

# Summary: Ancient Rome

## The Beginnings of Ancient Rome

Rome began as a group of villages along Italy's Tiber River. About 750 B.C., the villages joined together to form a city called Rome. It was ruled by kings for more than 200 years. Eventually, Rome became a republic, and the people elected representatives. These representatives formed the Senate, Rome's most powerful body of government. Each year the Senate elected two leaders who took charge of the government and the military.

At first, most senators were patricians. They had family roots dating back to ancient Rome. A plebeian was an ordinary, working male citizen. Plebeians could vote, but they could not hold public office. In 287 B.C., plebeians got the same rights as patricians.

The Roman Republic and its army grew. Rome conquered new lands beyond the Italian Peninsula. Its culture and language spread farther into Spain and Greece.

## From Republic to Empire

Julius Caesar was a Roman general and governor. Caesar used his power to become a dictator. This brought Rome's republican government to an end.

In 27 B.C., Rome became an empire. Caesar's adopted son Augustus became the first Roman emperor. He brought peace and wealth to Rome for 40 years. Rome made great progress. The army kept peace. Trade increased. Many public buildings and lighthouses were built. Great Roman literature was written. The growth that Augustus began lasted 200 years. It is known as the "Pax Romana," or Roman Peace.

## The Rise of Christianity

Christianity spread from the Middle East into the eastern half of the Roman Empire. News of this new religion traveled along Roman transportation routes. By the third century A.D., Christianity had spread throughout the empire.

In A.D. 306, Constantine became Rome's emperor. Before a battle, he had a vision of a cross in the sky. Constantine promised to become a Christian if he won the battle. He won the battle and kept his word. Christianity became the religion of Constantine's empire.

### Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

**republic** *noun*, a kind of government in which people rule through elected representatives

**Senate** *noun*, the most powerful group of elected representatives in the Roman government

**patrician** *noun*, a member of a wealthy, landowning family in ancient Rome

**plebeian** *noun*, a common citizen of ancient Rome

**empire** *noun*, a nation or group of territories ruled by an emperor

### After You Read

**REVIEW** What was the most powerful body of government in the Roman Republic? Circle the most powerful body of government in the Roman Republic.

**REVIEW** What part did Julius Caesar play in the change from republic to empire? Draw a box around the sentences that tell the part Caesar played in the change from republic to empire.

**REVIEW** How did the Roman Empire help spread Christianity? Highlight the sentences that tell how the Roman Empire helped spread Christianity.