

Teacher Introduction

These Common Core History Assessments are designed to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they learn about ancient Rome. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

Similar sets of assessments are available (or planned) for each unit in a typical world history class.

★ *Historical Thinking and the Challenge of the Common Core*

This set includes nine assessments aligned with the first nine Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standards. We have left out the tenth Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard, which does not lend itself to assessments of the sort provided here. The set also includes two writing tasks aligned with two key Common Core History/Social Studies Writing Standards.

These Common Core standards challenge history teachers to develop in students the complex literacy skills they need in today's world and the ability to master the unique demands of working with historical primary and secondary source texts. The Common Core standards are supportive of the best practices in teaching historical thinking. Such practices include close reading, attending to a source's point of view and purpose, corroborating sources, and placing sources in their historical context. These are the skills needed to make history less about rote learning and more about an active effort to investigate and interpret the past.

These assessments are also useful in many ways for ELA teachers. They assess many of the skills specified in the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards, which put a good deal of emphasis on the reading of informational texts. The Anchor Standards form the basis for all of the various Common Core standards for English Language Arts.

★ *What Are These Assessments Like?*

- **A group of nine reading skills assessments and two writing tasks for each major era of world history**

Each reading skills assessment is based on one of the key Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standards—Assessment 1 addresses Common Core Reading Standard 1, Assessment 2 addresses Common Core Reading Standard 2, and so on. Two writing tasks are based on the first two College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing, which are the basis for the Common Core History/Social Studies Writing Standards. The two writing standards focus on writing arguments to support claims and writing informative/explanatory texts.

- **Based on primary or secondary sources**

In most cases, one primary source is used. In some cases, an assessment is based on more than one primary source or on a primary and a secondary source. The sources are brief. In most cases, texts have been slightly altered to improve readability, but without changing meaning or tone. Links to online versions of print media are available in the Bibliography. Please note that these links were valid at the time of production, but the websites may have since been discontinued.

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- **Brief tasks promoting historical literacy**

For each assessment, students write brief answers to one or two questions. The questions are not tests of simple factual recall. They assess the students' mastery of the skills addressed by that assessment's Common Core History/Social Studies Standard.

- **Two versions of each of the nine reading standards assessments**

A *basic* and an *advanced* version of each assessment are provided. The *basic* assessment addresses the Common Core Standard for grades 6–8. The *advanced* assessment is based on the Common Core Standard for grades 9–10 and grades 11–12 combined. Each version uses the same source or sources. In some cases, sources have been somewhat shortened for the basic version.

- **Easy to use as both learning and assessment tools**

These assessments do not take valuable time away from instruction. The primary sources and background information on each source make them useful mini-lessons as well as tools to assess students' historical thinking skills. The sources all deal with themes and trends normally covered when teaching the relevant historical era.

- **Evaluating student responses**

Brief but specific suggestions are provided, defining acceptable and best responses to each question asked in the assessment. The suggestions are meant to aid in evaluating students, but even more importantly, they are a way for teachers to help students better understand and master the skills on which the assessment is focused.

Assessment 1 *Basic Level*

The Legend of Romulus and Remus

★ Key Ideas and Details

- 1. (6–8)** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

★ Using This Assessment

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Assessment 1 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 1 for grades 6–8. It asks students to cite specific textual evidence from two documents. It also challenges students to adapt that reading skill to the unique demands of thinking historically as they carefully interpret textual evidence in a primary source from a time in the past and a secondary source account of that same time in the past.

★ Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

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The Legend of Romulus and Remus

Directions: This exercise asks you to read one secondary source document and one primary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in the documents. In order to better understand the documents, read and make use of the source information located just below each document. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Document 1: A Secondary Source

Rome's origins are hidden in legend. But legends often tell us much about the way a society sees itself. The legend of Rome's founding is the story of Romulus and Remus. The story begins with King Numitor of Alba Longa, his brother Amulius, and his daughter Rhea Silvia. Amulius kills Numitor's male heirs in order to be next in line as king. He then tries to prevent Rhea Silvia from ever having children, since such children might challenge his right to rule. However, Rhea does have twins, by Mars, the god of warfare. Amulius takes them away and sees to it that they are abandoned by the banks of the Tiber River to die. Instead, they are nursed by a she-wolf until a shepherd finds and raises them. In time, Romulus and Remus learn what Amulius did. They kill him and give his kingdom back to Numitor. After that, the twins plan a city of their own to be built on the banks of the Tiber where the she-wolf had cared for them. An omen shows Romulus to be the city's founder, after which he kills his brother in an argument. Romulus uses a plow to mark the boundaries of his city, Rome. In time, he fills this city with people from many nearby regions. This myth does touch on certain major themes in Roman history: the central role of warfare, a strong sense of family honor, murderous internal strife, and a city unified by a powerful leader and built by people of mixed origins.

Source Information: This passage is a secondary source document about the legend of Romulus and Remus. A secondary source is an account of the past events written later by someone who did not experience or take part in those events. The passage is adapted and expanded from introductory material for "The Rise of Roman Power," Lesson 1 in Jonathan Burack's *Ancient Rome*, History Unfolding (Culver City, CA: MindSparks, 2009).

Document 2: A Primary Source

These pleasant anticipations were disturbed by the ancestral curse—ambition—which led to a deplorable quarrel over what was at first a trivial matter. As they were twins and no claim to precedence could be based on seniority, they decided to consult the tutelary deities of the place by means of augury as to who was to give his name to the new city, and who was to rule it after it had been founded. Romulus accordingly selected the Palatine as his station for observation, Remus the Aventine.

Remus is said to have been the first to receive an omen: Six vultures appeared to him. The augury had just been announced to Romulus when double the number appeared to him. Each was saluted as king by his own party. The one side based their claim on the priority of the appearance, the other on the number of the birds. Then followed an angry altercation; heated passions led to bloodshed; in the tumult Remus was killed. The more common report is that Remus contemptuously jumped over the newly raised walls and was forthwith killed by the enraged Romulus, who exclaimed, “So shall it be henceforth with everyone who leaps over my walls.” Romulus thus became sole ruler, and the city was called after him, its founder.

Source Information: Titus Livius, known as Livy, was a famous Roman historian who lived during the time when Augustus established the Roman Empire. He wrote a history of Rome and included accounts of the legends often told of its founding. In this passage, he describes the part of the Romulus and Remus legend when the brothers decide to found the city of Rome. This passage is excerpted from “The Earliest Legends,” Book 1 of Livy’s *The History of Rome*, vol. 1 (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1912).

Assessment Questions

1. Document 1 says the Romulus and Remus legend touches on “certain major themes in Roman history.” Choose one of the themes the document mentions, and explain what in the myth best illustrates that theme. Cite details from the document to support your answer.
2. What important details does Livy’s account (Document 2) add to the account in Document 1? Why are these details important for fully understanding the entire legend?

Assessment 7 *Basic Level*

Rome's Mighty Empire

★ *Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

- 7. (6–8)** Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

★ *Using This Assessment*

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Assessment 7 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 7 for grades 6–8. It asks students to do something historians must do all the time—integrate evidence found in several primary sources presented in a variety of visual and textual formats.

★ *Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment*

[[This selection is not available for review on sample pages]]

Rome's Mighty Empire

Directions: This exercise asks you to study three documents carefully and answer one question on what these sources have in common. In order to better understand the documents and their importance as historical evidence, read and make use of the source information located just below or next to each document itself. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the assessment question that follows.

CCS Standard 7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

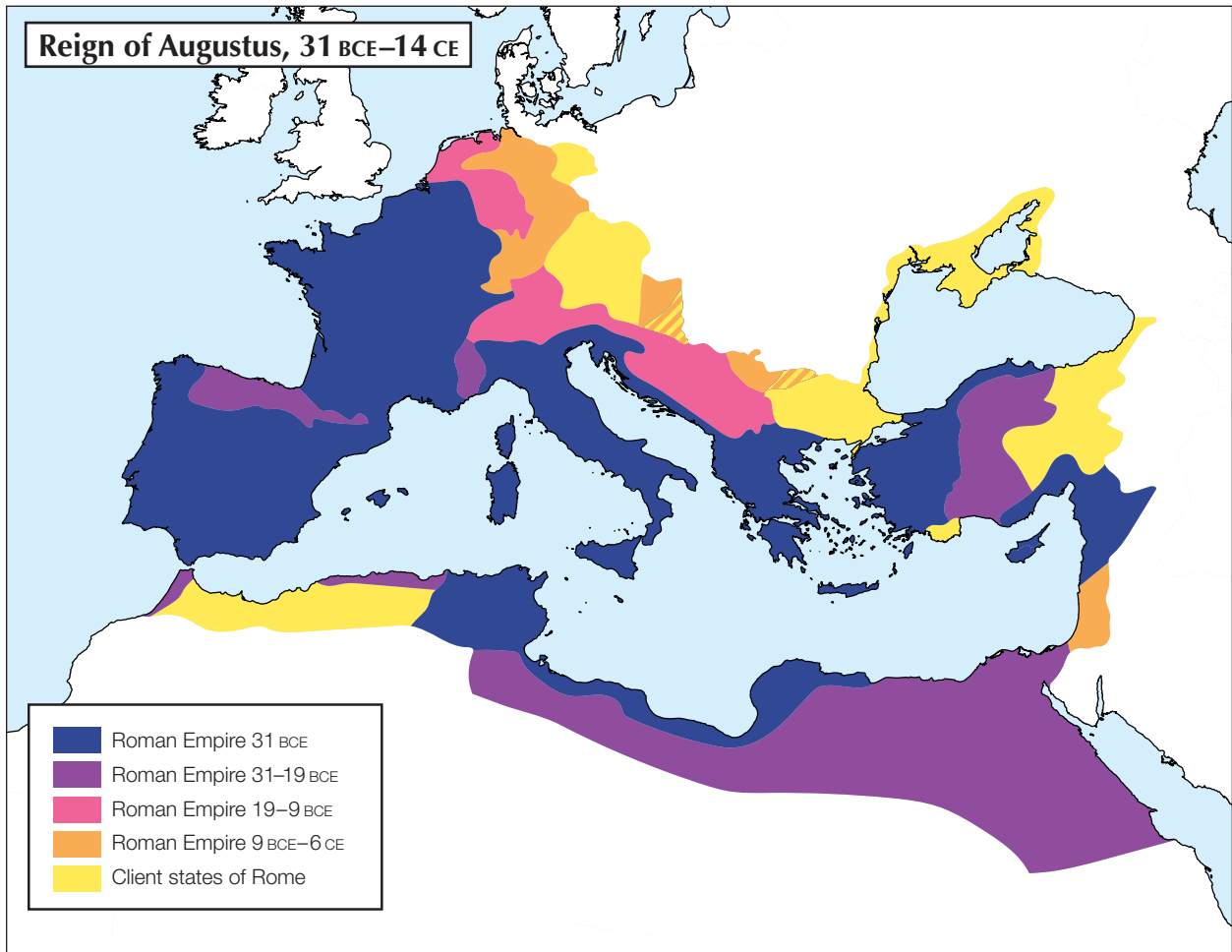
Document 1: A Primary Source



Image Credit: Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-103327

Source Information: This is a photo of Pont du Gard (“Gard Bridge”), the place where the Nîmes aqueduct crosses the Gard River in southern France. The ancient Romans built this aqueduct, probably between 40 and 60 CE. This photo was first published between 1860 and 1890.

Document 2: A Secondary Source



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Map Credit: Adapted from The Roman Empire under Augustus Caesar, by Cristiano64 (CC-BY-SA-3.0, <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>), via Wikimedia Commons

Source Information: This map shows the extent of the Roman Empire, from 31 BCE to 6 CE, primarily during the rule of Augustus.

Document 3: A Secondary Source

In the second century of the Christian era, the empire of Rome comprehended the fairest part of the earth, and the most civilized portion of mankind. The frontiers of that extensive monarchy were guarded by ancient renown and disciplined valor. The gentle but powerful influence of laws and manners had gradually cemented the union of the provinces. Their peaceful inhabitants enjoyed and abused the advantages of wealth and luxury. The image of a free constitution was preserved with decent reverence. The Roman senate appeared to possess the sovereign authority, and devolved on the emperors all the executive powers of government. During a happy period [98–180 CE] of more than fourscore years, the public administration was conducted by the virtue and abilities of Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the two Antonines. It is the design of this, and of the two succeeding chapters, to describe the prosperous condition of their empire; and afterwards, from the death of Marcus Antoninus, to deduce the most important circumstances of its decline and fall; a revolution which will ever be remembered, and is still felt by the nations of the earth.

Source Information: These are the first lines of one of the most famous books on the Roman Empire ever written, Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, first published in six volumes between 1776 and 1788. This introductory passage describes the Roman Empire at the height of its power in the first and second centuries CE. It is excerpted from volume 1 of Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London: Strahan & Cadell, 1776), reprinted (New York: Fred de Fau & Co., 1906).

Assessment Question

1. The Roman Empire was at the height of its power and stability in the first two centuries of the Common Era. How do *all three* of these documents offer evidence in support of this idea?