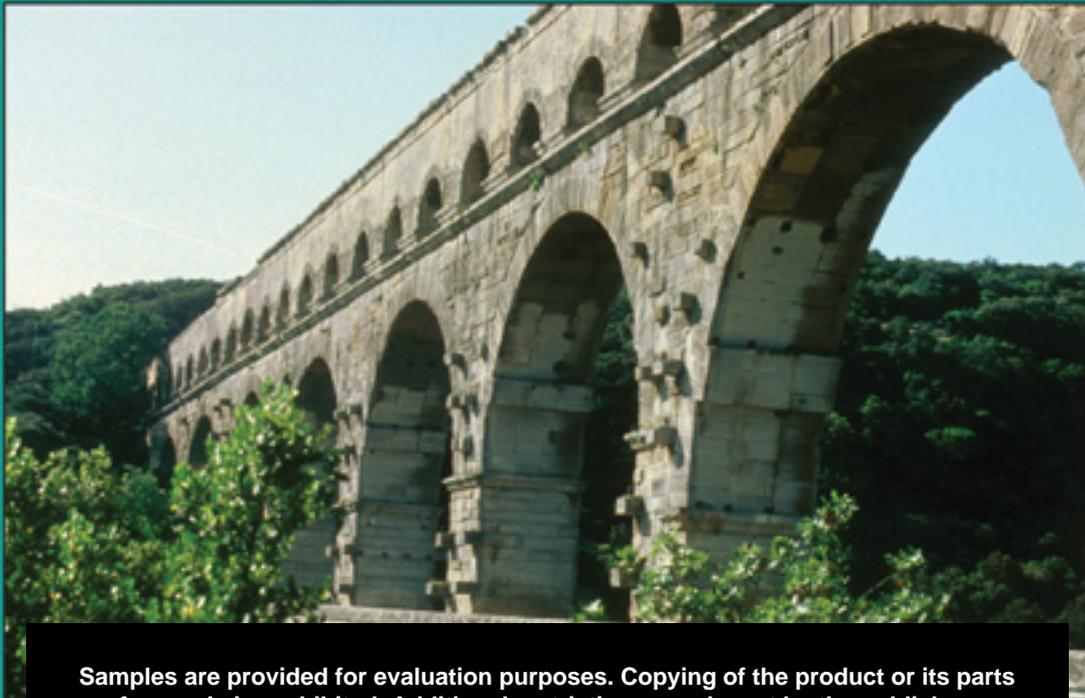


*History*  
UNFOLDING

# ANCIENT ROME



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**MindSparks**  
CHALLENGING STUDENTS TO THINK HISTORICALLY

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# Introduction

## The World of the Ancient Romans

People in Western societies often trace their origins back to the two great civilizations of the Classical Age—ancient Greece and Rome. Those two civilizations shared so much, after all, and we still value so much of what they gave us. Both were societies of the Mediterranean. Both were based on trade and complex interactions with other cultures. Each developed an early form of democratic rule, at least for a part of its history. And both shared a great deal in the realms of religion, literature, philosophy, and science—largely because of what Rome borrowed from the Greeks.

And yet, the two civilizations were dramatically different. Today we admire the Greeks for their art, their intellectual accomplishments, and their ideals. The triumphs of the Romans were much more practical. It is their roads, bridges, aqueducts, public baths, temples, forums, and their city planning that still impress us most. Even in the realm of ideas, their greatest legacy to the modern world—Roman law—was a practical one.

While ancient Rome amazes us, it also often repulses us. Its slavery, its militarism, its huge gap between rich and poor, and its barbaric gladiatorial spectacles force us to realize that ancient civilizations were often anything but “civilized” in terms we accept today. Yet even these aspects of ancient Rome have things to teach us. They, too, are a part of the heritage that has shaped us, for good or bad.

Obviously, it is impossible to tell the entire thousand-year story of ancient Rome in just 12 illustrations. But the 12 we have chosen focus on several key themes in this history. The illustrations are presented in four lessons. Each lesson uses three of the illustrations to explore one broad topic in the overall story. Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

### **The Rise of Roman Power**

The illustrations here focus on the impressive achievements of Rome in the realm of warfare and technology. These always formed the basis for all of the future conquests and triumphs of Roman civilization.

### **The Roman Republic**

The Roman Republic never created a fully democratic system in a sense that we would recognize today. But the achievement, as flawed as it was, is still impressive. The illustrations in this lesson focus on key aspects of this early phase of ancient Roman history.

### **The Roman Empire**

These illustrations give you a chance to discuss the end of the Roman Republic, the stability achieved by Augustus and his immediate successors, and the underlying realities that made the empire something less than an “Augustan” paradise.

### **Decline and Fall**

We complete this look at ancient Rome by focusing on the growing troubles of the empire, the rising threat of the “barbarian” societies along its borders, its spiritual crisis, and the rise of Christianity.

## Using Photos, Cartoons, and Other Visuals to Teach History

Many textbooks are full of colorful visuals. However, all too often these visuals function primarily as window dressing. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable. Only occasionally do the visuals in textbooks do more than offer simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, they pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help young people master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as historical documents. The lessons in this booklet focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, their emotional power, and their ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general, as well as their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

## How to Use This Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

**A BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET** This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

**DIGITAL IMAGES** The booklet's PDF allows you to project the images for use in your class discussions.

### **DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY SHEETS**

Each sheet displays one illustration. It includes a sequence of questions to help you plan an all-class discussion while using the projected images. The questions take students step by step through an analysis of the illustration. If you wish, you may reproduce these pages and hand them out. In addition to the discussion questions on the illustration itself, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. Some of these can be made into individual assignments. Others will work best as small-group or all-class activities.

**OBJECTIVE**

1. Students will understand the central importance of military ability and technical skill in the rise of the city of Rome to power as a mighty empire.

# The Rise of Roman Power

*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION****Illustration 1**

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. They were twin sons of a human queen and the god Mars. Left to die, they were nursed by a she-wolf until a shepherd found and raised them. This famous statue shows them with the wolf. Later, the twins planned a city to be built on the banks of the Tiber River, where the she-wolf had cared for them. An omen showed Romulus to be the city's founder, after which he killed his brother in an argument. Romulus used a plow to mark the boundaries of his city, Rome. He would fill this city with people from many nearby regions. The myth does touch on certain major themes in Roman history: a key role for the god of war, a strong sense of family honor, murderous strife, and a city unified by a powerful leader and built by people of mixed origins.

**Illustrations 2A & 2B**

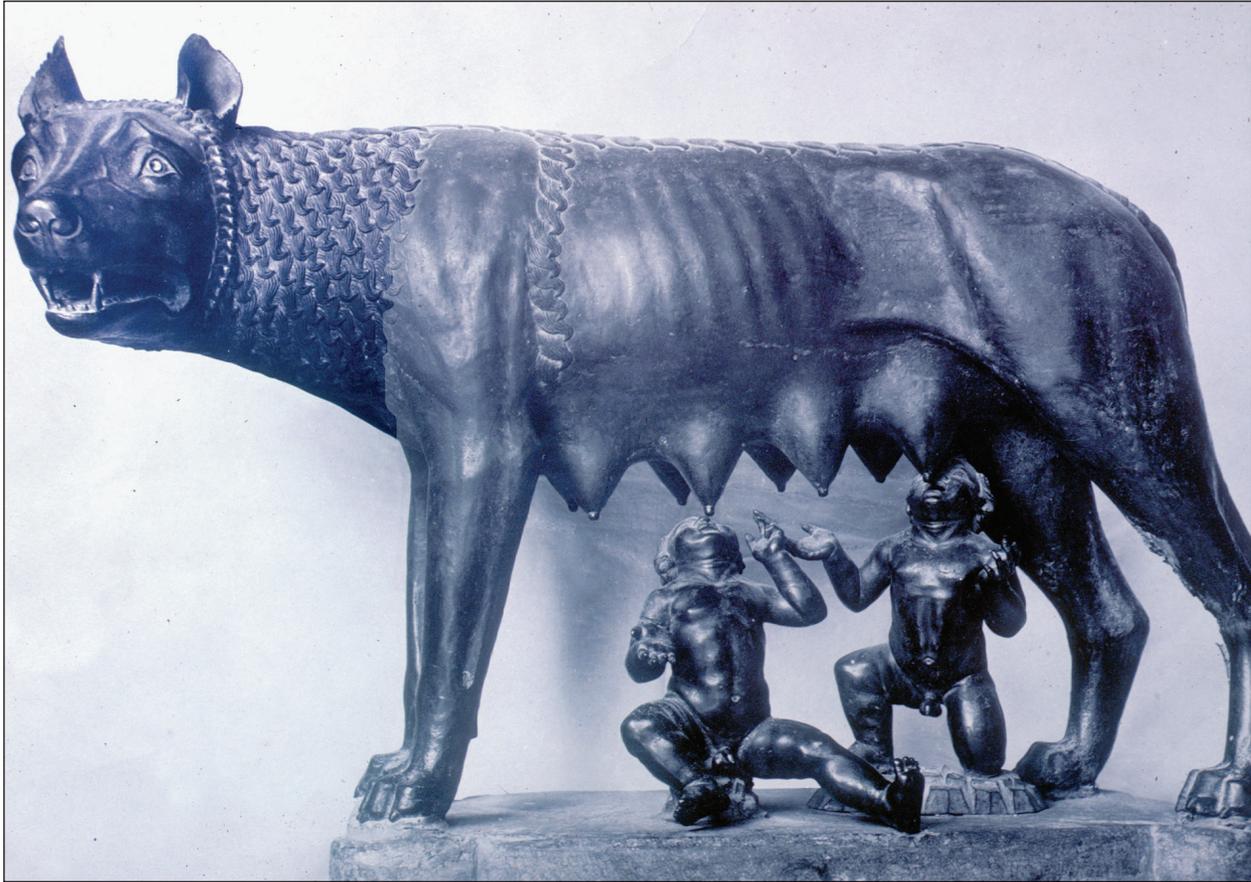
War was indeed what made ancient Rome a mighty empire. The famous Roman legionaries were well armed. And Rome's technical genius gave them powerful weapons, such as the ballista (Illustration 2A), a machine for hurling 60-pound stones and bolts of iron more than 500 yards. More crucial were the discipline, organization, training, and military tactics the Romans perfected, often in camps such as in Illustration 2B. Rome added one small territory at a time through conquest and diplomacy. The Romans were often wise enough not to deal too harshly with those they conquered. In fact, Roman citizenship in time was given to many groups who were originally taken over by force or threats of force.

**Illustrations 3A & 3B**

Technical building skills were every bit as important to Rome's success as its military skills. Fortification was important from the start. But Rome's ability to use wood and stone (and later, concrete) soon outpaced all earlier societies. Roman roads, as shown in Illustration 3A, were wonders of engineering skill. Some can still be seen today. They made it easy for merchants and legionaries to travel by foot or horseback from one end of the empire to the other rapidly. The aqueduct (Illustration 3B) is another engineering marvel. Such aqueducts could deliver a water supply to a Roman city from streams and hills many miles away.

## Lesson 1—The Rise of Roman Power

# Illustration 1



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### **Discussing the Illustration**

1. This sculpture is about the myth of how Rome began. That myth centers on the twins being nursed here by a she-wolf after they were taken from their mother by a bad king and left to die. Their mother was a queen, but their father was a god. Can you name the twins and that god?
2. The twins argued, and Romulus killed Remus. Then Romulus marked the boundaries of a new city, Rome. Rome was on the river where the she-wolf cared for these twins. Which river is that?
3. From what you know about ancient Rome and the Romans, why do you think they developed this myth about their city?
4. The original twins in this Etruscan bronze statue were destroyed in 65 BCE. New ones were added during the Renaissance, many centuries after Rome's fall. Do you think the sculptor who created the new twins imitated the original style well? Why or why not?

### **Follow-up Activities**

1. **Small-group activity:** Read the entire story of Romulus and Remus. Your teacher or librarian can help you find books or other sources on this myth. Discuss five key parts of the myth that you think could be illustrated. Then create a bulletin board-sized (or wall-sized) mural showing the entire Romulus and Remus myth. Use a picture of the above statue as one of the five scenes in your mural. Try to keep the artistic style of the other parts of the mural similar to the style you see here.
2. The myth of Romulus and Remus contains many elements important to the ancient Romans. Keep this in mind, and think about the history of your own town, city, or community. How much do you know about its beginnings? Ask your librarian to help you learn more about how your community began. Then invent a myth or story that you think sums up what is most important about your community and how it began. Either write your myth down as a brief story, or draw several scenes that illustrate it.