



◀ As Rome grew into a huge empire, power fell into the hands of a single supreme ruler.

From Republic to Empire

34.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, you learned how Rome became a republic. In this chapter, you'll discover how the republic grew into a mighty **empire** that ruled the entire Mediterranean world.

The **expansion** of Roman power took place over about 500 years, from 509 B.C.E. to 14 C.E. At the start of this period, Rome was a tiny republic in central Italy. Five hundred years later, it was a thriving center of a vast empire. At its height, the Roman Empire included most of Europe together with North Africa, Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor.

The growth in Rome's power happened gradually, and it came at a price. Romans had to fight countless wars to defend their growing territory and to conquer new lands. Along the way, Rome itself changed. Romans had once been proud to be governed by elected leaders. Their heroes were men who had helped to preserve the republic. By 14 C.E., the republic was just a memory. Power was in the hands of a single supreme ruler, the emperor. Romans even worshiped the emperor as a god.

In this chapter, you'll see how this dramatic change occurred. You'll trace the gradual expansion of Roman power. You'll also explore the costs of this expansion, both for Romans and for the people they conquered.



Use this map as a graphic organizer to help you understand how Rome expanded from a republic into a great empire.

34.2 From Republic to Empire: An Overview

The growth of Rome from a republic to an empire took place over 500 years. The story can be divided into four major periods.

The First Period of Expansion The first period began in 509 B.C.E. when the Romans drove the last Etruscan king out of power. At that time, Rome became a republic.

The Romans wanted to protect their borders and to gain more land. This led to a series of wars. During the next 245 years, the Romans fought one enemy after another. They conquered their Latin neighbors in central Italy. They also defeated their old masters, the Etruscans.

Wisely, the Romans eventually made allies, or friends, of their former enemies. By 264 B.C.E., Rome and its allies controlled all of Italy.

The Second Period of Expansion Rome's growth threatened another great power, the city of Carthage in North Africa. During the second period of expansion, from 264 to 146 B.C.E., Rome and Carthage fought three major wars. Through these wars, Rome gained control of North Africa, much of Spain, and the island of Sicily. Roman armies also conquered Macedonia and Greece.

Rome gained power over new lands through three savage wars with Carthage across the Mediterranean Sea.





Roman general Julius Caesar helped expand the Roman Empire by conquering Gaul and invading Britain.

The Third Period of Expansion During the third period of expansion, from 145 to 44 B.C.E., Rome came to rule the entire Mediterranean world. In the east, Rome took control of Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt. In the west, a general named Julius Caesar conquered much of Gaul (modern-day France).

Proud Romans now called the Mediterranean “our sea.” But the republic was in trouble. **Civil wars** divided the city. Roman generals were becoming dictators. They set their armies against the power of the Senate. Caesar himself ruled as a dictator before he was murdered in 44 B.C.E.

The men who killed Caesar thought they were saving the power of the Senate. However, several more years of civil war followed. Then Caesar’s grandnephew, Octavian, seized power. The Senate named him Augustus, or “honored one.” Rome was now an empire governed by one supreme ruler.

The Fourth Period of Expansion The fourth period of expansion began with the start of the empire. It lasted until 14 C.E. The first emperor, Augustus, added a great deal of new territory by pushing the borders of the empire all the way to natural boundaries, like rivers, to make it easier to defend. Later emperors added more territory. At its height, the Roman Empire stretched from the island of Britain in the west to the Black Sea in the east.

Each period of expansion involved cost and sacrifice. The next four sections give more details about each period of expansion. As you read, ask yourself what Romans of the time might have thought about these events.

civil war a war between regions of the same country

Julius Caesar’s grandnephew, Octavian, became Caesar Augustus, the supreme ruler of the Roman Empire.





One of the heroes of the Roman republic was Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus. In 458 B.C.E., the Roman Senate made Cincinnatus dictator, or supreme ruler, so that he could rescue the city from an attack by a neighboring tribe. After defeating the enemy, Cincinnatus willingly gave up his power and returned to his farm.

34.3 Rome's Conquest of the Italian Peninsula, 509 to 264 B.C.E.

Rome's first period of expansion included more than 200 years of almost constant warfare. During this time, Rome gradually took control of the entire Italian peninsula.

After the last Etruscan king was overthrown in 509 B.C.E., the Romans began to expand their territory and influence. In 493 B.C.E., Roman leaders signed a treaty, or agreement, with their Latin neighbors to the south. The treaty said, "There shall be peace between the Romans and all the communities of Latins as long as heaven and earth endure." The new allies agreed to band together against their common enemies. During the next 100 years, the Romans fought a number of wars against the Etruscans as well as against tribes living in hills in the area around Rome.

Then, in 390 B.C.E., Rome nearly came to an end. A band of Gauls, a warlike people from the north, crushed a Roman army and surged into the city. Most of Rome's people fled into the countryside. The Gauls looted the city and burned most of it down.

Territory Controlled by Rome, About 264 B.C.E.



With the city in ruins, the Romans considered fleeing to some other place. Instead, they bravely decided to start over. They rebuilt their city and surrounded it with walls. They also built up their army. Before long, Roman soldiers were on the march again.

During the 300s B.C.E., Rome conquered the Etruscans and many neighboring tribes. To the south, they battled a people called the Samnites, as well as several Greek cities. By 275 B.C.E., Rome's conquest of the Italian peninsula was complete. Rome now controlled the Italian peninsula. But Rome's expansion came at great cost. Romans had been fighting wars for two centuries. And the Gauls had once destroyed their city.

As Rome's territory grew, the city had to keep a large, permanent army to defend it and the conquered lands. As a result, more and more Romans were forced to serve in the army. Most of the soldiers were plebeians. This was one reason for the struggle between the plebeians and the patricians.

Roman citizens were not the only ones who paid a cost for Rome's expansion. Rome allowed the people of some defeated cities to become Roman citizens. But other cities were not treated as well. Many received more limited privileges, such as the ability to trade with Rome. And Roman allies had to pay Roman taxes and supply soldiers for Roman armies.

By 264 B.C.E., Rome had more citizens and well-trained soldiers than any other power in the Mediterranean world. But very soon, the Romans would face their greatest challenge yet.

Punic Wars wars fought between Rome and Carthage

34.4 Overseas Expansion During the Punic Wars, 264 B.C.E. to 146 B.C.E.

During Rome's second period of expansion, it fought three savage wars with Carthage, a powerful city in North Africa, for control of the Mediterranean region.

When the wars began, Carthage held North Africa, most of Spain, and part of Sicily. It also controlled most of the trade in the western Mediterranean. The Greek cities in southern Italy had frequently clashed with Carthage over trading rights. When Rome conquered these cities, it was drawn into the fight with Carthage.

Rome's wars with Carthage are called the **Punic Wars**, after the Greek name for the people of Carthage. The First Punic War

began in 264 B.C.E. It was fought mostly at sea. Carthage had a very powerful navy. But the Romans built up their own navy by copying and improving on the Carthaginians' ship designs. A decisive victory at sea in 241 B.C.E. won the war for the Romans. The triumphant Romans took over Sicily, as well as other islands.

The Second Punic War started 23 years later. This time, the Carthaginians decided to attack Italy itself. In 218 B.C.E., Hannibal, a brilliant Carthaginian general, surprised the Romans by marching his army from Spain across the Alps (a high mountain range) and into Italy. His troops rode elephants and braved snowstorms, landslides, and attacks by local tribes. For 15 years, Hannibal's men fought the Romans.

In 202 B.C.E., Hannibal returned home to defend Carthage against a Roman army. There he was defeated in the battle that ended the

In 218 B.C.E., the Carthaginian general Hannibal led his troops across the Alps to attack Rome.



Territory Controlled by Rome, About 146 B.C.E.



Second Punic War. Carthage was forced to give Spain to Rome along with huge sums of money.

For about 50 years, there was peace between Rome and Carthage. Then, spurred on by Cato, a senator who demanded the destruction of Carthage, the Romans attacked once more.

The Third Punic War lasted three years. In 146 B.C.E., the Romans burned Carthage to the ground. They killed many people and sold others into slavery. Rome was now the greatest power in the Mediterranean region. It controlled North Africa, much of Spain, Macedonia, and Greece.

The Punic Wars expanded Roman power and territory, but Rome's victories came at a price. Families mourned for the countless soldiers who had died in the long wars. In addition, people living outside Rome suffered huge losses. Hannibal's army had destroyed thousands of farms. Other farms had been neglected while farmers went off to fight in Rome's armies. By the time the soldiers returned home, grain was flowing into Italy from Sicily and other places. Small farms were being replaced by large estates where the wealthy planted vineyards and raised livestock. Unable to compete with the wealthy landowners, many poor farmers had to sell their land.

Although riches and slaves flowed into Rome from the conquered lands, so did new customs. Many of the new ideas came from Greece. Wealthy Romans competed with one another to build Greek-style homes and beautiful temples.

34.5 Expansion During the Final Years of the Republic, 145 B.C.E. to 44 B.C.E.

By 145 B.C.E., Roman conquests had brought great wealth to the city of Rome. But they had also put the republican form of government under great strain. By the end of Rome's third period of expansion, the republic collapsed.

The final years of the republic were marked by still more wars. Many of Rome's allies resented having to pay Roman taxes and fight in Roman armies without enjoying the rights of citizens. In 91 B.C.E., they rebelled. To end the revolt, Rome agreed to let all free Italians become Roman citizens.

Rome also had to fight to put down slave revolts. As Romans conquered other lands, they brought hundreds of thousands of prisoners to Roman lands. They turned them into slaves who labored on farms and in the city. Romans often treated their slaves very harshly. A slave named Spartacus led a famous revolt in 73 B.C.E. After crushing his army and killing Spartacus in battle, the Romans hung thousands of the surviving rebels on crosses.

There was trouble in the city, too. With so many slaves to do the work, thousands of farmers and laborers had no jobs. They crowded into Rome, becoming a mob that an ambitious leader could turn into an army.

Rome's army was producing many such leaders. Generals used their armies to gain fame in far-off lands and then fight for power in Rome. In one civil war in the 80s B.C.E., 200,000 Romans were killed.

Forty years later, another civil war broke out between two ambitious generals, Pompey and Julius Caesar. Pompey had

Julius Caesar was stabbed 23 times and bled to death at the door of the Senate.



Roman Conquests, About 44 B.C.E.



expanded Roman rule in such eastern lands as Syria and the island of Cyprus. Caesar had conquered much of Gaul. By 49 B.C.E., Pompey was back in Rome, while Caesar commanded an army to the north of Italy, across the Rubicon River. Both men wanted to control Rome, but Pompey had the support of the Roman Senate.

Urged on by Pompey, the Senate forbade Caesar from entering Italy with his army. Caesar disobeyed. On January 11, 49 B.C.E., he crossed the Rubicon with his army. After three years of fighting, he defeated Pompey. The frightened Senate named Caesar dictator for life. With Caesar in control, the republican form of government was at an end.

As dictator, Julius Caesar introduced many reforms. He gave work to thousands of Romans by starting projects to make new roads and public buildings. To keep the poor happy, he staged gladiator contests they could watch for free. He also adopted a new calendar that is still used today.

Caesar had a vision of Rome as a great empire. He started new colonies and granted citizenship to the people of cities in Gaul and Spain. But he did not live to see his vision come true. On March 15, 44 B.C.E., a group of enemies stabbed Caesar to death as he was entering the Senate.

The plotters who killed Caesar thought they were saving the republic. But they were wrong. Instead, a true Roman emperor soon emerged to take Caesar's place.

34.6 Rome Becomes an Empire, 44 B.C.E. to 14 C.E.

Caesar's murder plunged Rome into a series of civil wars that lasted for more than 10 years. When the fighting ended, one man stood as the absolute ruler of Rome. He was Octavian, Caesar's grandnephew and adopted son. So began the Roman Empire, and Rome's fourth period of expansion.

To gain power, Octavian had to defeat jealous rivals. One of them was Marc Antony, a popular general. Antony had married Queen Cleopatra of Egypt. In 31 B.C.E., Octavian defeated Antony and Cleopatra in a sea battle near Actium, Greece. His army chased the lovers to Egypt, where they killed themselves.

Octavian was now the supreme ruler of the Mediterranean region.

Octavian knew that the Romans prized their republic. He told them he was restoring the authority of the Senate and the Roman people. But in fact he was in complete control. The Senate gave him the title Augustus, which means "revered" (honored). Historians call him Rome's first emperor.

As ruler of Rome, Augustus encouraged education, art, and literature. He completed grand construction projects, repairing more than 80 ruined temples.

"I found Rome brick and left it marble," he boasted. He also gave Rome its first police force, firefighters, and library.

As emperor, Augustus ruled over 50 million people. He turned eastern kingdoms like Judea and Armenia into Roman provinces. To defend the empire, he pushed its borders to natural boundaries: the Rhine and Danube Rivers in the north, the Sahara Desert in the south, and the Atlantic Ocean in the west.

This vast empire needed a strong economy. The Romans improved trade routes by building harbors, canals, and roads. Goods flowed into Rome from throughout the empire and as far away as China. Roman coins made trade easier by providing a single system of currency (money).



As emperor, Augustus encouraged education and literature. Here he reads to a group of citizens. Augustus ruled for 41 years, until his death in 14 C.E.

Territory Controlled by Rome, About 117 C.E.



But Rome's final expansion brought new problems. To reform Roman morals, Augustus harshly punished people for being unfaithful to their husbands or wives. To protect the emperor, he established a private army, the Praetorian Guard. In later years, this same Guard sometimes murdered the emperors it was supposed to protect.

Under Roman rule, the Mediterranean world was mostly at peace for 200 years. This period is called the Pax Romana, or Roman Peace. But keeping the peace cost the Romans dearly. During Augustus's reign, one rebellion in the east took three years and 100,000 soldiers to put down. Before it was over, a Roman army was completely destroyed.

Later emperors added to the territory controlled by Rome. From Britain to the Red Sea, a single power ruled over the greatest empire the world had ever known. Defending this vast empire became increasingly challenging and costly as time went on.

34.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, you read about how Rome became a great empire. Roman power grew through four main periods of expansion. In each period, the costs of expansion were great. Yet, in the end, Rome ruled over an empire that lasted 500 years. In the next chapter, you will discover what daily life was like for Romans at the height of the empire's power.