

# GEOGRAPHY OF ANCIENT ROME

## READ ALOUD

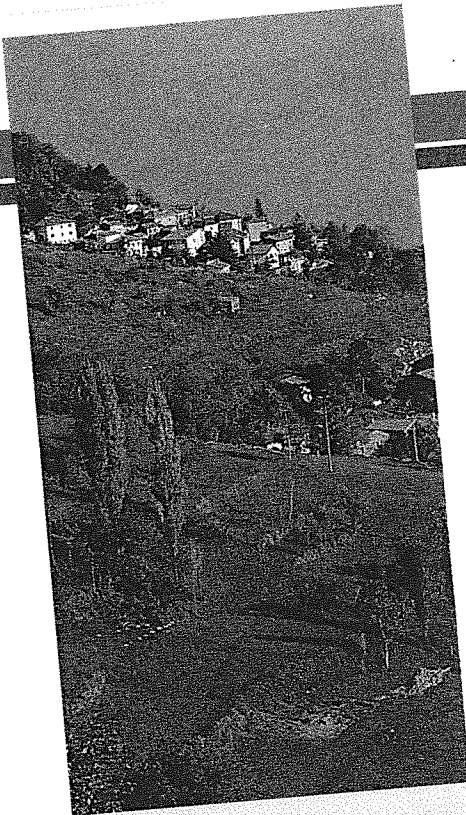
*"The countryside round here is very beautiful. . . . The broad, spreading plain is ringed by mountains, their summits topped by ancient woods of tall timber. . . . Below these the vineyards extend on every side, weaving their uniform pattern far and wide. . . . Then come the meadows and grainfields, which can only be broken by huge oxen and the most powerful plows."*

A Roman named Pliny the Younger wrote these words in a letter to a friend almost 2,000 years ago. As you will see, they describe the land around ancient Rome well.

## THE BIG PICTURE

Around 700 B.C. people from Sparta and other city-states began leaving Greece to start new colonies in other parts of the Mediterranean region. Many sailed west to present-day Italy, where the land was rich and fertile. There the Greek colonists settled among several groups of peoples who spoke different languages and followed different customs. The communities shared their ways of making a living from the land.

While Sparta and Athens rose to power in Greece another city was growing strong in Italy. That city was Rome. In time, Rome would unify all of Italy's many communities under its rule and eventually conquer Greece itself.



## Focus Activity

### READ TO LEARN

In what ways did Rome's geography help it to grow strong?

### PLACES

Rome

Sicily

Alps

Apennine Mountains

Latium

Tiber River

## A BOOT INTO THE SEA

The Italian peninsula is part of the European continent. It juts out into the Mediterranean Sea like a kicking boot. Find the "toe" of the boot on the map on this page. The island to the west of the toe is called Sicily. It was a popular destination for ancient Greek colonists because of its rich farmland.

### Mountains of Italy

At the northern border of present-day Italy stand the craggy Alps. The Alps are Europe's highest mountain range. Do you remember how the Himalayas separate the Indian subcontinent from the rest of Asia? The Alps wall off the Italian peninsula from the rest of Europe in a similar way.

Another mountain range has had an even greater effect on life in Italy. The

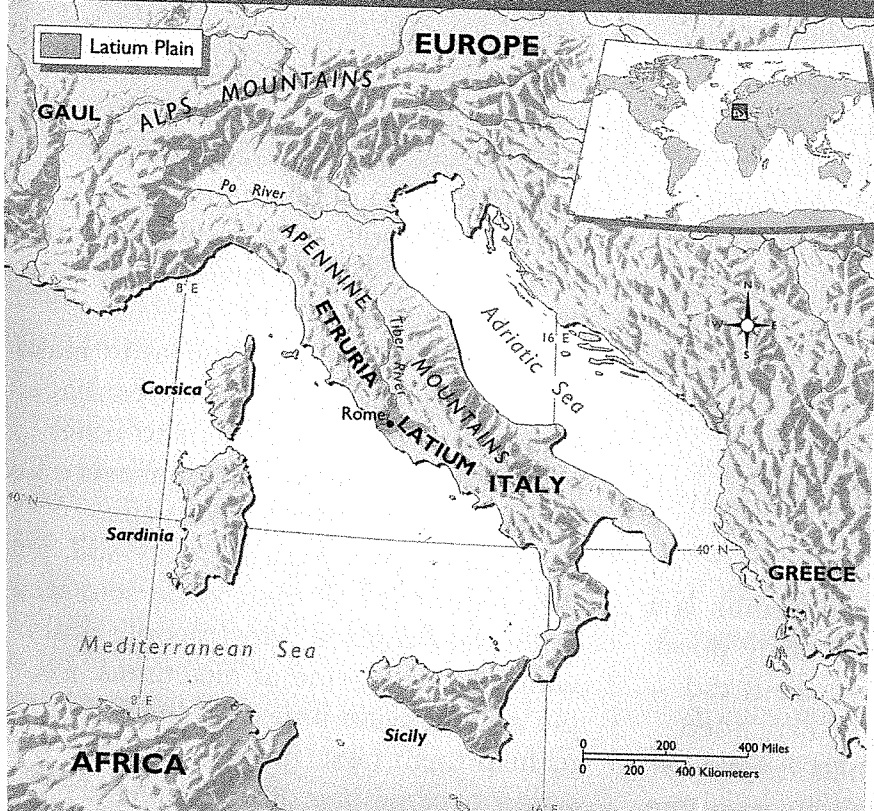
Apennine (AP uh nin) Mountains form a giant "backbone" through the Italian peninsula. Their towering height makes it difficult to travel across the peninsula. The Apennines also lack rich soil, so there is more sheep herding than farming on the mountainsides.

### Fertile Plains

Italy, like Greece, has much mountainous land. Also like Greece, Italy has a number of fertile plains. One important plain, Latium (LAY shee um), is located on the west coast of central Italy. The Tiber River runs through the center of this plain. Archaeologists have found remains of ancient communities on the Latium plain that date back about 3,000 years. Eventually, a great city called Rome would also arise on the plain along the Tiber River.

ITALY, c. 700 B.C.

MAP WORK



In ancient times, communities developed on the Latium plain in central Italy.

1. Which mountains border the eastern side of the Latium plain?
2. Which is farther south—Sardinia or Sicily?
3. The Italian peninsula is nearly surrounded by which two bodies of water?

## A CITY ALONG THE TIBER

Today Rome is a large, modern city beside the Tiber River, on the northern edge of the Latium plain. Rome was also a great city over 2,000 years ago. How did this city come into being?

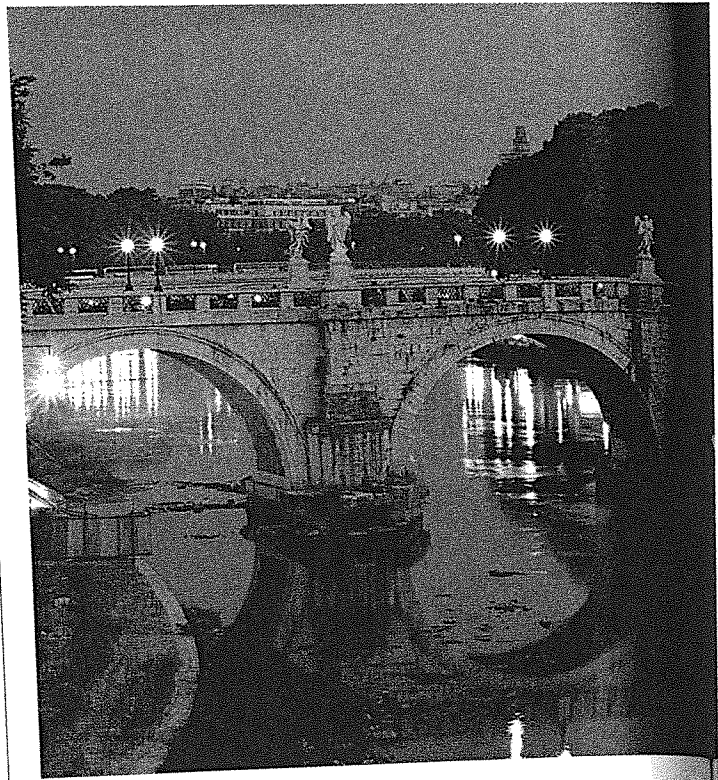
### The Legend of Romulus and Remus

According to Roman legend, a king ruled a small city near the Tiber River over 2,700 years ago. His younger brother overthrew him and drove away the rest of the royal family. Later the older brother's daughter gave birth to twin boys, Romulus and Remus. The new king was afraid these boys would try to claim the throne. He gave orders to throw the twins into the flooded Tiber River. This was done—but miraculously the boys did not drown. They were both washed up on a hilltop where a wolf happened along and rescued them.

The story goes on to say that a shepherd came upon the wolf's den and took the boys home. Romulus and Remus grew up to be strong and brave. In the end they helped their grandfather become king again. Then Romulus and Remus founded a new city on the hill where they had been rescued. The two brothers fought over the naming of the city, and Romulus killed Remus. The city was named Rome after its first king, Romulus.

### City of Seven Hills

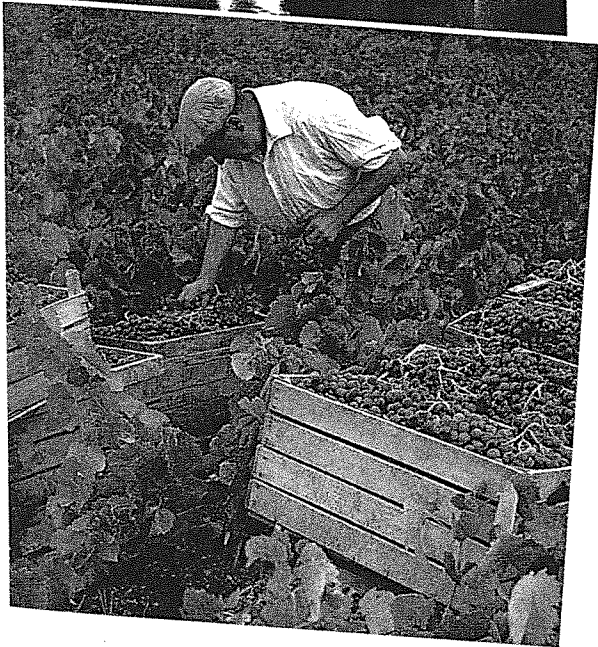
The story of Romulus and Remus is a legend. There are, however, many good reasons why Rome grew where it did. First, as Rome developed, it expanded across seven hills. These hills helped to protect the city from attack. Second, the Tiber River made a fine "highway" for



An ancient Roman bridge spans the Tiber River (above). Grapes remain a major crop in Italy (right).

travel between the mountains and the Mediterranean coast. Boats brought goods from faraway seaports as well as news from communities upriver. Last but not least, the Latium plain was surrounded by inactive volcanoes. Ash from earlier eruptions had created a thin but rich soil. As a result, farmers were able to produce large surpluses on the Latium plain.

Latium farmers grew wheat to make bread. They also grew beans, cabbage, and lettuce, as well as figs and other fruits. Perhaps most important were the grapes they raised to make wine. Grapevines grow best in rocky soil, and Italy had plenty of that. Wine sold well in the marketplace. Most people drank watered-down wine at mealtimes. People poured wine into cuts and wounds to help them heal. In time, Italy's fine wines became one of the peninsula's most valued trade goods.



## Peoples of the Peninsula

Before the founding of Rome, there were other peoples who developed civilizations in Italy. One group, called the Etruscans, settled on the plain northwest of the Tiber River. Find this plain, called Etruria (ih TRUR ee uh), on the map on page 225.

Around 575 B.C. the Etruscan army conquered much of the Italian peninsula, including Rome. Etruscan kings led the city to victory over many of its neighbors in Latium. However, in about 509 B.C., the leading families of Rome overthrew their Etruscan king.

## WHY IT MATTERS

During the period of Etruscan rule, Rome continued to grow and develop. However, the people of the small city on the Tiber River could not have known what the future would hold. As you will soon see, Rome would one day become the center of a mighty empire. Roman laws, language, and achievements would affect not only all of Italy, but in time, much of the world.

### ✓ Reviewing Facts and Ideas

#### SUM UP

- At the base of Italy's two mountain ranges—the Alps and the Apennines—lie fertile regions, such as the Latium plain.
- Italy's fertile plains were well used by local farmers as well as colonists from ancient Greece.
- The city of Rome was founded on seven hills. They helped to protect it from attack. The nearby Latium plain provided fertile farmland.
- Etruscan kings ruled Rome and other regions of Italy before being overthrown by Romans in 509 B.C.

#### THINK ABOUT IT

1. Why did grapes become an important crop in ancient Italy?
2. How did Rome come to be founded, according to legend? What role does geography play in this story?
3. **FOCUS** Why was the location of Rome a good place for a city?
4. **THINKING SKILL** What were the causes of farmers' success at growing grapevines in Italy?
5. **GEOGRAPHY** How did the mountains of Italy affect communication and transportation?

509  
B.C.100  
B.C.A.D.  
1A.D.  
250A.D.  
500

# THE RISE OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

## READ ALOUD

The Roman leader Cicero declared that Rome should be governed by its “best” citizens. But just who were Rome’s “best” citizens? Were they the city’s small circle of nobles? Or did they also include the many other citizens, poor and rich, who contributed to life in Rome? The way Romans answered this question would shape their lives and ours.

## THE BIG PICTURE

Almost 3,000 years ago, when the city of Anyang in China was losing power, Rome was only a cluster of mud huts on the hills overlooking the Tiber River. From the hilltops, farmers could enjoy a view of two small lakes that rippled in the valley below. The sound of lowing cattle drifted across the marshland at the river’s edge.

By 509 B.C. Romans had overthrown their king, Tarquinus. They began setting up a new government in which citizens played a larger part. Their community became a city. A wooden bridge now crossed the Tiber River. The valley’s marshland was drained and served as a busy market and meeting place.

High atop one of Rome’s hills stood a stone temple as big as any in Greece. On other hilltops, fine brick homes housed Rome’s wealthy. Some Romans clearly had become richer than others. The division between rich and poor, powerful and not so powerful, would affect the shape of the new government Romans were creating for themselves.

## Focus Activity

### READ TO LEARN

What kind of government did the Romans establish?

### VOCABULARY

plebeian  
patrician  
republic  
representative  
Senate  
tribune  
consul  
Twelve Tables  
Punic Wars

### PEOPLE

Livy  
Hannibal  
Scipio

### PLACES

Forum  
Carthage  
Zama

## THE CITIZENS OF ROME

As in Greece, society in Rome was divided into two groups: those who were citizens and those who were not. At first, Rome had few slaves. The city did have many women, but none of them were citizens.

The body of citizens included two groups. Most Roman citizens were plebeians (plih BEE unz). Plebeians were men who farmed, traded, and made things for a living. The second group was made up of Rome's handful of patricians (puh TRISH unz). Patricians were members of Rome's noble families. They owned large farms and had plebeians work the land for them.

### Plebeians Protest

After Rome's last king was overthrown in 509 B.C., the patricians took power. As they did this they remade the city's government. Only patricians could belong to a ruling assembly or become government leaders.

Rome's many plebeians reacted to the patricians' rules with protest. According to the Roman historian Livy,

plebeians rebelled in 494 B.C., demanding changes in the government. To calm them down, Livy wrote, the patricians sent a popular leader to speak with the plebeians. He told them this story. How do you suppose the plebeians reacted?

### MANY VOICES PRIMARY SOURCE

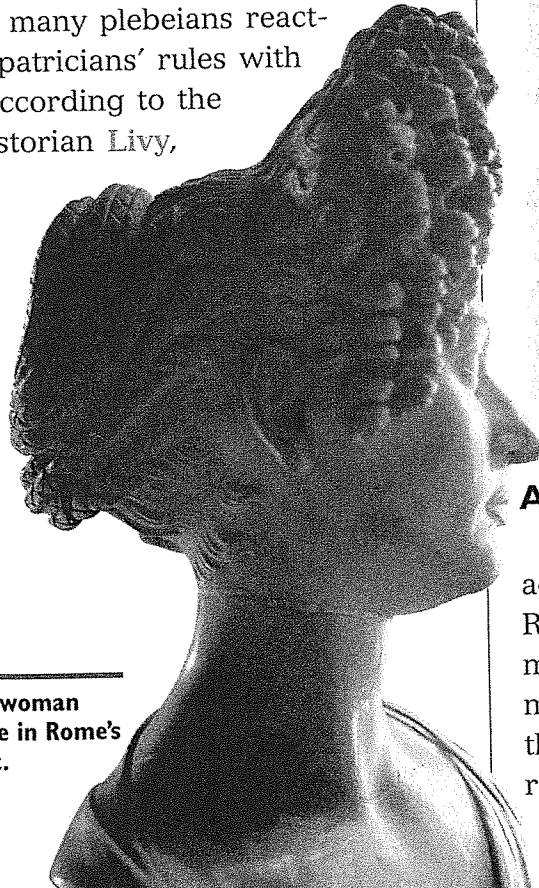
Excerpt from  
*Stories of Rome, Livy, c. 20 B.C.*

*Once upon a time, the different parts of the human body were not all in agreement. . . . And it seemed very unfair to the other parts of the body that they should worry and sweat away to look after the belly. After all, the belly just sat there . . . doing nothing, enjoying all the nice things that came along. So they hatched a plot. The hands weren't going to take food to the mouth; even if they did, the mouth wasn't going to accept it. . . . They went into a **sulk** and waited for the belly to cry for help. But while they waited, one by one all the parts of the body got weaker and weaker. The moral of this story? The belly too has its job to do. It has to be fed, but it also does feeding of its own.*

**sulk:** to be in a bad mood and stay silent

### A New Government

According to Livy both sides in time agreed to work together to improve Rome's government. The new government was called a republic, which means "public things" in Latin. Latin was the language of ancient Rome. In a republic citizens choose their leaders.



A patrician woman had no voice in Rome's government.

## GOVERNING THE REPUBLIC

Unlike in the democracy of Athens, not all Roman citizens participated in the assembly that ran their city. Instead, they elected representatives, people who acted for them.

Does this sound familiar? The government of the United States is often called a republic. Citizens elect representatives who serve in Congress or in state legislatures. Unlike in the United States, however, not all the votes of Roman citizens were equal. In Rome the more powerful a man was, the greater influence his vote had.

Rome's republic lasted for nearly 500 years. During that time, three different government branches ran the city's affairs. Each of these branches had decision-making powers that allowed it to have some control over the actions of the other branches. What were the three branches?

The oldest and most powerful branch of the republic was the Senate. The Senate was controlled by Rome's patricians. Like the Senate of the United States, the Roman Senate determined how Rome would act toward other governments. It also had control of all the money collected and spent by the Roman Republic.

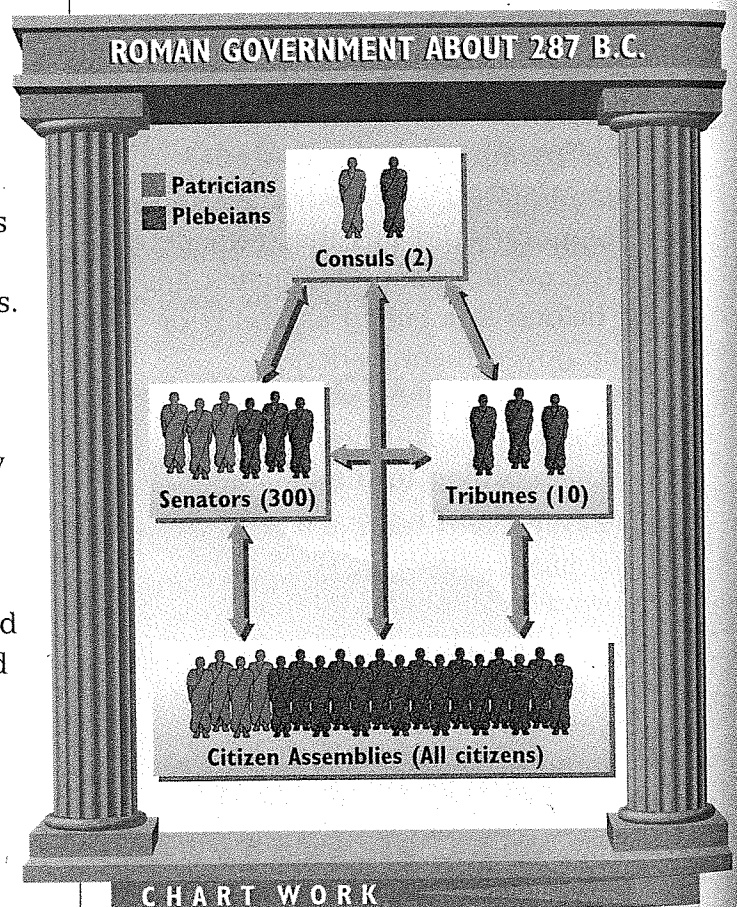
### Power for the Plebeians

To make their voices heard in Rome, plebeians formed a citizen assembly. Beginning in 494 B.C., the citizen assembly elected tribunes (trih BYOONZ) who worked to gain rights for the plebeians of Rome. The tribunes were the leaders of the large citizen assembly.

### The Consuls

Early tribunes worked to make sure plebeians got fair trials. They brought plebeian complaints before the Senate and the consuls. The consuls were the third branch of Rome's republic.

Each year the citizen assembly elected two men to become consuls. Consuls served as Rome's army commanders and the city's most powerful judges. They could order anyone to be arrested. The consuls could also propose new laws for Rome. The citizen assembly, however, could veto, or stop, any of the consuls' actions.



Both patricians and plebeians had a role in the government of Rome.

1. Which citizens served as Rome's consuls?
2. How many citizens served as Senators?
3. In which parts of government could plebeians participate?

Power in Rome was shared, if very unevenly, among the different branches of the republic. Study the chart to see how power was divided.

### **Plebeian Influence Grows**

The citizens in the assembly often met to vote in a large field along the Tiber River. The field was also the headquarters of Rome's mostly plebeian army. Rome's patricians depended heavily on the army. In its early years Rome was constantly at war.

The plebeian army protected both the city of Rome and its patrician leaders. This role gave plebeians added power to change Rome's government in an important way.

For many years patrician leaders had ruled Rome according to laws that were unwritten. Only the patrician leaders had knowledge of those laws. As a result, plebeians had no way of knowing just what was and was not against the law. If brought to court, plebeians could only hope that the patrician judges would give them a fair trial.

About 450 B.C. the plebeians protested the unfairness of Rome's unwritten

laws. Finally the patricians agreed to write a collection of laws on twelve wooden tablets, or tables. These became known as the Twelve Tables.

### **The Laws of the Republic**

Historians today know little about what the Twelve Tables actually said. They do know, though, that the laws governed everything from marriage to slavery. Plebeians could not marry patricians. People who did not pay their debts could be made slaves. Like Hammurabi's Code in Babylon, the Twelve Tables were an important step in the development of written laws.

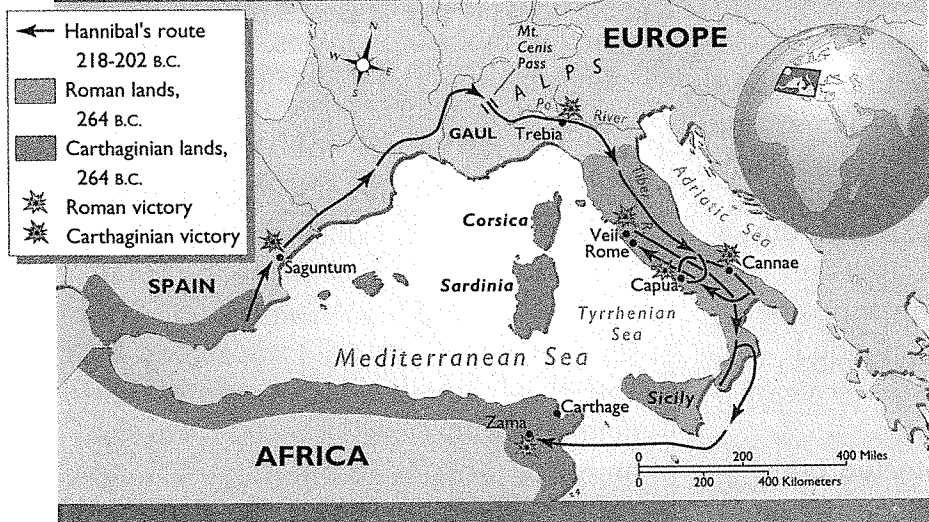
The Twelve Tables were posted in the city's crowded Forum. In the late 400s B.C. the Forum was a gravel clearing not much bigger than a soccer field. This clearing was the center of life in Rome. Here senators met and citizens pleaded their cases before judges. Women sometimes joined in the debates that took place there, hoping to influence those who could vote.

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**This painting shows a Roman trial by law. The Twelve Tables developed into a code of laws that influenced the laws of many future governments.**







The Punic Wars took place on Roman and Carthaginian lands.

1. Which body of water did Hannibal cross to reach Zama?
2. In which two cities did Roman victories take place?

## THE REPUBLIC EXPANDS

The Roman army moved out across the peninsula to conquer other areas. By 265 B.C. Rome controlled all of the Italian peninsula.

### A Rival Across the Sea

In 264 B.C. Roman soldiers landed on the island of Sicily. Their arrival sparked a long conflict with the powerful empire of Carthage. Carthage was a city based in present-day Tunisia, on the northern coast of Africa. This city controlled much of the land around the western Mediterranean, including Sicily. Since Carthage had once been a colony of Phoenicia, Romans named their conflicts with that city the Punic Wars. *Punic* comes from the Latin word for Phoenicia.

In 241 B.C., after more than 20 years of fighting, Carthage surrendered control of Sicily to Rome. Rome then seized even more of the lands controlled by Carthage. The leaders of Carthage were outraged! One general asked his son Hannibal to seek revenge. In 218 B.C., when he was 29 years old, Hannibal led an army against the forces of Rome.

### Hannibal's Plan

Hannibal came up with a daring plan. Since Rome's navy controlled the waters around Italy, he decided to attack by land. Hannibal marched from Spain to Rome with an army of about 90,000 men. He also brought elephants, which scared the Romans, who had never before seen these huge animals. In front of Hannibal, though, lay 1,000 miles of enemy territory.

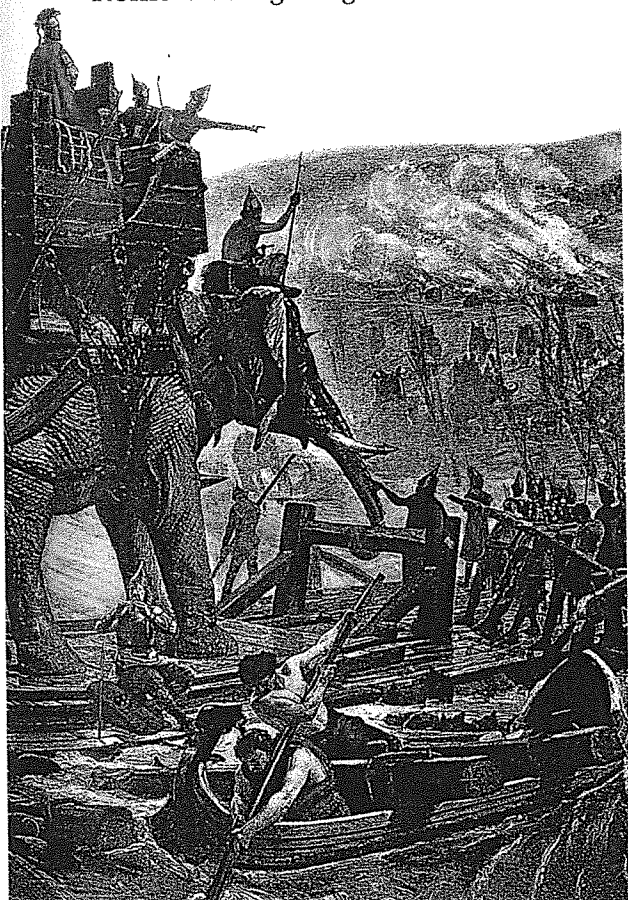
**More than 15 soldiers could ride atop one of Hannibal's elephants.**



The army from Carthage actually carried out much of this plan, though thousands died along the way. Hannibal won major battles in Italy and caused great destruction there. Hannibal's success, however, did not win victory for Carthage. In Rome a 25-year-old general, Scipio (SIHP ee oh), was elected as consul. Scipio's large army defeated Hannibal outside Carthage in the Battle of Zama in 202 B.C. The defeat of Hannibal gave Rome control over Carthage's vast territory. Rome became the most powerful nation in the Mediterranean region.

### The Changing Republic

All of these changes upset the workings of the republic. Patricians and plebeians struggled for government control. Slaves and conquered peoples revolted against their Roman leaders. Roman generals used their troops to take control of the government. By about 100 B.C. the republican government of Rome was fighting for its life.



## WHY IT MATTERS

When the Roman republic was first set up, participation was limited to those who lived in and around the city. By 100 B.C., though, the republic was huge. It extended around the Mediterranean Sea and included millions of people.

The republic would not long survive. However, the ideas about how people could govern themselves—using a Senate, a people's assembly, and elected officials—would inspire the creators of the United States government over 2,000 years later.

### Reviewing Facts and Ideas

#### SUM IT UP

- After about 509 B.C. Rome's citizens created a republic in which citizens elected leaders to run the government. Wealthy patrician citizens had more power than plebeian citizens.
- The republic of Rome was divided into three main branches—the Senate, the citizen assembly, and the consuls.
- Defeating Carthage in the Punic Wars made Rome the leading power in the Mediterranean region by 202 B.C.

#### THINK ABOUT IT

1. Describe the differences between patricians and plebeians.
2. Why was it important for Rome's laws to be written down?
3. **FOCUS** How did the struggle between the plebeians and patricians affect Roman government?
4. **THINKING SKILL** *Make conclusions* about the importance of the Punic Wars to Rome's history.
5. **WRITE** In a paragraph, explain the branches of Rome's republic.