Trajan’s Column stands as a monument to Rome’s power. Built by order of the emperor Trajan and finished in A.D. 113, it depicts scenes of the emperor’s military conquests.

Lesson 1

MAIN IDEAS

1 Government Early Rome grew from a small village to a thriving republic on the Italian peninsula.

2 Culture The Romans eventually built a large empire that spread their culture to many lands.

3 Belief Systems During the Roman Empire, a powerful new religion known as Christianity emerged.

TAKING NOTES

Reading Skill: Explaining Sequence

Placing historical events in order helps you understand relationships among events. As you read about the rise and expansion of Rome, record major events on a time line like the one shown below.

510 B.C.  A.D. 14

Skillbuilder Handbook, page R15

CALIFORNIA STANDARDS

7.1.1 Study the early strengths and lasting contributions of Rome (e.g., significance of Roman citizenship; rights under Roman law; Roman art, architecture, engineering, and philosophy; preservation and transmission of Christianity) and its ultimate internal weaknesses (e.g., rise of autonomous military powers within the empire, undermining of citizenship by the growth of corruption and slavery, lack of education, and distribution of news).

7.1.2 Discuss the geographic borders of the empire at its height and the factors that threatened its territorial cohesion.

CST 3 Students use a variety of maps and documents to identify physical and cultural features of neighborhoods, cities, states, and countries and to explain the historical migration of people, expansion and disintegration of empires, and the growth of economic systems.
The Rise and Expansion of Rome

Build on What You Know  Consider what you know about ancient Rome. Perhaps images of gladiators and chariot races come to mind. Indeed, both were part of Roman civilization. As you will read, however, Rome is most remembered for being one of the most influential empires in all of history.

The Origins of Rome

ESSENTIAL QUESTION  How did Rome begin?

Rome began near the center of what is now Italy. From about 700 to 500 B.C., the Italian peninsula was home to three groups—the Latins, the Greeks, and the Etruscans. The Latins built the original settlement of Rome on a series of hills along the Tiber River. These settlers are considered to be the first Romans.

The Geography of Rome

As the settlement of Rome grew, it benefited from a favorable environment. The region experienced cool, rainy winters that created acres of productive farmland. Meanwhile, Rome’s location near the Apennines Mountain range protected it from harsh weather. It also kept the settlement safe from easy foreign invasion. In addition, the nearby Tiber River enabled the Romans to engage in a busy and prosperous trade network throughout Italy, and later throughout the Mediterranean Sea.
A Kingdom Emerges  Historians believe that sometime during the eighth century B.C., Rome became a kingdom. For the next several centuries, a series of kings ruled over the growing Roman civilization. Many of these kings were related to the Etruscans, a powerful group from northern Italy that had a great impact on Roman culture.

The last king to rule Rome was Tarquin the Proud. He often ruled with a harsh hand. As a result, the Romans rose up in 510 B.C. and drove Tarquin from power. They refused to live under the rule of a king again. Instead, they decided to base their government largely on the will of the people.

What brought an end to the kingdom of Rome?

From Republic to Empire

ESSENTIAL QUESTION  Why did Rome change from a republic to an empire?

The Romans established a form of government known as a republic. In a republic, power rests with citizens, who vote to select their leaders. For the next 500 years, the Romans operated under a political system that serves as a model for many of today’s democratic nations.

The Roman Republic  The Romans created a government in which average citizens had a voice. To be sure, the wealthy and members of noble families wielded great influence in the Roman Republic. What’s more, Roman women had few rights. Even so, all free-born males enjoyed the right to vote. The Romans also created laws that protected basic liberties.

In addition, they worked to limit the power that one person could hold. At the head of the government were two leaders known as consuls. However, their power was limited. They could rule only for one year, and the Roman lawmaking body, the Senate, acted as a check to the consuls’ power.
In addition to their government, the Romans prided themselves on their powerful and well-organized army. And they used that army to expand their territory. The Romans eventually conquered all of what is modern-day Italy as well as other nearby lands. During a series of wars between 264 and 146 B.C., Roman forces defeated a powerful North African civilization known as Carthage. (These wars were known as the Punic Wars.) The victory gave the Romans control over much of the Mediterranean Sea.

**Decline of the Republic** As the Roman Republic grew larger and more populated, the task of maintaining order and stability became increasingly difficult. In addition, tensions arose between the different classes in Roman society. Eventually, Rome fell into a civil war, which is a conflict between different groups within a country.

In 45 B.C., a powerful Roman general named Julius Caesar brought order to Rome and named himself sole ruler. This brought an end to the Roman Republic. In 44 B.C., political opponents of Caesar killed him. A bloody power struggle followed. Caesar’s adopted son Octavian emerged as the winner and unchallenged ruler of Rome. He took the title **Augustus** (au•GUHS•tuhs), or “divine one.” His rule began an era of great growth for Rome as the empire reached the greatest extent of its size and influence.

**Rome Becomes an Empire** Under Augustus, Rome became an empire. An **empire** is a group of different cultures or territories led by a single all-powerful ruler. The ruler of an empire is known as the **emperor**. Augustus was a careful and brilliant leader. He used his power to create a strong government. The Senate continued to represent citizens’ interests, but it now had little power. During his rule, a long period of peace and prosperity began. It is known as the Pax Romana, or “Roman Peace.”

Augustus died in A.D. 14, but the policies he began enabled Rome to grow and become stronger. By the second century A.D., the Roman Empire reached its largest size. It ruled over two million square miles. Tied together by more than 50,000 miles of roads, the empire extended from Spain in the west to Mesopotamia in the east. It took in lands from Britain in the north to the Sahara in the south. Between 60 million and 100 million people lived under Roman rule. They included Celts, Germans, North Africans, Greeks, Slavs, Jews, Persians, and Egyptians.

**REVIEW** How did Rome build such a powerful empire?
The Rise of Christianity

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** How did Christianity grow so powerful?

At the height of its power, Rome was indeed a strong and influential empire. But it couldn’t control everything. One thing that Roman leaders could not contain was the spread of a new religion known as Christianity. From its emergence during the Roman Empire, Christianity would become one of the dominant religions in history and retain its great influence through today.

**Jesus and His Teachings** Christianity is the religion based on the teachings of Jesus, who is believed by Christians to be the son of God. Jesus was born in the Roman province of Judea sometime around 6 to 4 B.C. He was a member of a group known as the Jews. They practiced a religion known as Judaism. Many of Jesus’ teachings contained ideas from Judaism, including the belief in a single god. Jesus encouraged people to love God as well as their neighbors, and even to love their enemies. He also taught that God had created a kingdom in heaven for all people who followed his teachings.

Jesus began his teachings as a young adult. He achieved a great following. This troubled many Roman and Jewish leaders. They viewed him as a threat to their own power and authority. Eventually, authorities arrested Jesus and put him to death.

Jesus This 16th-century painting of Jesus healing a blind man illustrates the belief among many of his followers that Jesus had great powers.
According to Christian belief, Jesus rose from the dead and went to heaven. His followers continued to spread his teachings across the Roman Empire. Those who became Christians did so at great risk. They believed in a single god, and so refused to worship Roman gods. For that reason, Roman officials imprisoned and killed many Christians. Nonetheless, Christianity continued to spread throughout the empire.

While Christianity grew stronger, the Roman Empire itself eventually grew weaker. In the next lesson, you’ll read about the forces that led to the fall of Rome.

**REVIEW**

What were some of the main teachings of Jesus?

**Lesson Summary**

- The Romans established an early form of a republic, in which average citizens had a strong voice in government.
- Rome eventually became a large empire that spread its influence to many lands.
- Christianity emerged during the Roman era and became one of the world’s influential religions.

**Why It Matters Now . . .**

Christianity remains one of the most popular and significant religions today with some two billion followers worldwide.

**Terms & Names**

1. Explain the importance of republic, empire, Christianity
   - Augustus, emperor

**Using Your Notes**

**Explaining Sequence** Using your completed time line, answer the following question:

2. What events marked the beginning and the end of the Roman Republic? (CST 3)

   - 510 B.C.
   - A.D. 14

**Main Ideas**

3. What rights did most male citizens enjoy in the Roman Republic? (7.1.1)
4. What factors led to the Roman Empire’s growth? (7.1.2)
5. Why did Roman leaders treat Christians harshly? (HI 1)

**Critical Thinking**

6. **Drawing Conclusions** Why did the creators of the Roman Republic work to ensure that no leader became too powerful? (7.1.1)
7. **Identifying Issues and Problems** What challenges do you think came with governing an empire as large and diverse as Rome? (7.1.2)

**Internet Activity**

Use the Internet to research a town or region outside Italy that Rome ruled. Determine what Roman influences still exist there and deliver your findings in a short speech.

**INTERNET KEYWORD:** Roman Legacy (7.1.2)