Classical Rome

509 B.C.E – 476 C.E.
Roman Geography

- Geographical features allowed Rome to create a unified empire
  - Low rolling hills made for easy travel and communication
  - Fertile plains allowed for farming to support a large population
  - Access to Mediterranean Sea led to trade and travel
  - Alps Mountains to the North offered protection and made Rome easy to defend
Roman Government

• 509 BCE the Romans established a Republic
  – “res publica” or “public affairs”
  – Citizens (Assembly) voted to elect their leaders
  – Roman Republic governed by 2 Consuls and 300 Senators

• During a crisis Rome would replace the republic for 6 months with a temporary dictator
  – Given total control of the military and law making process
Roman Social Classes and Laws

- Rome had two social classes
  - Patricians: Upper class
  - Plebeians: Lower class
- The Twelve Tables were Rome’s written laws which gave equal protection to all Romans
- The Tribunes were an assembly of plebeians that represent the lower class in the government
  - Tribunes had the power to veto Consuls and Senators
Julius Caesar

- Rome’s empire expanded beyond Italy after defeating Carthage in the Punic Wars
- The larger empire required professional soldiers to replace the citizen soldiers
- Julius Caesar emerged as Rome’s most popular and successful general
  - Strong, smart, brave, ambitious
- Caesar defeated his rival Pompey in a Civil War and returned to Rome a conquering hero
- Romans named Caesar dictator for life in 46 BCE
Assassination of Julius Caesar & Augustus and the *Pax Romana*

- Caesar began many reforms in Rome which made him very popular with the Roman people
  - Gave people citizenship, jobs, land, and more money to soldiers
- Roman senators became jealous of Caesar’s power and popularity and assassinated him hoping to bring back the Republic
- Caesar’s nephew Octavian (Augustus) replaced Julius Caesar and became Rome’s first emperor
- Augustus began the *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace), Rome’s Golden Age which lasted from 27 BCE – 180 CE

“Beware the Ides of March”
March 15, 44 BCE
Sculpture and Art

- Roman art was realistic, practical, and educational depicting Rome’s history
- Bas-relief sculpture
  - Carved into background to create a three-dimensional image
- Frescoes
  - Water based paints on wet plaster
- Mosaics
  - Created with small pieces of colored stones, glass, or tiles

Trajan’s Column 106 – 113 CE
128 feet high; 650 foot band of sculpture
Philosophy - Stoicism

- Roman philosophers Cicero, Seneca, and Emperor Marcus Aurelius were influenced by the Greeks.
- Romans invented the philosophy known as stoicism:
  - Purpose of life is happiness
  - Emphasize virtue, duty, moderation, and endurance
  - Show very little emotion

Anger is the beginning of madness
~ Marcus Tullius Cicero~

"Very little is needed to make a happy life; it is all within yourself in your way of thinking."
~ Marcus Aurelius
Literature and Language

- Epic poems written by Virgil
  - *Aeneid* tells the story of the Trojan Prince who built Rome
- History recorded by Tacitus
  - Accurate reporting of facts to record the good and bad of the Roman Empire
- Latin Language
  - Used as the official language of the Catholic church
  - Basis for the romance languages (French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Romanian)
  - Basis for half of English words
Architecture

Arches capable of withstanding much heavier weights than beams

Domes which allowed for the creation of large and well defined interior spaces

Concrete incorporating volcanic ash making it the most durable form of cement
The Colosseum

- From the Latin colossus or “gigantic”
- Built 72 – 81 CE by Emperor Vespasian
- Held 50,000 spectators
- 157 feet high, 620 feet long, 80 entrances
- Built of stone and concrete
- Velarium: retractable canvas awnings shielded spectators from sun and rain
- Hypogeum: underground tunnels, 32 animal pens, and 36 trap doors
- Free tickets - made of pottery - but seating based on social rankings
  - Actors, grave diggers, former gladiators not allowed to attend
- 500,000 gladiators and over 1 million animals killed in the “games”
  - 11,000 animals and 10,000 gladiators killed in 123 day period in 107 CE

Gladiators had no rights
Engineering

Arch Bridges connected Roman cities, ports, and mines

Aqueducts brought fresh water to Roman cities. Cleanliness contributed to Roman feelings of superiority over other cultures

2,000 miles of roads built throughout empire for transport of military, along with trade and travel of citizens
Roman Law

- Roman laws contained many of the legal principles found in modern day law
  - Equal treatment under the law
  - Innocent until proven guilty
  - Burden of proof lies with the accuser not the accused
  - Only actions – not thoughts – are punishable
  - Unreasonable laws set aside
Decline of Classical Rome

- Economic problems due to inflation
  - Coins made with less silver decreasing their value
- Agriculture problems led to food shortage
  - Land was either overworked, destroyed in war, or abandoned by farmers to avoid taxes
- Military problems with loss of loyalty to the Roman Empire
  - Soldiers only loyal to their generals
  - Mercenaries fight only for money
- Political problems and loss of patriotism
  - Corruption and expenses leave most Romans unwilling or unable to serve
- End of expansion meant no new sources of wealth or slave labor