Short Lessons in World History

FOURTH EDITION

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WALCH EDUCATION
# CONTENTS

*Purpose of the Book* .................................................. ix
*Maps Help Us Understand World History* .......................... xi
*List of Maps* ............................................................. xv

## The First Civilized People ............................................ 1
- Introduction ......................................................... 1
- The People of Sumer ................................................ 1
- The Land of the Nile ............................................... 3
- Early African Civilizations ....................................... 6
- Who Else Lived Near Egypt and Sumer? ......................... 6
- Hammurabi ........................................................... 8
- China and India Begin .............................................. 9

## Greece and Rome ...................................................... 14
- Introduction ......................................................... 14
- The Early Greeks .................................................. 15
- Greece’s Golden Age ............................................... 16
- Pericles .............................................................. 22
- The Rise of Rome .................................................. 23
- Rome Becomes Great ............................................... 23
- Rome’s Decline ..................................................... 27

## Empires and Civilizations Around the World ...................... 29
- Introduction ......................................................... 29
- Christian and Muslim Empires .................................. 30
- India, China, and Japan .......................................... 31
- African Empires Prosper ......................................... 33
- Civilizations in the Americas ................................... 34
- Montezuma .......................................................... 35
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Middle Ages</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dark Ages and Feudalism</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlemagne</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knights of the Middle Ages</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Church Grows More Powerful</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The End of Feudalism in Europe</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings and Nations Gain Power</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Begins Again in Europe</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Renaissance and the Reformation</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan of Arc</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Europe’s Power Grows Greater</strong></td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe Explores the World</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ships Used in Exploration</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe—A Continent at War</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine the Great</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revolutions!</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Beginnings of the Modern World</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Industrial Revolution</strong></td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machines and Factories</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain and the Growing Industrial Revolution</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money and Wealth</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Changes</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Conditions and Labor Unions</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Results of the Industrial Revolution</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialism and Communism</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence Nightingale</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empire Building and War</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empire Building</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Meets West</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe in Africa</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Start a War</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The World at War</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Plan for Peace</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Was Not a Solution</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia After the Revolution</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe After the War</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Time of Change</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The End of World Peace</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winston Churchill</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another Chance for World Peace</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communism and the Cold War</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cold War and the Iron Curtain</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different Brands of Communism</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communism in Asia</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Again!</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War in Vietnam</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Middle East ................................. 120
Introduction .................................. 121
Israel ........................................... 121
Iran ............................................. 127
Iraq ............................................. 128
Afghanistan .................................. 131
Lebanon ...................................... 134
Jordan ........................................ 135
Saudi Arabia ................................. 136

Africa ........................................... 138
Introduction .................................. 138
Redrawing the Map of Africa ............ 139
Ethiopia ....................................... 140
The Congo and Angola .................... 140
South Africa ................................. 141
Zimbabwe ..................................... 142
African Nations with Old Problems .... 143
Is Peace Only a Dream? ................. 146

Asia ........................................... 149
Introduction .................................. 149
China .......................................... 150
Korea .......................................... 151
India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh ....... 153
Indira Gandhi ................................. 154
Vietnam ....................................... 155
Japan and Southeast Asia ............... 156

Europe and the Former Soviet Union 160
Introduction .................................. 161
Developments in Western Europe ...... 161
Developments in Eastern Europe ..... 165
Europe of Today ............................ 167
The Americas and Today’s World ........................................ 171

Introduction ............................................................... 171
Danger, Drugs, and Democracy in Latin America ............. 172
Developments in the United States and Canada ............... 175
Technology and the Space Age ...................................... 178
The Future: Promises and Problems ............................... 179

Glossary ................................................................. 183
Answer Key .............................................................. 197
INTRODUCTION

Two great civilizations began near the Mediterranean Sea. Greece came first; Rome followed. Much of Western civilization today has been strongly influenced by the things these people learned and did many years ago.

The people of these two civilizations had many great ideas. They also made some mistakes. When you are reading about these people, watch for both. Learning about mistakes that the Greeks and Romans made 2,000 years ago and more might keep us from repeating them.
The Early Greeks

When trading ships sailed from Egypt and Phoenicia, they often stopped at the island of Crete. This large island in the Mediterranean Sea was where one of the greatest nations in the ancient world began. It is known as the Minoan civilization, after the legendary king, Minos. Ships from Crete carried goods to other settlements along the Mediterranean. Minoan sailors observed the customs and ways of other nations. They remembered useful ideas and took them home.

It was not long before the Minoans developed their own kind of writing. They learned to make pottery and used new ideas to improve it. They learned to work with gold and ivory. Their jewelry was popular everywhere.

Just as the Phoenicians had done, the Minoans started colonies around the Mediterranean. Some of their colonies were in Greece, which later became the center of one of the greatest civilizations in the world. The people of Crete did well trading, and they prospered. The way of life they created vanished around 1400 B.C.E. for unknown reasons.

Critical Thinking

Why did Crete have a large navy but almost no army?

By about 1000 B.C.E., the Dorians from Greece were using iron weapons and had become very strong. During the Dorian age, people forgot how to write. They passed down stories and myths by oral storytelling.

Just like Sumer, Crete and Greece began with city governments. Greece is on a peninsula with many mountains. These mountains divide the country into small areas. Each city had its own government and army. Some Greek rulers were kind, and some were harsh. Many Greek rulers forced the farmers to pay high taxes. Those who could not pay sometimes lost their land and were sold as slaves.

Some Greek states, such as Sparta, became very warlike. Men and boys in Sparta were trained to be soldiers able to withstand great hardships. Boys began military training when they were seven and stayed in the army until they were about thirty. The word Spartan today means “disciplined” or “simple to the point of being uncomfortable.”

Athens, another Greek state, started a kind of government called a democracy. Every voter helped rule the city. Free Athenian men over eighteen years old could vote. Women, children, foreigners, and slaves could not vote in Athens. Even so, the government of Athens was something like today’s democratic government in the United States.
GREECE’S GOLDEN AGE

About 500 B.C.E., Greece went to war against Persia. Athens eventually defeated Persia and began to change in a number of ways. The result is known as the Golden Age of Greece. Greece developed a rich culture during this time.

Nearly 200 city-states turned to Athens for leadership. Just as Sumer had brought city-states together, so did Athens. Athens protected smaller city-states and for a time was the center of one of the most advanced civilizations the world had ever known.

Laws were written out, and everyone knew what they were. People who owed money could not be sold as slaves. The rich no longer took land forcibly from the poor. A powerful navy protected Greece from other nations. Greek merchants sailed, looking for trade.

Under the leadership of Athens, life in Greece became better and better. Greek schools improved, and such things as reading, math, music, and sports were taught to boys. Girls did not attend public school.

Great thinkers, called philosophers, began to teach. Philosopher means “lover of wisdom.” Socrates was a philosopher who thought one could discover the truth by asking the correct questions. Other philosophers set up plans for government or studied science and medicine.

The Greeks built beautiful marble buildings in Athens. Statues we still wonder at today were carved during this time. Plays written and performed for the people of Athens are still read and enjoyed today. Other Greek authors wrote poetry, social commentary, and books on education.

The Olympic Games started during this time. Every four years, athletes from all over Greece took part in running, jumping, wrestling, and other sports. If sports were ever more popular than they are today, it must have been in ancient Greece.

The people relied on the gods for help. The Greeks thought of their gods very much as people. Greek gods were supposed to have fought one another and to have had fun, just like the humans they controlled.

Life during Greece’s Golden Age was wonderful if you were a rich citizen of Athens. However, slaves were not as well off. Many suffered from overwork. Only a few were able to buy their freedom and become citizens. Women had few rights. The poor worked hard and had few pleasures.

Once again, war changed things. The people of Athens had learned to enjoy a cultured life and good government, but Sparta had stayed warlike. Finally, war broke out between the two city-states. It took Sparta twenty-seven years to defeat Athens. Both states were left so weak they could no longer defend themselves against outsiders. The Golden Age of Greece was ending.
Soon after Athens and Sparta fought, a neighbor to the north began taking over the Greek city-states. Philip, king of Macedonia, a region north of Greece, finally controlled all of Greece. His son, Alexander, took over the army when Philip died. By the time Alexander died at 32, he had conquered most of the world he knew about. From Greece to Egypt to India, Alexander the Great ruled.

Alexander had many good ideas. He thought people from different nations should marry each other as a way of keeping peace among nations. People from all religions were welcome in his army and his empire. He set up a system of money so all parts of his kingdom could trade easily. He wanted people to be well educated. His own teacher had been Aristotle, a philosopher from Athens. Aristotle’s teacher was Plato, and Plato was a student of Socrates, the great thinker we learned about earlier. During and after Alexander’s time, Greek men learned much about astronomy and mathematics.

Despite Alexander’s plans, his kingdom did not last. When he died, his kingdom was divided. Greece’s Golden Age had ended. Also, the time had come when Greece itself would no longer be free.

**CRITICAL THINKING**

Some civilizations had great cultures. Many of these civilizations were destroyed in war. Can nations today learn lessons from the defeats of past civilizations?

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**CRITICAL THINKING**

Name several things that Athens and the United States have in common. List a few differences.

**PUZZLE: ANCIENT GREECE**

Each description that follows has a one-word answer. The lines following each clue stand for the letters in the answer. One letter in each answer is already in place. Write the rest of each answer on the lines provided.

1. an island nation in the Mediterranean Sea     __ __ E __ __
2. a warlike city-state in Greece                __ __ __ __ T __
3. a famous Greek thinker, or philosopher       __ __ __ __ A __ __ __
4. a powerful nation north of Greece            __ __ __ __ __ O __ __ __
5. a Greek state where democracy began          __ __ __ __ E __ __
6. the Macedonian king who conquered all Greece __ __ __ __ I __
7. the king of Macedonia who ruled the world    __ __ __ __ A __ __ __
8. the athletic games held every four years in Greece __ __ __ __ __ I __
9. The time when Greece was at its best is often called this. __ O __ __ __ __ __ __ __
10. a nation that Macedonia defeated __ __ E __ __ __

**MAP REVIEW: ANCIENT GREECE**

Answer these questions with the help of the map on page 19. Write your answer on the line provided.

When you have answered all the questions, try to locate the places again in the word search on page 20. Circle each name in the word search. The words can go up, down, across, or backward. Be careful! They can be tricky.

1. Five different seas are shown on the map. Look carefully at each one. Which is the smallest?
2. Which sea is in the northwestern corner of the map?
3. A narrow channel, or strait, separates the Black Sea from the Sea of Marmara. What is the name of this strait?
4. If you travel from the Aegean Sea to the Sea of Marmara, you go through a narrow channel, or strait. This strait is called the Dardanelles today. What did the Greeks call it?
5. Most of Asia Minor was not controlled by Greece. What power did control Asia Minor?
6. The Olympic Games are held every four years. They were first held in Greece. In which city did the Olympic Games start? Use its name as a clue.
7. The city of Sparta was on a peninsula. What is the name of this peninsula?
8. South of Greece is a large island. What is the island’s name?
9. West of Greece is part of another peninsula. What is the name of this peninsula?
10. When people from Athens traveled to the city of Troy, they crossed a sea. What is the name of this sea?
Now, here is the word search. Can you find and circle the answers in it?

ESSASETETOQUIAO
SERNWRHESTONP
WADRATICSEA
ROTDIECBKTRD
TFNRTGACWASS
FMIAEOALPUE
WAPIITALIANRU
BRSECNYTOOR
CMESISMATAPO
NALTAEPPEIS
ERLIAIARSOS
IAEANCAICRBU
ATHUSTTEEPR
TPERSIANPOSO
PELOPONNESSUS

**MAP REVIEW: ALEXANDER THE GREAT**

Follow Alexander the Great in his conquests. Answer the following about Alexander on the lines provided. You can find the answers either on the map on page 21 or in the reading.

1. Alexander was born in the country of Macedonia. (Find Macedonia on the map.) South of Macedonia is the country of _______________. Two important Greek cities shown on the map are _______________ and _______________.

2. After capturing Greece, Alexander moved into Asia Minor. What body of water is north of Asia Minor? _______________. What country controlled Asia Minor until Alexander took it away? _______________.

3. The empire of Persia lay between a sea and a gulf. What are the names of these two bodies of water? _______________ and _______________.
4. While Alexander was conquering Persia, he also captured two of the areas where civilization first started. These two river valleys around Persia were the _________________ on the east and the _________________ on the west. Both of these, as well as Persia, are on the continent of ________________.

5. After defeating Persia, Alexander conquered a third ancient civilization. This one developed west of the Red Sea, along the _________________ River. This civilization was called _________________.

6. Macedonia is on the continent of Europe. Alexander controlled land on how many continents? ________________ These continents are named ________________, ________________, and ________________.

7. The mountains that stretch from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea are called the _________________.

Alexander’s Empire
Pericles was born in Athens, Greece, about 495 B.C.E. His father was a famous warrior. His mother was the niece of a famous statesman named Cleisthenes.

Cleisthenes brought many democratic reforms to Athens. He had given the assembly and courts the power to govern. Pericles wanted to continue these reforms. He joined the popular party and began his work.

In 463 B.C.E., Pericles was a state prosecutor who helped try Cimon, a powerful general. Cimon wanted Athens to join with its enemy, Sparta. Pericles lost the trial but became famous among the people of Athens.

Pericles helped the people gain power by giving power to the Council of Five Hundred, the popular court, and the assembly. When the party leader was killed, Pericles took his place.

Pericles was elected one of the ten generals of Athens. Each year for nearly thirty years, he was reelected.

Pericles brought about changes in the government of Athens. He decided government officers should be paid. This meant poor people could afford to hold office.

Pericles' goal was to make Athens a powerful democracy. Athens had a strong navy, but Pericles wanted it to have a strong army as well. Pericles started a series of wars to gain more land. He did not always win. As a result, Cimon took charge of the armics. Cimon defeated Persia in 449 B.C.E. and died soon afterward.

Three years later Athens signed a thirty-year peace treaty with Sparta. This gave Athens control of a league of Greek cities that joined together for trade. Pericles used money from the league to build up the navy and make Athens beautiful. The Parthenon was built at this time.

War with Sparta came in 431 B.C.E. Much of the land around Athens was lost. Then a year later, a plague broke out and killed many people. Pericles was blamed for the troubles of Athens and removed from power.

He was reelected the next year but did not rule long. Pericles died of the plague soon after his reelection.
THE RISE OF ROME

Alexander the Great had planned to march west to Italy after he finished with Persia. He died before this plan was carried out. Instead, armies from Italy marched east and took over much of the land Alexander had ruled.

Italy had been settled by people from the north, from Asia Minor, and from Greece. The northerners were called Latins. They learned much from other peoples. They worshiped the Greek gods, though they gave these gods new names. They modeled their writing and government after the Greeks. The people of Asia Minor taught them to build good roads. All these things helped the people of Italy.

As in other parts of the world, the Italian peninsula was dotted with many city-states. The city of Rome was more powerful than any other. Because it was built on seven hills, it was protected from its enemies. It used this safety to become a center of trade for most of Italy. By 270 B.C.E., Rome had taken control of most of the other city-states. It made these cities pay taxes to Rome and supply soldiers for Rome’s army. In return, Rome protected them from attack by other nations.

Rome began to look for more lands to control. War broke out between Rome and Carthage in northern Africa. Carthage had been a Phoenician colony and had become strong. This war lasted off and on for sixty-two years. They are called the Punic Wars. Finally Rome destroyed Carthage and was on its way to becoming more powerful. During the seventy-five years that followed, Rome fought and defeated Macedonia, Spain, and Greece. Roman rule went as far as Asia Minor and Egypt. The Hebrew nation of Palestine also became part of the Roman Empire.

When Rome captured an area, it was made a province. This meant that Rome governed it and received tax money and soldiers from that area. Many Romans in government used this tax money for their own good and became very wealthy. These wealthy people then bought large farms and used slaves to do the work. In this way, they became even wealthier. As more and more slaves were used for work, the poor people could not find jobs. This soon led to troubles for Rome.

ROME BECOMES GREAT

One of Rome’s many accomplishments was a new kind of government. The people of Rome formed a republic. As in Greece, the wealthy people had the most to say about government. They elected the men who formed the Senate. These lawmakers, called senators, were elected for life. The senators also chose two consuls to rule Rome for a year at a time.
At first, the poor people had little say in the government of Rome. Finally, a plan was worked out to include the common people. They could choose two tribunes to represent them. If the tribunes felt a law was bad for the common people, they could turn it down, no matter what the Senate said. The tribunes also had the laws written down so everyone knew just what they were.

Most tribunes tried hard to help the people. Sometimes, though, when a tribune tried too hard, members of the Senate would have him murdered. One famous tribune killed himself when he heard the plans for his murder.

Roman schools were an improvement over those of other nations. They helped to carry on the knowledge of the Greeks. They also encouraged new ideas. These schools trained boys to become lawyers, bookkeepers, and government workers. Boys stayed in school until they were sixteen. Even girls went to school until the age of thirteen. Education helped Rome become great.

Romans and all the people they conquered spoke the Latin language. Many modern languages, such as French, Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese, are strongly related to Latin. For many hundreds of years, Latin was the language used by writers all over Europe.

HANNIBAL

Hannibal was a general from Carthage. During the Punic Wars, Hannibal decided to take a small force and invade Italy. The army crossed the towering mountains of the Alps with elephants! They wiped out a Roman force and won other victories but could not take Rome.

Rome became great for other reasons as well. Roman law spread over all the world the Romans knew. The Roman calendar was better than older calendars and remained in use for over a thousand years. Rome followed the example of Persia and made roads connecting all parts of the empire. Some of these roads are still used even though they are 2,000 years old. Many Roman buildings still stand, too. Roman aqueducts for carrying water from the mountains to the cities are still bringing water to thirsty people in Rome today.

CRITICAL THINKING

The Romans used ideas from other cultures. They also came up with fresh ideas. How did they blend the past and present to make their nation strong?
CROSSWORD PUZZLE: THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Use the map on page 26 and the clues below to write the correct answers in the puzzle.

Across
1. This ocean is west of the country of Gaul.
4. This continent is south of the Mediterranean Sea.
8. This river in Africa starts in the south and flows north to empty into the Mediterranean Sea.
11. The Roman Empire controlled only half of this large island off the northern coast of Europe.
12. Which of these controlled the most land: the Roman Republic or the Empire?
14. This body of water was surrounded by the Roman Empire.
15. This narrow channel separates Spain from Africa.

Down
1. This chain of mountains runs along the Italian peninsula.
2. This famous Greek city-state is shown on the map.
3. This city-state was south of the island of Sardinia and was destroyed by Rome.
4. These mountains lie between Italy and Gaul.
5. This city was the center of the Roman Empire.
6. This sea lies between Italy and Greece.
7. This peninsula lies south of the Black Sea.
9. This large island is south of Greece.
10. Most of the Roman Empire lies on this continent.
11. The Danube River flows into this body of water.
13. This is one of the rivers near the northern border of the Roman Empire.

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Roman Empire

Key:
- Roman Republic 265 B.C.
- Roman Empire A.D. 120
- Mountains

Countries and Regions:
- Asia Minor
- Greece
- Italy
- Spain
- Gaul
- Africa
- Britain
- Sicily
- Sardinia
- Nile R.

Cities and Regions:
- Athens
- Rome
- Black Sea
- Rhine R.
- Strait of Gibraltar
- Strait of Messina
- Adriatic Sea
- Mediterranean Sea
- Alps

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ROME'S DECLINE

Rome started to have troubles while it was still growing. Romans began to use more and more slaves to do their work. Because of this, many unemployed people became angry about the lack of jobs. The government of Rome set up a large welfare system. It provided food for the hungry. To keep these people from thinking about their problems, the government set up free public entertainment. This entertainment was most likely to be a chariot race or an afternoon of fights in the arena.

The arena fighters were called gladiators. Often they were strong slaves trained to fight. A gladiator had a good reason for wanting to win—if he lost, he might well be killed. Gladiators fought each other or wild animals.

During this time, Rome was growing. Under the great general Julius Caesar, its armies had won Gaul and marched and sailed as far as Britain. These two areas are now called France and the United Kingdom, but for many years they were just provinces in the Roman Empire.

Julius Caesar took over Rome’s government. Like many men before and after him, Julius Caesar found that good generals are not always popular politicians. He passed many laws to help the poor. When the wealthy Romans thought he had done too much for the poor, they had him killed.

Augustus followed Julius Caesar as Rome’s ruler. He was careful not to anger the Senate too much. Instead, he worked out a better plan of government for the Roman Empire. He tried hard to make government honest and helpful to the people. The empire was fairly stable for about 200 years after this.

During this time, a new religion, Christianity, had its beginnings in the Hebrew nation of Palestine. Jesus of Nazareth preached his beliefs among the people there. The Romans ruled Palestine. A Roman court ordered Jesus put to death, and Roman soldiers carried out the court’s order.

After the death of Jesus, his followers spread his teachings. Many Romans felt Christianity offered them more than did their gods. Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire. Roman leaders killed many early Christians, yet the nation of Rome finally adopted Christianity as its official religion.

Even though things seemed pretty good, Rome was weakening. The Romans had too many slaves and had grown lazy. Far too many people were on welfare or were supported by the government. The Roman rulers spent too much money on armies, and they raised taxes too high in order to pay for the cost of the armies and the government. In order to raise more money, the government started mixing copper with the silver in its coins.

CRITICAL THINKING

Rome was extremely powerful. Yet it grew weak and was destroyed. What lessons could modern nations learn from Rome?

The Roman Empire was divided into two parts. The eastern part lasted a thousand years longer than did the western part. By 476 C.E., the western part...
had been destroyed. Fierce tribes of warlike people from the north invaded. The Visigoths and the Vandals finally destroyed the city of Rome itself. These tribes had not been part of the Roman Empire. They ended the great Roman Empire because Rome had become weak and lazy.

**PUZZLE: THE ROMAN EMPIRE**

The nine questions below all have their answers hidden in the word search. Some of the answers are written across, up, down, or even backward. Some cross each other. Can you find all nine answers? Write each answer on the line provided after the question. Then circle each answer in the word search.

L J U L I U S C A E S A R
A P A O E S T R I B U N E
T O D S C E D S L A V E S
I P G V A N D A L S U S N
N E B G L A D I A T O R S
C H R I S T I A N I T Y T
F A R A I E G A H T R A C

1. What language did Romans speak? ________________
2. What great Roman general captured Gaul? ________________
3. What African state did Rome fight? ________________
4. What new religion came to Rome after the death of Jesus? ________________
5. **Vandalism** means “destruction of property.” The origin of this word comes from a German tribe. What is the name of that tribe? ________________
6. What was the name of the Roman lawmaking group that was elected for life? ________________
7. What name was given to a man chosen to represent the common people in Rome’s government? ________________
8. What word means “professional fighter”? ________________
9. What group of people did much of the work in Rome? ________________

**CRITICAL THINKING**

The Roman leaders gave the poor “bread and circuses” to keep them happy. What does this mean?

**tribe**—a group of semi-independent communities that occupy a common territory and are related by bonds of kinship, language, culture, values, and traditions

**invade**—to enter another nation’s territory by force