

**READING ESSENTIALS AND STUDY GUIDE 9-2**

**The Fall of Rome** *For use with pages 317–326*

**Key Terms**

**plague:** a deadly disease that spreads fast and kills many people (page 319)

**inflation:** prices that rise quickly (page 319)

**barter:** to exchange goods and services without using money (page 319)

**reform:** political change to make things better (page 320)

**Drawing From Experience**

Think about why sports teams sometimes lose games. Someone might not be able to play. The other team might be better. People make silly mistakes. Most of the time there are a couple of reasons that a team loses.

In the previous section, you learned about life in Rome and how its people accomplished many things in art, science, and engineering. In this section, you will learn about the problems Rome experienced and why the Roman Empire fell.

**Organizing Your Thoughts**

Many things led to the fall of the Roman Empire. Use the reading to help you fill in the boxes with reasons that the empire fell.

<b>1.</b>	+	<b>2.</b>	+	<b>3.</b>	+	
<b>4.</b>	+	<b>5.</b>	=	<b>Fall of the Roman Empire</b>		

**READING ESSENTIALS AND STUDY GUIDE 9-2 (continued)****The Decline of Rome** (*pages 318–320*)

**Main Idea** Poor leadership, a declining economy, and attacks by Germanic tribes weakened the Roman Empire.

Marcus Aurelius died in A.D. 180. He was the last of the “good emperors.” His son, Commodus, became emperor. Commodus was cruel and wasted money. In A.D. 192 the emperor’s bodyguard killed him.

After Commodus, a new group of emperors ruled Rome. They were named the Severans. People rebelled many times while the Severans were rulers. The Severans paid the army well, so they stayed in power. But the Severans did not deal with the reasons why people were rebelling. They ignored the empire’s growing crime and poverty.

**Political and Social Problems** The last Severan ruler died in A.D. 235. Then army leaders fought for the throne. In 50 years, Rome had 22 different emperors.

Rome had many other problems. Government officials took bribes. Many wealthy citizens stopped paying taxes. Fewer people went to school. Wealthy Romans supported slavery because it was a cheap way to get work done.

**Economic and Military Problems** Rome’s economy began to fall apart. Law and order broke down. Roman soldiers and invaders seized crops. They destroyed fields. Farmers grew less food. People went hungry.

People bought fewer things. Artisans made less. Shopkeepers lost money. People lost their jobs. Many workers had to leave jobs and serve in the army.

Then came the **plague**. A plague is a disease that spreads quickly. The plague killed one out of every ten people in the empire.

Rome also faced **inflation**. During inflation, prices go up very quickly. Money loses its value. How does money lose its value? As you just read, the rich were not paying

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taxes. The bad economy meant that other people had no money to pay taxes. So, the government had less tax money to spend. But the government still needed to pay for things. It needed to pay soldiers and the people who built things.

The government started making coins with less gold in them. But people soon learned that the coins did not have as much gold in them. The coins began losing value. Prices went up. Many people stopped using money. They **bartered** for things. Barter means to trade goods without using money.

Then Germanic tribes raided the western empire. Persian armies attacked the eastern empire. Soon the government did not have enough soldiers. The Roman government tried using Germanic warriors, but they were not loyal to Rome.

**What Were Diocletian's Reforms?** In A.D. 284 General Diocletian became emperor. He made **reforms** to stop the empire's decline, or fall. Reforms are political changes to make things better.

Diocletian divided the empire into four parts. He named officials to rule these areas, but he ruled all four sections. He also tried to fix the economy. He set the prices of goods. He set wages. He also told workers to keep the same jobs until they died.

Diocletian's reforms failed. People ignored his rules, and he could not make them obey.

**Who Was Constantine?** Diocletian retired in A.D. 305. Seven years later, General **Constantine** became emperor. Constantine made some new rules to help the economy. He said that the sons of workers had to do what their fathers did. The sons of farmers had to farm the same land their fathers worked. The sons of soldiers had to serve in the army.

**READING ESSENTIALS AND STUDY GUIDE 9-2 (continued)**

Constantine's changes did not stop the empire's decline in the west. So Constantine moved the capital away from Rome. He moved the capital east, to the old city of Byzantium. He rebuilt the city and called it Constantinople. Today, Constantinople is called Istanbul.

6. How did Diocletian try to reverse the decline of Rome?

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## Rome Falls *(pages 322–324)*

**Main Idea** Rome finally fell when invaders swept through the empire during the A.D. 400s.

Constantine died in A.D. 337. Fighting broke out again. Theodosius finally gained control and ended the fighting. He decided that the empire should be split into two. When he died in A.D. 395, it was split into the Western Roman Empire with its capital at Rome and the Eastern Roman Empire with its capital at Constantinople.

**Rome Is Invaded** As Rome declined, it could not keep out the Germanic tribes. There were many Germanic groups—Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Vandals, Angles, and Saxons. They came from northern Europe.

These tribes wanted warmer climates and better land for their cattle. They also liked Rome's wealth and culture. In addition, they were fleeing the Huns, warriors from Asia.

In the late A.D. 300s, the Huns entered Eastern Europe. They beat the Ostrogoths. The Visigoths asked the Eastern Roman emperor for protection. He let them settle just inside the empire's border. In return they promised to be loyal to Rome.

**READING ESSENTIALS AND STUDY GUIDE 9-2 (continued)**

The Visigoths and Romans soon started fighting. The empire made the Visigoths pay very high prices for food. The Romans also enslaved many Visigoths.

The Visigoths rebelled. In A.D. 378 they defeated Roman legions at the Battle of Adrianople. Rome had to give land to the Visigoths.

More and more Germanic warriors came into the Roman Empire for land. In the winter of A.D. 406, the Rhine River in Western Europe froze. Germanic groups crossed the frozen river into Gaul (France). The Romans were too weak to keep them out.

In A.D. 410, the Visigoths captured Rome. They were led by **Alaric**. It was the first time Rome had been conquered in 800 years.

The Vandals—another Germanic group—overran Spain and northern Africa. They enslaved some Roman landowners. They drove others away. Then the Vandals sailed to Italy. In A.D. 455 they entered Rome. They stole and burned Rome for 12 days. The English word *vandalism* comes from these attacks. *Vandalism* means “the willful destruction of property.”

**Rome Falls** By the mid-A.D. 400s, several Germanic leaders held high posts in Rome’s government and army. In A.D. 476 a Germanic general named Odoacer threw out the western emperor. The emperor was a 14-year-old boy named Romulus Augustulus. Romulus Augustulus was the last emperor to rule from Rome. Historians say that this event was the end of the Western Roman Empire.

Odoacer controlled Rome for almost 15 years. Then a group of Visigoths took over. They killed Odoacer. They set up a kingdom in Italy under their leader, Theodoric. Other Germanic tribes set up kingdoms in Europe, too.

By A.D. 550, the Western Roman Empire was gone. But people still did things in Roman ways. For example, Germanic rulers spoke and wrote in Latin. They used Roman laws. They were also Christians.

**READING ESSENTIALS AND STUDY GUIDE 9-2 (continued)**

The Western Roman Empire had fallen. But the Eastern Roman Empire prospered. It became known as the Byzantine Empire and lasted nearly 1,000 more years.

7. Which event usually marks the fall of the Western Roman Empire?
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## The Legacy of Rome *(pages 325–326)*

**Main Idea** Rome passed on many achievements in government, law, language, and the arts.

Our world would be very different if the Roman Empire had never existed. Many words in the English language come from the Romans. Many of our ideas about government, laws, and building come from the Romans, too. As you will read in the next chapter, Roman rule led to peace and order. This let the Christian religion spread.

**Roman Ideas and Government Today** As you read earlier, the Romans first wrote their laws on the Twelve Tables. We still use those ideas today. For example, we believe that all people are equal under the law. We expect our judges to be fair. We think that people are innocent until they are proven guilty.

We use Roman ideas about government and citizenship, too. The U.S. is a republic made up of equal citizens. We think that that is the best form of government. We also think that people should vote and do their duty. We think that people should try to make society better.

**Roman Influence on Culture** Today, we use the Latin alphabet in most of the Western world. Many modern languages—Italian, Spanish, French—come from Latin. Many English words come from Latin, too. Scientists, doctors, and lawyers still use Latin phrases. Plants and animals have Latin names.

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We also use many Roman ideas about building. Many modern buildings use concrete. Roman architectural styles are still popular, too. Many buildings—especially churches and city and state buildings—have domes and arches. Those were copied from Roman buildings.

**Christianity** As you probably know, Christianity is a major religion today. Christianity began in the Roman Empire. Rome’s government adopted Christianity in the A.D. 300s. That helped the new religion to grow and spread.

- 8. Name some things from the Roman Empire that we still use today.

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