

## Lesson 2: The Glory of Rome - The Roman Empire at its Height

### Big Ideas of the Lesson

- Advancements in technology, politics, and literature achieved under both the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire have had a significant impact on the course of history. Romans often borrowed and built upon the ideas and technologies of other civilizations.
- Roman contributions in architecture, engineering, public health, law, and art helped shape the modern era.
- In order to build and maintain an empire as vast and advanced as Rome, the Romans developed and called upon a wide range of systems and expertise.

### Lesson Abstract:

In this lesson students learn about the history of the Roman Empire and its contributions to humanity. Through an interactive PowerPoint presentation, they begin with map and timeline work, using Turn and Talks and Stop and Jots to process information. Next, students work in groups to determine the most significant contribution or innovation of the Roman Empire, as represented by four specific categories: (1) art and ideas; (2) language, writing, and calendars; (3) technology and engineering; and (4) culture and lifestyle. Using a Chalk Talk procedure, small groups compare their thinking with another group. Each group then works to create an argument and make a poster about which advancement was most significant using the criteria for historical significance from Unit 1. When the groups present their posters to the class, audience members will take notes on at least three of the presentations. As a class, students choose the most significant Roman contribution. After analyzing an info-graphic on Rome, the lesson concludes with a 3-2-1 exercise reviewing what they have learned about Roman civilization.

**Content Expectations<sup>1</sup>:** **Grades 6 and 7** – H1.2.1; H1.2.2; H1.4.1; H1.4.2; H1.4.3; G1.3.1; G2.2.1;  
**Grade 6** – G1.2.4;  
**Grade 7** – W3.1.1; W3.1.5; W3.1.8; G1.2.3;

**Common Core State Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies:** RH.6-8. 1, 2, 4, 7, and 10; WHST.6-8.4, 7, 9, and 10.

### Key Concepts

cultural diffusion  
empire  
historical significance  
innovation  
social hierarchy/class system  
trade networks

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<sup>1</sup> The language of the content expectations, common core, and list of resources can be found in the Reference Section at the end of the lesson.

**Teacher Note:** This lesson can be divided into five chunks: Introduction, Interactive PowerPoint, Group Research, Group Poster and Presentation, and Lesson Conclusion.

### Lesson Sequence

1. Begin the lesson with a brainstorming List/Group/Label activity to find out what the students know, remember, and think about the Roman Empire. To do so, place the students into groups of three or four, and then ask them to brainstorm and list important facts and details they know or remember about the Roman Empire. Each group should have a recorder who writes down the ideas that people generate. Encourage each group to try to list 10-15 ideas about the Roman Empire.

Move around the room to monitor their progress. If the students struggle, you can use probing questions about images and ideas from popular culture (e.g. the movie *Gladiator*) that they may have seen. Once each group has several ideas, have students categorize their ideas into logical groupings. Once they have done this, have them label their categories. Encourage them to create their own categories, but be prepared with an example to help them if necessary. For example, students may have listed names like Julius Caesar and Nero. If so, these would be grouped together and the group could be named “Leaders” or “Emperors.”

Have several groups share their categories with a few examples of what they have listed in them. Take this opportunity to develop an overview of what students know and think about the Roman Empire. Explain to the students that they already know a fair amount, but that they will learn even more.

**Teacher Note:** The purpose of this exercise is to surface what students already know about the Roman Empire, including their misconceptions learned from popular culture. At times in an exercise like this, students might list out misconceptions or erroneous beliefs. It is best to address these as they come up, although you might at times choose to tell students that a particular idea needs to be checked and that you will revisit it later in the lesson. This is appropriate if you know you are going to cover a particular topic. This exercise is not about finding the “right” answer, but if there are ideas that are clearly wrong, it is best to correct them in an explanatory way (as opposed to in an evaluative framework of right and wrong answers). It can also be a good idea to explain to students that brainstorming is not about finding the right answer, but rather about surfacing the ideas they already have so that these ideas can be evaluated and compared to new information.

2. Open up the *PowerPoint (Unit 5, Lesson 2)*, show the title **Slide 1**, and then move to **Slide 2**. Have a student volunteer read the text on the slide. Move to **Slide 3** and do the same. Direct students to Stop and Jot and Turn and Talk following the prompt on the slide, which asks student to remember three important ideas about Roman society from the previous unit about empire. If necessary, remind them that they learned about power and leadership in Rome when they compared the Republic to the Empire, and that they also learned about slavery in Rome.

Have a few pairs share their ideas. Then use the notes in the note section of this slide to deliver a brief mini-lecture (2 to 3 minutes) to explain the bullets on the slide in more detail.

3. Advance to **Slide 4** and then to **Slide 5** and remind students that they have seen these maps before. Proceed to **Slide 6** and ask students to Turn and Talk and describe the change in Roman territory shown across the two maps in 15 words or less with their partner. After a minute or so, have a few teams share their summaries.
4. Proceed to **Slide 7** and have students Stop and Jot as directed on the slide. The map on this slide shows the geographic and cultural regions that made up the Roman Empire. This is important information because it reminds us that Rome was an empire -- it was made up of many peoples and cultures. Help students get to this point by using prompts and questioning. Have a few students share their ideas.
5. Advance to the timeline on **Slide 8** and explain to the students that this timeline shows the big picture of Roman history. Have students study the timeline and follow the Turn and Talk instructions on the slide. Students should identify three events that they think made Rome stronger and three events that made Rome weaker. Call on different pairs to share their ideas, and push students to explain their thinking by stressing the importance of logical conclusions.
6. Proceed to **Slide 9**. Explain to the students that in the lesson, they are going to learn more about the height of the Roman Empire and the contributions of Rome to the modern world. Read the question on **Slide 9** and explain to the students that they should be able to answer it after the lesson.
7. Go to **Slide 10** and ask students to describe the resemblances between the Roman Pantheon and the Jefferson Memorial. Tell them that the architecture of Ancient Rome can be seen in many places around the world, even in the United States. Using **Slide 11**, have students study the picture of Roman and US coins. Explain to the students that the classical symbols and designs of Rome can be found in many other places as well.

Advance to **Slide 12** and read the text on the slide. Emphasize to students the importance of the distinction between invention and adaptation. The Romans actually did not “invent” that much. They tended to take ideas and technologies from other places and make them bigger and better. Although they are often described as master inventors, the Romans seemed to be master adapters as well.

8. Explain to the students that they will now read about specific types of advances made by the Romans. Instruct students that they are going to have to analyze the significance of these different innovations and then, at the end of the activity, choose the one thing they feel was most significant or important and craft a poster to display that explains their choice.

Have them begin this activity by brainstorming in small groups about the criteria for importance. Use **Slide 13** to direct students in brainstorming criteria for significance. Ask students to write down their ideas on one sheet of paper per group. Keep this activity short and focused; give groups enough time to generate three or four ideas, and then ask a few groups to share. If students generate new ideas that aren't represented in some way on the next slide (**Slide 14**), and these ideas make sense, integrate them into your list as appropriate.

Move to **Slide 14** and have volunteers read the information on the slide. Explain to the students that these are the criteria for importance that they learned about in Unit 1 and that they will use these criteria to help them analyze Roman innovations in the upcoming reading and analysis activity.

9. Have students work in small groups to explore Roman contributions in one of four different categories:
- Art and Ideas
  - Language, Writing, and Calendars
  - Technology and Engineering
  - Culture and Lifestyle

For each category, there is a separate packet. Depending upon how many students are in your class, you will likely need to make a few copies of each packet. It will be best to have two groups assigned to each topic area as they will exchange work later in the lesson.

Have students work in groups of three to four students. Pass out the packets, as well as a copy of “**Student Handout #1**,” located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 5, Lesson 2)* for each student. Instruct students to read the packet for the category they have been assigned. Each student should take notes on their category using “**Student Handout # 1.**” This portion of the lesson may be assigned as homework.

10. Once students have read through the packet, they should engage in a small group discussion about which specific innovation discussed in the packet they think is most important or significant. Direct their attention to **Slide 15** which provides some talking points for their discussion, as well as instructions for the first part of the Chalk Talk activity. Distribute a large sheet of butcher or poster paper to each group to serve as their chalk talk sheet. Have students write down the innovation they thought was most important and create a bullet point list of reasons supporting their choice.
11. Move to **Slide 16** which has instructions for the next part of the activity. When completed, each group should exchange their responses on the butcher or poster paper with another group who read about the same category. With the other group’s sheet, each group should engage in a Chalk Talk response in which they do not verbally discuss the other group’s ideas, but instead agree or disagree with their choice, and then provide their own reasons in writing on the Chalk Talk sheet. Explain to students that in Chalk Talk, there is no verbal conversation, but only the exchange of ideas through writing. They then pass the sheets back to the original group. Each group should then read the comments on their sheet and talk about whether or not their choice of most important innovation has changed.
12. Next, students will engage in a group poster production and presentation. Group Poster Production and Presentation. Distribute out “**Student Handout # 2 – Roman Contributions Poster Instructions**,” located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 5, Lesson 2)*. Direct the students to review their notes from the reading they just did about their category, and as a group, review the instructions on the handout.

Each group will now develop a poster about the one contribution from their category they feel was most important, following the criteria laid out on the handout. Be sure you have the necessary supplies (butcher or poster paper, markers, etc.). You may choose to assign students group roles in order to maximize participation and accountability (illustrator, timekeeper, scribe, researcher, etc.). Help students understand that their poster should only deal with **one** particular advance or innovation of the Romans, not the whole category (for example, from Art and Ideas, a group might focus on the concept of *innocent until proven guilty*).

13. When the groups have completed their posters, each group will then briefly present their poster to the class following the instructions on out “**Student Handout # 2 – Roman Contributions Poster Instructions.**” Before they begin their poster presentations, however, pass out “**Student Handout # 3 - Roman Contributions Poster Presentation Notes,**” located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 5, Lesson 2)*. Students will use this handout to take notes on one poster presentation from each category.

The group members should divide up the responsibilities for speaking and talking about the different pieces of information on their posters. Each group basically needs to share their ideas about which development in their category they chose as most significant, and then they should explain how their example meets the criteria for historical significance.

14. After the presentations, have students meet back in their groups to review and compare their notes. Each group should then nominate one particular innovation, from any category, as the most significant Roman contribution of all. Each group must also be prepared to defend that idea using the criteria for historical significance. Elicit the groups’ choices and write all the nominations on the board. Have the class take a vote. If the vote is close between any of the ideas, ask for volunteers to make a case for each of the innovations in question. After a few students have spoken, vote again. You can choose to repeat the cycle of argument and voting again if necessary, or just have more than one “winner.” Explain to the students that the goal of this activity was not to actually identify one Roman innovation as more important than the rest, but rather to learn about Roman contributions and to apply the criteria for historical significance to some specific examples.
15. As an optional activity, if you have the ability to connect to the internet and project, display the infographic from History.com on the city of Rome. This info-graphic can be found at: <http://www.history.com/topics/history-infographics/interactives/ancient-rome>. Invite students to read different sections of text on the info-graphic out loud. Have students Turn and Talk about the info-graphic, in particular focusing on what is most surprising to them. Invite students to share their thoughts and reactions once they have a minute or two to Turn and Talk.

Explain to the students that the Romans really paved the way for modern cities with many of these developments, but again stress that not all of these ideas were Roman “inventions,” some were Roman inventions and others were examples of the Romans developing and adding to things that other groups had created and discovered. In either case, the Romans laid the foundations for modern life in important ways.

16. To close out the lesson, distribute “**Student Handout #4 – Final thoughts on Roman contributions,**” located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 5, Lesson 2)*. Have students reflect upon what they have learned in the lesson using 3-2-1 format provided on the handout. This can be assigned as an exit pass, as homework, or used to spark a final small group or class discussion.

## Resource Section

### Content Expectations:

- 6 and 7*  
*H1.2.1:* Explain how historians use a variety of sources to explore the past (e.g., artifacts, primary and secondary sources including narratives, technology, historical maps, visual/mathematical quantitative data, radiocarbon dating, DNA analysis).
- 6 and 7*  
*H1.2.2:* Read and comprehend a historical passage to identify basic factual knowledge and the literal meaning by indicating who was involved, what happened, where it happened, what events led to the development, and what consequences or outcomes followed.
- 6 and 7*  
*H1.4.1:* Describe and use cultural institutions to study an era and a region (political, economic, religion/belief, science/technology, written language, education, family).
- 6 and 7*  
*H1.4.2:* Describe and use themes of history to study patterns of change and continuity.
- 6 and 7*  
*H1.4.3:* Use historical perspective to analyze global issues faced by humans long ago and today.
- 7 – W3.1.1:* Describe the characteristics that classical civilizations share (institutions, cultural styles, systems of thought that influenced neighboring peoples and have endured for several centuries).
- 7 – W3.1.5:* Describe major achievements from Indian, Chinese, Mediterranean, African, and Southwest and Central Asian civilizations in the areas of art, architecture and culture; science, technology and mathematics; political life and ideas; philosophy and ethical beliefs; and military strategy.
- 7 – W3.1.8:* Describe the role of state authority, military power, taxation systems, and institutions of coerced labor, including slavery, in building and maintaining empires (e.g., Han Empire, Mauryan Empire, Egypt, Greek city-states and the Roman Empire).
- 6 – G1.2.4:* Use observations from air photos, photographs (print and CD), films (VCR and DVD)  
*7 – G1.2.3:* as the basis for answering geographic questions about the human and physical characteristics of places and regions.
- 6 and 7*  
*G1.3.1:* Use the fundamental themes of geography (location, place, human environment interaction, movement, region) to describe regions or places on earth.

*6 and 7*  
*G2.2.1:* Describe the human characteristics of the region under study (including languages, religion, economic system, governmental system, cultural traditions).

### **Common Core State Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies**

- RH.6-8.1:* Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- RH.6-8.2:* Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- RH.6-8.4:* Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
- RH.6-8.7:* Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
- RH.6-8.10:* By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.
- WHST.6-8.4:* Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- WHST.6-8.7:* Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.
- WHST.6-8.9:* Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis reflection, and research.
- WHST.6-8.10:* Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

### **Instructional Resources**

#### Equipment/Manipulative

Computer with PowerPoint capability  
Internet connection (optional)  
Larger sheets of chart or butcher paper  
LCD/Overhead Projector  
Markers and/or other poster making supplies

#### Student Resource

- “Ancient roman Concrete Is About to Revolutionize Modern Architecture.” Bloomberg Businessweek. 14 June 2013. 9 Oct. 2013 <<http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2013-06-14/ancient-roman-concrete-is-about-to-revolutionize-modern-architecture>>.
- Andrews, Evan. “10 Innovations That Built Ancient Rome.” History.com. 20 Nov. 2012. 9 Oct. 2013 <<http://www.history.com/news/history-lists/10-innovations-that-built-ancient-rome>>.

“Christianity in Ancient Rome.” Ancient Rome for Kids. Mr.Donn.org. 9 Oct. 2013  
<<http://rome.mrdonn.org/christianity.html>>.

“The Colosseum.” *Ancient Rome for Kids*. Mr.Donn.org. 9 October 2013  
<<http://rome.mrdonn.org/colosseum.html>>.

“The Evening Meal. The rich and the poor.” *Ancient Rome for Kids*. Mr.Donn.org. 9 October 2013  
<<http://rome.mrdonn.org/dinner.html>>.

"History: Ancient Roman Art for Kids." *Ducksters*. Technological Solutions, Inc. (TSI), Oct. 2013. Web.  
9 Oct. 2013. <[http://www.ducksters.com/history/art/ancient\\_roman\\_art.php](http://www.ducksters.com/history/art/ancient_roman_art.php)>.

“Honoring their gods was a big part of ancient Roman daily life. Roman Gods. *Ancient Rome for Kids*.  
Mr.Donn.org. 9 October 2013 <<http://rome.mrdonn.org/gods.html>>.

“Primary History – Romans: Leisure.” *BBC*. 9 October 2013  
<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/romans/leisure/>>.

“Roman Holidays & Festivals.” *Ancient Rome for Kids*. Mr.Donn.org. 9 October 2013  
<<http://rome.mrdonn.org/holidays.html>>.

*Roman Numerals History and Use*. 9 October 2013 <<http://www.romannumerals.co.uk/roman-numerals/numerals-history.html>>.

### Teacher Resource

Stockdill, Darin and Stacie Woodward. “Growth of the Roman Empire” *PowerPoint Presentation*. (Unit 5, Lesson 2). Teacher-made materials. Oakland Schools, 2013.

- - -. *Supplemental Materials (Unit 5, Lesson 2)*. Teacher-made materials. Oakland Schools, 2013.

- - -. *Roman Art and Ideas (Unit 5, Lesson 2)*. Teacher-made materials. Oakland Schools, 2013.

- - -. *Roman Culture and Lifestyle (Unit 5, Lesson 2)*. Teacher-made materials. Oakland Schools, 2013.

- - -. *Roman Language, Writing and Calendar (Unit 5, Lesson 2)*. Teacher-made materials. Oakland Schools, 2013.

- - -. *Roman Technology and Engineering (Unit 5, Lesson 2)*. Teacher-made materials. Oakland Schools, 2013.