

Ancient Civilizations

by Walter A. Hazen

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McDonald Publishing Co.
12621 Western Avenue
Garden Grove, CA 92841
www.teachercreated.com

R540 • ©1998 McDonald Publishing Co.
Reprinted, 2022
ISBN: 978-1-55708-659-4
Printed in U.S.A.

The Babylonians

The invaders who overran the Sumerian civilization about 2300 B.C. built the city of Babylon on the Euphrates River. Sometime later, Hammurabi, their greatest king, extended his control over most of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. His kingdom became known as the Babylonian Empire.

The Babylonians copied and added to the civilization of the Sumerians. They adopted the cuneiform system of writing, using a stylus to make impressions on clay tablets. They also borrowed Sumerian ideas concerning science and architecture.

The greatest contribution of the Babylonians was Hammurabi's Code of Laws. Sometime about 1750 B.C., Hammurabi had 282 laws chiseled on stone and inscribed in clay. The laws had to do with commerce, trade, marriage, divorce, and property rights. Every aspect of Babylonian life was addressed. Although Hammurabi's Code was harsh and was based on the concept of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," it nevertheless represents the oldest legal system known to humans.

Read each sentence and identify the word that would correctly fill each blank. Write the word, one letter per space below, to complete the puzzle about Babylon.

- Babylon's greatest king was _____.
- The city of Babylon was located on the _____ River.
- The Babylonians wrote on clay _____.
- A _____ was a pointed stick used for writing.
- Hammurabi is remembered for his Code of _____.
- "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a _____."
- The Babylonians adopted the _____ method of writing from the Sumerians.



- _____ B _____
- _____ A _____
- _____ B _____
- _____ Y _____
- _____ L _____
- _____ O _____
- _____ N _____

- Do you think a law code based on the concept of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," like that instituted by Hammurabi, is effective in maintaining law and order and in settling disputes? Can such a law code produce the opposite effect?

The Roman Empire

A number of mighty empires rose and fell during ancient times. Two of these were the Persian Empire and the empire of Alexander the Great. However, the greatest empire by far was that of the Romans. It included not only the lands that touched the Mediterranean Sea, but also all of western Europe, parts of central Europe, and the British Isles. The Roman Empire began in 27 B.C. with the crowning of Octavian as Caesar Augustus. It ended in 476 when Rome fell to invading Germanic tribes.

For over two hundred years, the Roman Empire was ruled by the emperor in Rome. However, in time, the difficulties of governing such a vast realm proved too much for one person. In the year 284, Emperor Diocletian appointed a co-emperor, Maximian, to share the responsibilities and burdens of the empire. For the next hundred years, one emperor ruled from Rome while another ruled from Constantinople (now the city of Istanbul in Turkey). In 395, because of religious and other differences, the empire officially split into two parts: the Western Roman Empire, centered at Rome, and the Eastern Roman Empire, centered at Constantinople. The Eastern Roman Empire, which was also called the Byzantine Empire, outlasted the Western Empire by almost one thousand years.

The map below shows the Roman Empire at its greatest size. Use your textbook or another reference book and label each of the locations below.

Spain

Rome

Carthage

Britain

Gaul

Greece

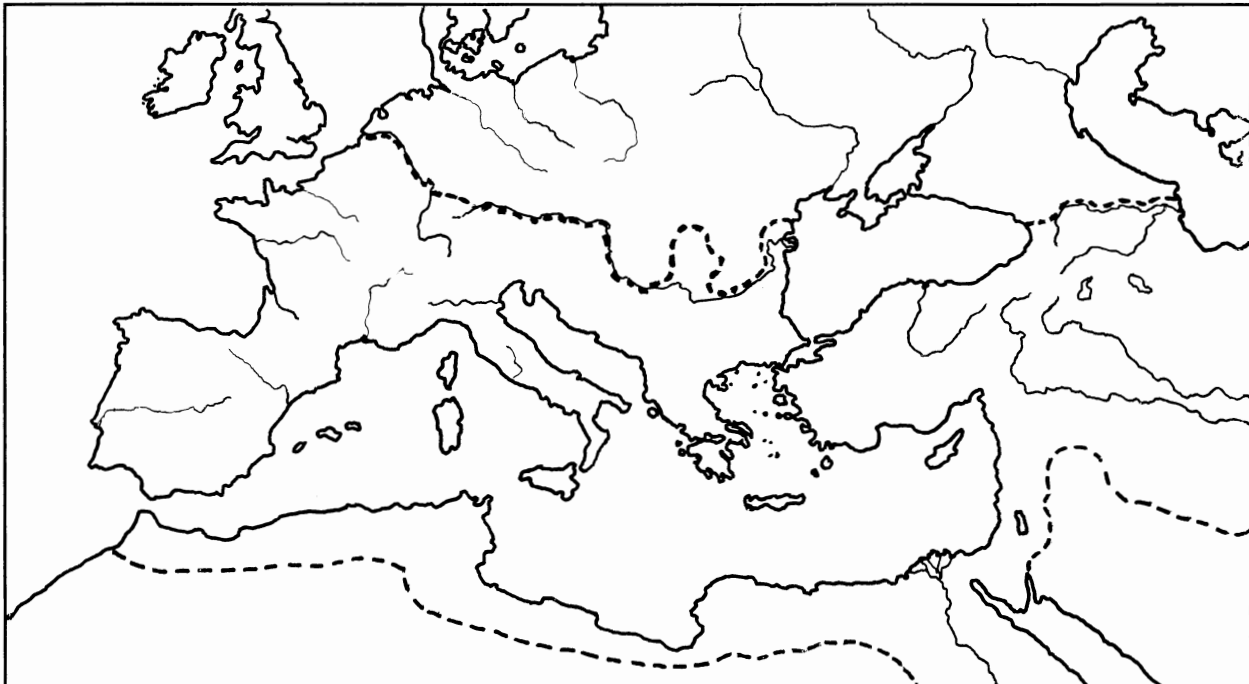
Asia Minor

Egypt

Mediterranean Sea

Black Sea

Adriatic Sea



Roman Contributions

The Romans were more imitators than originators of new ideas. They admired and adapted much of Greek culture. They even worshiped the Greek gods, but changed their names. For example, Zeus became Jupiter, and Athena became Minerva. Wherever the Romans went, they transmitted Greek civilization to other peoples.

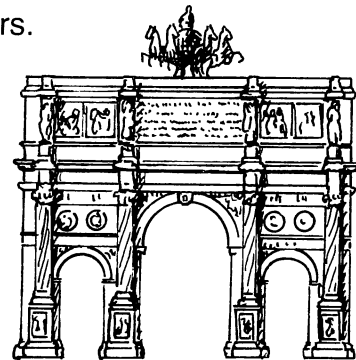
The Romans themselves built imposing buildings, aqueducts, and roads. Several outstanding Roman writers such as Cicero, Horace, Virgil, Livy, and Plutarch wrote great works. However, the Romans' greatest contributions were in law and language.

In the field of law, the Romans gave the world the Justinian Code, which later became the model for the legal systems of Europe. The Code even influenced the laws of England and America. The Justinian Code emphasized several important points. One was that all persons are equal under the law. Another was that a person is innocent until proven guilty.

Latin, the language of Rome, became the basis for what are called the Romance (after *Roman*) languages. The Romance languages are Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Romanian. Many of the words in the English language are also derived from Latin.

Read each sentence and identify the word that would fill each blank. Write the words, one letter per space, to complete the puzzle below about the Romans.

1. The Romans' name for the Greek god Zeus was _____.
2. The Justinian _____ influenced the legal systems of modern Europe.
3. The _____ languages are derived from Latin.
4. The Romans were more _____ than originators.
5. "_____ until proven guilty."
6. _____ is one of the Romance languages.



1. _____ R
2. _____ O _____
3. _____ M _____
4. _____ A _____
5. _____ N _____
6. S _____

7. In what ways were the legal systems of England and America influenced by Roman law?
