

SECTION 5

The western Roman empire came to an end in 476, when the emperor gave up his crown.



A plaque from an invader's shield



WITNESS HISTORY AUDIO

The Exhausted Empire

After 300 years of empire, Rome was weakening due to various causes. The oppressive government and corrupt upper class generated hostility among those who suffered in the weak economy. When invaders came from the north and east, the empire's days were numbered. The Roman writer Salvian noted the mood of the Roman people:

“In the districts taken over by the barbarians, there is one desire among all the Romans, that they should never again find it necessary to pass under Roman jurisdiction [authority].”

—Salvian, *On the Governance of God*

Focus Question How did military, political, social, and economic factors combine to cause the fall of the western Roman empire?

The Long Decline

Objectives

- Explain how and why the Roman empire divided.
- Describe how waves of invaders contributed to the decline of the Roman empire.
- Identify the various types of problems that led to the fall of Rome.

Terms, People, and Places

Diocletian
inflation
Constantinople
Huns
mercenary

Note Taking

Reading Skill: Recognize Multiple Causes As you read, complete a chart like the one below by filling in the causes of the fall of the western Roman empire.

Causes of the Fall of the Western Roman Empire			
Military:	Social:	Political:	Economic:
•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•

After ruling the Mediterranean for hundreds of years, the Roman empire faced threats from inside and outside. Economic problems, foreign invasions, and a decline in traditional values were undermining stability and security.

The Roman Empire Divides

After the death of the emperor Marcus Aurelius in 180, the golden age of the Pax Romana ended. For the next 100 years, political and economic turmoil rocked the Roman empire.

Political Violence Becomes Common During this period, a disruptive political pattern emerged. Again and again, emperors were overthrown by political intriguers or ambitious generals who seized power with the support of their troops. Those who rose to the imperial throne in this way ruled for just a few months or years until they, too, were overthrown or assassinated. In one 50-year period, at least 26 emperors reigned. Only one died of natural causes. Political violence and instability had become the rule.

Social and Economic Problems Arise At the same time, the empire was shaken by disturbing social and economic trends. High taxes to support the army and the bureaucracy placed heavy burdens on business people and small farmers. Farmland that had been over-cultivated for too long lost its productivity.

Many poor farmers left their land and sought protection from wealthy landowners. Living on large estates, they worked for the landowners and farmed small plots for themselves. Although technically free, they were not allowed to leave the land.

5

SECTION

Step-by-Step Instruction

Objectives

As you teach this section, keep students focused on the following objectives to help them answer the Section Focus Question and master core content.

- Explain how and why the Roman empire divided.
- Describe how waves of invaders contributed to the decline of the Roman empire.
- Identify the various types of problems that led to the fall of Rome.

Prepare to Read

Build Background Knowledge L3

Put the phrase “bread and circuses” on the board. Have students recall the reasons why the government wanted to distract the public with gladiator contests, chariot races, and other entertainments. Have students describe the challenges facing the empire as the Pax Romana ended. Then ask students to skim the headings and subheadings of the section and suggest possible reasons for the decline of the empire.

Set a Purpose L3

- WITNESS HISTORY** Read the selection aloud or play the audio.

AUDIO **Witness History Audio CD,**
The Exhausted Empire

Ask **According to Salvian, how did Romans living in areas overrun by the barbarians feel about barbarian conquest?** (They were glad to be free from Roman rule.) **What are four problems facing Rome mentioned in the introduction?** (oppressive government, corrupt upper class, weak economy, invaders from north and east) **What does the image suggest about Rome's power?** (Sample: that the empire is no longer able to defend itself) Tell students to read this section to understand the events that led to the fall of Rome.

Vocabulary Builder

Use the information below and the following resources to teach the high-use word from this section.

All in One Teaching Resources, Unit 1, p. 88; Teaching Resources, Skills Handbook, p. 3

High-Use Word

prestige, p. 177

Definition and Sample Sentence

n. the power to impress or influence because of success or wealth
As the mayor and owner of the city's largest bank, he had the **prestige** to convince the others to accept his plan.

- **Focus** Point out the Section Focus Question and write it on the board. Tell students to refer to this question as they read. (*Answer appears with Section 5 Assessment answers.*)
- **Preview** Have students preview the Section Objectives and the list of Terms, People, and Places.
- **Note Taking** Have students read this section using the Paragraph Shrinking strategy (TE, p. T20). As they read, have students fill in the graphic organizer showing the causes of the fall of the western Roman empire.



Reading and Note Taking
Study Guide, p. 56

Teach

The Roman Empire Divides 13

Instruct

- **Introduce: Vocabulary Builder**
Have students locate the Vocabulary Builder term in the text and look up its definition. Ask students to explain how loss of *prestige* might affect an emperor's ability to govern or control his armies.
- **Teach** Have students identify the political and economic problems the empire faced after the Pax Romana ended. Then ask **Why are political instability and frequent, violent changes in leadership a serious problem for a government?** (*They lead to lack of continuity and frequent changes in policies, weaken rule of law, decrease respect for and trust in government, make citizens fearful and uncertain, make long-term economic or social planning impossible, damage trade, and make businesses reluctant to invest.*) **How did overcultivation of land and the empire's economic problems affect the status of small farmers?** (*The burden of high taxes led small farms to fail, forcing farmers to work on large estates for landowners. Farmers lost independence and the freedom to leave the land.*)

Answers

- ✓ Instability hurt the economy, making trade difficult or dangerous; it caused disruptions and/or inconsistencies in economic policy and possibly difficulties in imposing and collecting taxes.

Emperor Diocletian Shares Power In 284, the emperor **Diocletian** (dy uh KLEE shun) set out to restore order. To better handle the challenge of governing the huge empire, he divided it into two parts. He kept control of the wealthier eastern part for himself and appointed a co-emperor, Maximian, to rule the western provinces.

Diocletian also took steps to end the empire's economic decay. To slow **inflation**, or the rapid rise of prices, he fixed the prices of many goods and services. Other laws forced farmers to remain on the land. In cities, sons were required to follow their fathers' occupations. These rules were meant to ensure steady production of food and other goods.

Emperor Constantine Makes Further Reforms In 312, the talented general Constantine gained the throne. As emperor, Constantine continued Diocletian's reforms. In addition, he took two steps that changed the course of European history. First, as you have read, Constantine granted toleration to Christians. Second, he established a new capital at the centuries-old city of Byzantium, which he renamed **Constantinople**. With this "New Rome," Constantine made the eastern empire the center of power.

Improvements Prove Temporary The reforms of Diocletian and Constantine had mixed results. They revived the economy, and by increasing the power of government, they helped hold the empire together for another century. Still, the reforms failed to stop the long-term decline. In the end, internal problems combined with attacks from outside to bring the empire down.

- ✓ **Checkpoint** How do you think Rome's unstable government affected the economy?

INFOGRAPHIC

Redefining the Empire

By the 200s, the days of the empire were numbered. Diocletian and Constantine undertook numerous reforms to help keep it alive. Although they could not stop the decline, Diocletian and Constantine redefined the empire both politically and religiously. The effects of their changes would last well beyond the official "fall of Rome." While the western empire would face failure, the eastern empire would maintain power for another thousand years as the Byzantine empire.



◀ Diocletian and Maximian, the co-emperors

Political Reforms

Diocletian's division of the empire into eastern and western halves (at left) made the huge territory more manageable to oversee. When Constantine later moved the capital from Rome to Constantinople (background image), he set the eastern empire on a path to long-lasting power. Previously called Byzantium, Constantinople would thrive as the capital of the Byzantine empire until 1453.

Differentiated Instruction

Solutions for All Learners

L1 Special Needs L2 Less Proficient Readers

Explain to students that there are many factors that played a part in the decline of the Roman empire. Pair students who have difficulty reading with those who are more proficient. Have the proficient students guide their partners in creating an outline of this section.

tion detailing the main ideas and supporting details of each of the section's red heads. Then have them work together to write a summary of the events in the last 300 years of the Roman empire that led to the empire's decline.

Invaders Threaten the Roman Empire

For centuries, Rome had faced attacks from the Germanic peoples who lived east of the Rhine and north of the Danube rivers. When Rome was powerful, the legions on the frontiers were successful in holding back the invaders. Some of the Germanic peoples who lived along the borders learned Roman ways and became allies of the Romans.

Migrating Nomads Attack As early as 200, wars in East Asia set off a chain of events that would eventually overwhelm Rome, thousands of miles to the west. Those wars sent a nomadic people, the **Huns**, migrating from central Asia toward eastern Europe, which they reached by 370. These skilled riders fought fierce battles to dislodge the Germanic peoples in their path. The Visigoths, Ostrogoths, and other Germanic peoples crossed into Roman territory seeking safety.

With the empire in decline, Roman legions were hard pressed to halt the invaders. Under pressure from attacks, the Roman empire surrendered first Britain, then France and Spain. It was only a matter of time before foreign invaders marched into Italy and took over Rome itself.

Rome Is Sacked In 378, when a Roman army tried to turn back the Visigoths at Adrianople, it suffered a stunning defeat. Roman power was fading. New waves of invaders were soon hammering at Rome's borders, especially in the west. In 410, the Visigoth general Alaric overran Italy and plundered the city of Rome. Meanwhile, a Germanic people called the Vandals moved through Gaul and Spain into North Africa. Gradually, Germanic groups occupied more and more of the western Roman empire.

Religious Reforms

Before Constantine came to power, many Roman emperors had persecuted Christians, arresting or executing them. Diocletian had been among the most brutal persecutors. This painting shows the Christian martyr Lucy being burned under his reign (an ordeal she is said to have survived).



Growth of Christianity in the Roman Empire

Year	Number of Christians*
0	0
50	1,400
100	7,530
150	40,496
200	217,795
250	1,171,356
300	6,299,832
350	33,882,008

*Numbers are estimates.
SOURCE: Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*

Whether Constantine (above) fueled Christianity's growth or its growth fueled his acceptance is not known. What is clear is that in the 300s, Christianity was thriving in the empire. It would underlie social and cultural developments for centuries onward.



Thinking Critically

- 1. Make Comparisons** Compare the short-term and long-term effects of Diocletian's division of the empire.
- 2. Synthesize Information** How do you think the acceptance of Christianity changed life in the empire?

- **Quick Activity** Divide students into small groups. Have each group make a list of the problems the empire faced and the effects of each. Then have them pick the problem they consider to be most serious, assess Emperor Diocletian or Constantine's efforts to solve this problem, and brainstorm alternative solutions. Use the Numbered Heads strategy (TE, p. T23) to have each group report its findings to the class.

Independent Practice

Have students create political cartoons that comment on the problems the empire faces or the responses of the government to these problems.

Monitor Progress

As students fill in their charts, circulate to make sure they have listed the social, political, and economic problems they have read about so far. For a completed version of the chart, see



Note Taking Transparencies, 71

Link to Geography

Constantinople Constantine made a wise choice in the location of his new capital. The city is located on a peninsula where Europe and Asia meet, making it an ideal port for trade between east and west. The Bosphorus channel enabled shipping to ports on both the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. The city has had many names. Its first was Byzantium, named accord-

ing to legend after a Greek leader who conquered the area and built a city there about 657 B.C. Almost a millennium later in A.D. 196, a Roman emperor changed its name to Augusta Antonina after his son. This name lasted just over a century until Constantine renamed it Constantinople. In 1930, the city officially took its modern name, Istanbul.

Thinking Critically

- 1. short term:** failure of western empire, eastern empire more manageable; long term: eastern empire survives as the Byzantine empire to preserve the Roman heritage for centuries
- 2. less conflict and persecution;** government perceived as more accepting of citizens; less fear

Invaders Threaten the Roman Empire/Many Problems Cause Rome to Fall

L3

Instruct

- **Introduce** In the previous subsection students looked at internal threats to the stability of the empire. Have students speculate about why Rome would be more vulnerable to foreign attack than it had been during the Pax Romana.
- **Teach** Ask **Why did Rome's internal problems make it harder to stop the Huns and other invaders?** (*Division of the empire, economic decline, power struggles among rival generals, and political instability all made the army less effective.*) **How were military and social problems related?** (*Decline in such values as patriotism and devotion to duty made the hiring of mercenaries necessary.*) **Why are the developments that ended the Roman empire more correctly called a decline than a fall?** (*They were gradual rather than sudden, and the Roman empire did not disappear completely.*)
- **Quick Activity** Divide students into four groups. Assign each group either military, political, economic, or social problems. Have group members explain how these problems contributed to Rome's decline.

Independent Practice

Have students read Comparing Viewpoints on this page and discuss the explanations given for the empire's decline.

Monitor Progress

- Check to make sure that students have correctly filled in their chart with military, social, political, and economic causes.
- Check Reading and Note Taking Study Guide entries for student understanding.

Answers

- ✓ The Huns ravaged large areas of the Roman empire and left Italy open to attack.

COMPARING VIEWPOINTS Gibbon is surprised that the empire lasted as long as it did while Brown states that the empire actually endured longer than its supposed date of collapse.

■ COMPARING VIEWPOINTS

What Kind of Downfall?

Historians have long held that the "fall of Rome" was an important historical event, but they argue over many details. **Critical Thinking** *What about Rome's end most surprises Gibbons? How does Brown differ with him on this point?*



Argument for an Enduring Rome

The Roman empire lasted a lot longer than its supposed date of collapse. . . . Things don't change overnight in a big, lazy empire. The life of the cities remained much more vigorous than was thought; the classics continued to be taught with great intensity and a real feeling that they were still relevant. Even after the official end of the empire, as late as 476 A.D., many of the social structures we associate with the empire endured.

—Historian Peter Brown

Argument for a Ruined Rome

[T]he decline of Rome was the natural and inevitable effect of immoderate [excessive] greatness. Prosperity ripened the . . . decay; the causes of destruction multiplied with the extent of conquest; and as soon as time or accident had removed the artificial supports, the stupendous fabric yielded to the pressure of its own weight. The story of its ruin is simple and obvious; and instead of inquiring *why* the Roman empire was destroyed, we should rather be surprised that it had subsisted so long.

—Historian Edward Gibbons

For Rome, the worst was yet to come. Starting in 434, the Hun leader Attila embarked on a savage campaign of conquest across much of Europe. Christians called Attila the "scourge of God" because they believed his attacks were a punishment for the sins of humankind. The Hun invasion sent still more Germanic peoples fleeing into the lands of Roman empire.

Finally, in 476, Odoacer (oh doh AY sur), a Germanic leader, ousted the emperor in Rome. Later, historians referred to that event as the "fall" of Rome. By then, however, the Roman empire had already lost many of its territories, and Roman power in the west had ended.

✓ **Checkpoint** How did the Hun invasion weaken the Roman empire?

Many Problems Cause Rome to Fall

The passing of Rome's power and greatness was a major turning point in the history of Western civilization. Why did Rome "fall"? Modern historians identify a number of interrelated causes.

Military Attacks Perhaps the most obvious cause of Rome's fall was the invasions. Still, these attacks were successful partly because Roman legions of the late empire lacked the discipline and training from which earlier Roman armies had benefited. To meet its need for soldiers, Rome hired **mercenaries**, or foreign soldiers serving for pay, to defend its borders. Many were Germanic warriors who, according to some historians, felt little loyalty to Rome.

Political Turmoil Political problems also contributed to Rome's decline. First, as the government became more oppressive and authoritarian, it lost the support of the people. Growing numbers of corrupt officials undermined loyalty, too. So did frequent civil wars over succession to the imperial throne. Again and again, rival armies battled to have their commanders

Connect to Our World

Civic Responsibility The decline in civic participation was a key sign of the weakening of the Roman empire. Point out that volunteerism is one key way young people demonstrate civic participation. Volunteerism includes such activities as helping to clean up highways or parks, peer tutoring, mentoring younger students, creating or using a recycling center, visiting

people in a hospital or senior center, supporting or coaching a local sports team, and making donations to a food bank or homeless shelter. Have students explain how such activities contribute to the quality of life in a community. Have students discuss whether civic participation or citizen involvement in the community is an important value in their community.

chosen as emperor. Perhaps most important, dividing the empire at a time when it was under attack may have weakened it beyond repair. The richer eastern Roman empire did little to help the west.

Economic Weakness Economic problems were widespread in the empire. Heavier and heavier taxes were required to support the vast government bureaucracy and huge military establishment. At the same time, reliance on slave labor discouraged Romans from exploring new technology. The wealth of the empire dwindled as farmers abandoned their land and the middle classes sank into poverty. Some scholars have suggested that climate change was yet another reason for reduced agricultural productivity. In addition, the population itself declined as war and epidemic diseases swept the empire.

Social Decay For centuries, worried Romans pointed to the decline in values such as patriotism, discipline, and devotion to duty on which the empire was built. The need to replace citizen-soldiers with mercenaries testified to the decline of patriotism. The upper class, which had once provided leaders, devoted itself to luxury and prestige. Besides being costly, providing “bread and circuses” may have undermined the self-reliance of the masses.

Did Rome Fall? Although we talk of the “fall” of Rome, the Roman empire did not disappear from the map in 476. An emperor still ruled the eastern Roman empire, which continued to exist for another 1,000 years under the name of the Byzantine empire.

The phrase “the fall of Rome” is, in fact, shorthand for a long, slow change from one way of life to another. Roman civilization survived the events of 476. In Italy, people continued to live much as they had before, though under new rulers. Many still spoke Latin and obeyed Roman laws.

Over the following centuries, however, Germanic customs and languages replaced much of Roman culture. Old Roman cities crumbled, and Roman roads disappeared. Still, the Christian Church preserved elements of Roman civilization. In later chapters, you will read how Roman and Christian traditions gave rise to medieval civilization in western Europe.

✓ **Checkpoint** What social problems contributed to the decline of the Roman empire?

Vocabulary Builder

prestige—(pres TEEZH) *n.* the power to impress or influence because of success or wealth


Assess and Reteach

Assess Progress

L3

- Have students complete the Section Assessment.
- Administer the Section Quiz.

All in One Teaching Resources, Unit 1, p. 87


- To further assess student understanding, use  **Progress Monitoring Transparencies, 23**

Reteach

If students need more instruction, have them read the section summary.

 **Reading and Note Taking Study Guide, p. 57**

L3

 **Adapted Reading and Note Taking Study Guide, p. 57**

L1

L2

 **Spanish Reading and Note Taking Study Guide, p. 57**

L2

Extend

L4

Display **Color Transparency 30: Decline of Rome**. Ask students to review the reasons that Rome declined. Then have them conduct a debate as to which factor was most significant in causing the decline.

 **Color Transparencies, 30**

Answer

- ✓ Decline in such values as patriotism, discipline, and devotion to duty resulted in fewer citizen-soldiers and more reliance on mercenaries as well as fewer members of the upper class willing to assume leadership positions in public life.

● Writing About History

Student responses should give reasons for identifying particular factors as having decisive roles in the fall of Rome.

For additional assessment, have students access **Progress Monitoring Online** at **Web Code naa-0551**.

Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-quiz with vocabulary practice
Web Code: naa-0551

● Writing About History

Quick Write: Write a Conclusion
Compare the various factors that led to the “fall” of Rome. Write a conclusion paragraph for an essay explaining which factors you think played the greatest role.

Section 5 Assessment

Terms, People, and Places

1. For each term, person, or place listed at the beginning of the section, write a sentence explaining its significance.

Note Taking

2. **Reading Skill: Recognize Multiple Causes** Use your completed chart to answer the Focus Question: How did military, political, social, and economic factors combine to cause the fall of the western Roman empire?

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

3. **Summarize** Describe the crisis that afflicted the Roman empire after the Pax Romana ended. How did Diocletian try to resolve the crisis?
4. **Express Problems Clearly** How did the successes of invaders such as the Huns reveal the fading power of the Roman empire?
5. **Identify Central Issues** What features of the western Roman empire survived after the year 476?

Section 5 Assessment

1. Sentences should reflect an understanding of each term, person, or place.
2. The Romans were unable to defend against foreign invasion because of the weakness of their armies and political rivalries among commanders. Also, heavy taxes needed to finance the mercenary army hurt the economy, as did reliance on

- slave labor. Decline in moral values reduced the number of capable people willing to accept positions in public life.
3. Crisis caused by political violence and instability; Diocletian divided the empire to make governing easier.
4. showed how weak the Roman army was
5. Roman culture, laws, and language survived.