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Roman civilization

- 1.** The centre of the Roman civilization was Italy, the peninsula that projects into the Mediterranean sea in the west of Greece. The river Tiber on which the city of Rome is located runs through the central part of the peninsula.
- 2.** The city of Rome was founded about 1000 BC by Romulus, in the district of Latium. The language of the ancient Romans, Latin, gets its name from Latium.
- 3.** The early Romans had a king, an assembly and a senate.
- 4.** Towards the end of the 6th century BC the king was overthrown and a republic was established. Under the Republic the Romans conquered other parts of the peninsula, and by 265 BC controlled all of Italy. The political system of the Roman republic consisted of two consuls, the senate & the assembly.
- 5.** The Romans were involved in a series of wars with Carthage, a city on the north coast of Africa. The danger of Carthaginian occupation of Sicily led the Romans to attack Carthage. The wars that followed, known as the Punic Wars, lasted from 264 BC to 146 BC. The Carthaginians were defeated in this war.
- 6.** By the beginning of the 1st century BC the Roman had conquered Greece and Asia Minor and established a protectorate over Egypt.
- 7.** Rivalry for power grew between two generals, Pompey & Julius Caesar. War between them followed and Pompey was murdered by his enemies in Egypt. Caesar remained in Egypt for some time, attracted by the captivating beauty of the Egyptian queen Cleopatra. On his return to Rome, in 46 BC, he made himself dictator. However, on the charge that Caesar intended to become king, he was assassinated in 44 BC, in a senate meeting.
- 8.** After the assassination of Caesar, power passed into the hands of Mark Antony and Lepidus, Caesar's friends and Octavian, Caesar's grand-nephew. The leaders of the conspiracy, Brutus and Cassius, fled and organised a large army, but they were captured and slain.
- 9.** In 37 BC, Octavian became the most powerful man in the Roman empire. He ruled for 44 years under the titles of Augustus Imperator, meaning 'holy victorious-general.' He also called himself Princeps, 'first citizen of the state'.
- 10.** The period of Roman history beginning with his rule up to 284 AD is called 'the Principate'. His rule and the period following it were peaceful and are known in history as Pax Romana, which means 'Roman Peace'.

11. In 284 AD, Diocletian became ruler. From this time on, Roman civilization declined more rapidly. One of Diocletian's successor, Constantine, built a new capital called Constantinople, on the site of ancient Byzantium, in 330 AD. Not long after, the Roman empire was divided into two empires — Western & Eastern. The Western part soon broke into many pieces. But Eastern part, called as Byzantine empire, continued for a thousand years more.

12. The final blow to the Roman empire at the hands of northern invaders they were German tribes. By 476 AD, the once powerful Roman empire was no more.

13. The Roman worshipped as many gods & goddesses as the Greeks. Jupiter sent rain for the crops; Mars helped them in war; Mercury carried their messages; Neptune, the god of sea; Vesta guarded the home; Juno protected their women.

Contributions of Roman Civilization

- 1.** Roman law and principles of governance are Rome's greatest contribution to the world.
- 2.** So complete was Rome's system of road linking all parts of empire that people could say 'All roads lead to Rome'.
- 3.** The Roman developed their own alphabet and the Latin language became the language of all educated people in western Europe. Latin words are still widely used in science, and Latin is the basis of several European languages — esp. French, Spanish & Italian.
- 4.** Lucretius, Cicero, Marcus Aurelius & Seneca were the famous Roman philosophers.
- 5.** Horace ('Odes') & Virgil ('Aeneid') were the famous Roman poets.
- 6.** Tacitus ('Annals' & 'Histories') was the most famous Roman historian and Pliny, the elder, was the another famous Roman historian.
- 7.** The Romans were the inventors of concrete and could firmly cement bricks and stones together. They also introduced two architectural improvements — the arch and cupolas or domes.
- 8.** Fights between gladiators or between a gladiator and a wild animal, was a popular Roman amusement. Special arenas or amphitheatres were built for these contests. The ruins of the Colosseum, one of the greatest of arenas, can be seen in Rome.