

# The Artios Home Companion Series

## Unit 23: Rome – the Accidental Empire

### Teacher Overview

The rise of the Roman Empire came out of much turmoil and conflict, and the history of the Roman Empire is no different. From its founding until its fall, there was a constant struggle for power and rule between the various Roman leaders. The most well-known of those Roman leaders was Julius Caesar, yet he was not the most powerful. In the midst of the rule of one of the most powerful Roman emperors, Caesar Augustus, a Child was born in a stable, a Child who would change the world by His life, death, burial and resurrection.



Hannibal's Famous Crossing of the Alps

### Reading and Assignments

In this unit, students will:

- Complete one lesson in which they will learn about **the Rise of Rome**, journaling and answering discussion questions as they read.
- Define vocabulary words.
- Visit [www.ArtiosHCS.com](http://www.ArtiosHCS.com) for additional resources.

## Leading Ideas

### The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

*Now muster your troops, O daughter of troops; siege is laid against us; with a rod they strike the judge of Israel on the cheek. But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.*

— Micah 5:1-2

### The Messiah would be a descendant of King David.

*“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”*

— Jeremiah 23:5

### The Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham.

*“In your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”*

— Genesis 22:18

### God promised another prophet like Moses

*“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen— just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ And the Lord said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.’”*

— Deuteronomy 18:15-18

### Isaiah foreshadowed the virgin birth of Jesus.

*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*

— Isaiah 7:14

## Vocabulary

### Lesson 1:

preconceived	forum
menace	republic
legions	phalanx
forbearance	dissension
turbulent	jubilation
obstinate	potentate
anarchy	

## Key People, Places, and Events

The Punic Wars	Scipio
Carthage	Hannibal
Sicily	Cleopatra
General Pompey	Julius Caesar
Mark Antony	Octavian
Gaius Julius Caesar	Octavianus Augustus

## Lesson One

### History Overview and Assignments Showdown Between a Palace and a Stable



*Vercingetorix throws down his arms at the feet of Julius Caesar, by Lionel Royer (1852-1926), 1899*

### Reading and Assignments

- Review the discussion questions and vocabulary, then read the article: *The Rise of Rome*.
- Narrate about today's reading using the appropriate notebook page. Be sure to answer the discussion questions and include key people, events, and dates within the narration.
- Define the vocabulary words in the context of the reading and put the word and its definition in the vocabulary section of your history notebook.
- Be sure to visit [www.ArtiosHCS.com](http://www.ArtiosHCS.com) for additional resources.

### Vocabulary

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## Key People, Places, and Events

The Punic Wars

Scipio

Carthage

Hannibal

Sicily

Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus Augustus

Cleopatra

General Pompey

Julius Caesar

Mark Antony

Octavian

## Discussion Questions

1. What was the cause of the Punic Wars?
2. List some of the main “players” in the Punic Wars.
3. What was the final result of these wars?
4. How did the citizens of Rome react when the Roman armies returned from these wars? Why?
5. What happened to the Carthaginians after they were defeated by Rome?
6. How did the Romans view slaves?
7. Describe the fate of the freeborn farmer.
8. How did many of the rich men and noblemen react to the discontent of the poor?
9. How was Cornelia and her sons Tiberius and Gaius different in their reactions?
10. What did Tiberius Gracchus do to reform the system? How was he treated?
11. How did his brother Gaius try to reform the system? How was he treated?
12. Narrate the story and relationship between General Pompey and Caesar?
13. Once elected dictator by the senate, what type of reforms did Julius Caesar attempt to make?
14. How did Julius Caesar die and why?
15. What two men tried to continue Caesar’s legacy?
16. What was the fate of the land of Egypt during all of this struggle?
17. What does the author mean when he says “the palace and the stable were to meet in open combat?”

*Adapted for Middle School from the book:*

## ***The Story of Mankind***

*by* Hendrik Willem van Loon

### ***The Rise of Rome***

The Roman Empire was an accident. No one planned it. It “happened.” No famous general or statesman or cut-throat ever got up and said “Friends, Romans, citizens, we must found an Empire. Follow me and together we shall conquer all the land from the Gates of Hercules to Mount Taurus.”

Early Rome produced famous generals and equally distinguished statesmen and cut-throats, and Roman armies fought all over the world. But the Roman empire-making was done without a preconceived plan. The average Roman was a very matter-of-fact citizen. He disliked theories about government. When someone began to recite “eastward the course of Roman Empire, etc., etc.,” he hastily left the forum. He just continued to take more and more land because circumstances forced him to do so. He was not driven by ambition or by greed. Both by nature and inclination he was a farmer and wanted to stay at home. But when he was attacked he was obliged to defend himself, and when another country sent across the sea to ask for aid against a distant enemy, the patient Roman marched many dreary miles to defeat this dangerous foe. Once this had been accomplished, he stayed behind to administer his newly conquered provinces lest they fall into the hands of wandering barbarians and become themselves a menace to Roman safety. Before long the Roman Empire was born. It sounds rather complicated, and yet to the contemporaries it was so very simple, as you shall see in a moment.

While Rome was still a small republic,

she fought a series of wars against Carthage, across the Mediterranean Sea. They started over control of the island of Sicily and were called the Punic Wars. In the year 203 B.C., Rome sent a general named Scipio across the sea to carry the Second Punic War into Africa. Carthage called Hannibal back from his occupation of Italy to repel Scipio’s assault. Badly supported by his mercenaries, Hannibal was defeated near Zama. The Romans asked for his surrender, and Hannibal fled to seek aid from the kings of Macedonia and Syria.

The rulers of these two countries (remnants of the empire of Alexander the Great) just then were contemplating an expedition against Egypt. They hoped to divide the rich Nile valley between themselves. The king of Egypt had heard of this and had asked Rome to come to his support. The stage was set for a number of highly interesting plots and counter-plots. But the Romans, with their lack of imagination, rang the curtain down before the play had been fairly started. Their legions completely defeated the heavy Greek phalanx, which was still used by the Macedonians as their battle formation. That happened in the year 197 B.C. at the battle in the plains of Cynoscephalae, or “Dogs’ Heads,” in central Thessaly.

The Romans then marched southward to Attica and informed the Greeks that they had come to “deliver the Hellenes from the Macedonian yoke.” The Greeks, having learned nothing during their years of semi-slavery, used their new freedom in a most

unfortunate way. All the little city-states once more began to quarrel with each other as they had done back in the good old days. The Romans, who had little understanding and less love for these silly bickerings of a race which they rather despised, showed great forbearance. But tiring of these endless dissensions they soon lost patience, invaded Greece, burned down Corinth (to “encourage the other Greeks”) and sent a Roman governor to Athens to rule this turbulent province. In this way, Macedonia and Greece became buffer states which protected Rome’s eastern frontier.

Meanwhile, right across the Hellespont lay the kingdom of Syria. Antiochus III, who ruled that vast land, had shown great eagerness when his distinguished guest, General Hannibal, had explained to him how easy it would be to invade Italy and sack the city of Rome.

Lucius Scipio, a brother of Scipio the African fighter who had defeated Hannibal and his Carthaginians at Zama, was sent to Asia Minor. He destroyed the armies of the Syrian king near Magnesia (in the year 190 B.C.) Shortly afterward, Antiochus was lynched by his own people. Asia Minor became a Roman protectorate, and the small city-republic of Rome became master of most of the lands which bordered upon the Mediterranean.

### **The Roman Empire**

When the Roman armies returned from these many victorious campaigns, they were received with great jubilation. But alas and alack! This sudden glory did not make the country any happier. On the contrary, the endless campaigns had ruined the farmers who had been obliged to do the hard work of empire making. It had placed too much

power in the hands of the successful generals (and their private friends) who had used the war as an excuse for wholesale robbery.

The old Roman republic had been proud of the simplicity which had characterized the lives of her famous men. The new republic felt ashamed of the shabby coats and the high principles which had been fashionable in the days of its grandfathers. It became a land of rich people ruled by rich people for the benefit of rich people. As such it was doomed to disastrous failure, as I shall now tell you.

Within less than a century and a half, Rome had become the master of practically all the land around the Mediterranean. In those early days of history a prisoner of war lost his freedom and became a slave. The Roman regarded war as a very serious business, and he showed no mercy to a conquered foe. After the fall of Carthage, the Carthaginian women and children were sold into bondage together with their own slaves. And a like fate awaited the obstinate inhabitants of Greece, Macedonia, Spain, and Syria when they dared to revolt against the Roman power.

Two thousand years ago a slave was merely a piece of machinery. Nowadays a rich man invests his money in factories. The rich people of Rome (senators, generals and war-profiteers) invested theirs in land and in slaves. They bought or took the land in the newly-acquired provinces. They bought the slaves in open market wherever they happened to be cheapest. During most of the third and second centuries before Christ there was a plentiful supply, and as a result the landowners worked their slaves until they dropped dead in their tracks. Then they simply bought new ones at the nearest

bargain-counter of Corinthian or Carthaginian captives.

And now behold the fate of the freeborn farmer!

He had done his duty toward Rome, and he had fought her battles without complaint. But when he came home after ten, fifteen or twenty years, his lands were covered with weeds and his family had been ruined. But he was a strong man and willing to begin life anew. He sowed and planted and waited for the harvest. He carried his grain to the market together with his cattle and his poultry, to find that the large landowners who worked their estates with slaves could underbid him all along the line. For a couple of years he tried to hold his own. Then he gave up in despair. He left the country and he went to the nearest city. In the city he was as hungry as he had been before on the land. But he shared his misery with thousands of other disinherited beings. They crouched together in filthy hovels in the suburbs of the large cities. They were apt to get sick and die from terrible epidemics. They were all profoundly discontented. They had fought for their country, and this was their reward. They were always willing to listen to those plausible spell-binders who gather around a public grievance like so many hungry vultures, and soon they became a grave menace to the safety of the state.

But the class of the newly-rich shrugged its shoulders. "We have our army and our policemen," they argued. "They will keep the mob in order." And they hid themselves behind the high walls of their pleasant villas and cultivated their gardens and read the poems of a man named Homer, which a Greek slave had just translated into very pleasing Latin hexameters.

But in a few families, the old tradition of unselfish service to the Commonwealth continued. Cornelia, the daughter of Scipio Africanus, had been married to a Roman by the name of Gracchus. She had two sons, Tiberius and Gaius. When the boys grew up they entered politics and tried to bring about certain much-needed reforms. A census had shown that most of the land of the Italian peninsula was owned by two thousand noble families. Tiberius Gracchus, having been elected a tribune, tried to help the freemen. He revived two ancient laws which restricted the number of acres which a single owner might possess. In this way he hoped to revive the valuable old class of small and independent freeholders. The newly-rich called him a robber and an enemy of the state. There were street riots. A party of thugs was hired to kill the popular tribune. Tiberius Gracchus was attacked when he entered the assembly and was beaten to death. Ten years later his brother Gaius tried the experiment of reforming a nation against the expressed wishes of a strong privileged class. He passed a "poor law" which was meant to help the destitute farmers. Eventually it made the greater part of the Roman citizens into professional beggars.

He established colonies of destitute people in distant parts of the empire, but these settlements failed to attract the right sort of people. Before Gaius Gracchus could do more harm he too was murdered and his followers were either killed or exiled. The first two reformers had been gentlemen. The two who followed them were of a very different stamp. They were professional soldiers. One was called Marius. The name of the other was Sulla. Both enjoyed a large personal following.

Sulla was the leader of the landowners. Marius, the victor in a great battle at the foot of the Alps when the Teutons and the Cimbri had been annihilated, was the popular hero of the disinherited freemen.

Now it happened in the year 88 B.C. that the Senate of Rome was greatly disturbed by rumors from Asia. Mithridates, king of a country along the shores of the Black Sea, and a Greek on his mother's side, had seen the possibility of establishing a second Alexandrian empire. He began his campaign for world domination with the murder of all Roman citizens who happened to be in Asia Men, women and children. Such an act, of course, meant war. The Senate equipped an army to march against the king of Pontus and punish him for his crime. But who was to be commander-in-chief?

"Sulla," said the Senate, "because he is consul."

"Marius," said the mob, "because he has been consul five times and because he is the champion of our rights."

Possession is nine points of the law. Sulla happened to be in actual command of the army. He went west to defeat Mithridates, and Marius fled to Africa. There he waited until he heard that Sulla had crossed into Asia. He then returned to Italy, gathered a motley crew of malcontents, marched on Rome, and entered the city with his professional highwaymen, spent five days and five nights slaughtering the enemies of the senatorial party, got himself elected consul, and promptly died from the excitement of the last fortnight.

There followed four years of disorder. Then Sulla, having defeated Mithridates, announced that he was ready to return to

Rome and settle a few old scores of his own. He was as good as his word. For weeks his soldiers were busy executing those of their fellow citizens who were suspected of democratic sympathies. One day they got hold of a young fellow who had been often seen in the company of Marius. They were going to hang him when someone interfered.

"The boy is too young," he said, and they let him go. His name was Julius Caesar. You shall meet him again shortly.

As for Sulla, he became "dictator," which meant sole and supreme ruler of all the Roman possessions. He ruled Rome for four years, and then he died quietly in his bed, having spent the last year of his life tenderly raising his cabbages, as was the custom of so many Romans who had spent a lifetime killing their fellow-men.

But conditions did not grow better. On the contrary, they grew worse. Another general, Gnaeus Pompeius, or Pompey, a close friend of Sulla, went east to renew the war against the ever troublesome Mithridates. He drove that energetic potentate into the mountains, where Mithridates took poison and killed himself, well knowing what fate awaited him as a Roman captive. Next Pompey re-established the authority of Rome over Syria, destroyed Jerusalem, roamed through western Asia trying to revive the myth of Alexander the Great, and at last (in the year 62) returned to Rome with a dozen ship-loads of defeated kings, princes, and generals, all of whom were forced to march in the triumphal procession of this enormously popular Roman who presented his city with the sum of forty million dollars in plunder.

It was necessary that the government of

Rome be placed in the hands of a strong man. Only a few months before, the town had almost fallen into the hands of a good-for-nothing young aristocrat by the name of Catiline, who had gambled away his money and hoped to reimburse himself for his losses by a little plundering. Cicero, a public-spirited lawyer, had discovered the plot, warned the Senate, and had forced Catiline to flee. But there were other young men with similar ambitions, and it was no time for idle talk.

Pompey organized a triumvirate to take charge of affairs. He became the leader of this vigilante committee. Gaius Julius Caesar, who had made a reputation for himself as governor of Spain, was the second in command. The third was an indifferent sort of person by the name of Crassus. He had been elected because he was incredibly rich, having been a successful contractor of war supplies. He soon went upon an expedition against the Parthians and was killed.

As for Caesar, who was by far the ablest of the three, he decided that he needed a little more military glory to become a popular hero. He crossed the Alps and conquered that part of the world which is now called France. Then he hammered a solid wooden bridge across the Rhine and invaded the land of the wild Teutons. Finally he took ship and visited England. Heaven knows where he might have ended if he had not been forced to return to Italy.

Then he learned that Pompey had been appointed dictator for life. This, of course, meant that Caesar was to be placed on the list of the “retired officers,” and the idea did not appeal to him. He remembered that he had begun life as a follower of Marius. He decided to teach the senators and their

“dictator” another lesson. He crossed the Rubicon River which separated the province of Cis-alpine Gaul from Italy. Everywhere he was received as the “friend of the people.” Without difficulty Caesar entered Rome, and Pompey fled to Greece. Caesar followed him and defeated his followers near Pharsalus. Pompey sailed across the Mediterranean and escaped to Egypt. When he landed he was murdered by order of young King Ptolemy. A few days later Caesar arrived. He found himself caught in a trap. Both the Egyptians and the Roman garrison which had remained faithful to Pompey attacked his camp.

But fortune sided with Caesar. He succeeded in setting fire to the Egyptian fleet. Incidentally the sparks of the burning vessels fell on the roof of the famous library of Alexandria (which was just off the waterfront) and destroyed it. Next he attacked the Egyptian army, drove the soldiers into the Nile, drowned Ptolemy, and established a new government under Cleopatra, the sister of the late king.

Just then word reached him that Pharnaces, the son and heir of Mithridates, had gone on the war-path. Caesar marched northward, defeated Pharnaces in a war which lasted five days, sent word of his victory to Rome in the famous sentence “veni, vidi, vici,” which is Latin for “I came, I saw, I conquered,” and returned to Egypt where he fell desperately in love with Cleopatra, who followed him to Rome when he returned to take charge of the government, in the year 46. He marched at the head of not less than four different victory parades, having won four different campaigns.

Then Caesar appeared in the Senate to report upon his adventures, and the grateful

Senate made him “dictator” for ten years. Accepting this position proved to be a fatal step.

The new dictator made serious attempts to reform the Roman state. He made it possible for freemen to become members of the Senate. He conferred the rights of citizenship upon distant communities as had been done in the early days of Roman history. He permitted “foreigners” to exercise influence upon the government. He reformed the administration of the distant provinces, which certain aristocratic families had come to regard as their private possessions. In short he did many things for the good of the majority of the people but which made him thoroughly unpopular with the most powerful men in the state. Half a hundred young aristocrats formed a plot “to save the Republic.” On the Ides of March (the fifteenth of March according to that new calendar which Caesar had brought with him from Egypt), Caesar was murdered when he entered the Senate. Once more Rome was without a master.

There were two men who tried to continue the tradition of Caesar’s glory. One was Antony, his former secretary. The other was Octavian, Caesar’s grand-nephew and heir to his estate. Octavian remained in Rome, but Antony went to Egypt to be near Cleopatra with whom he too had fallen in love, as seems to have been the habit of Roman generals.

A war broke out between the two. In the battle of Actium, Octavian defeated Antony. Antony killed himself, and Cleopatra was left alone to face the enemy. She tried very hard to make Octavian her third Roman conquest. When she saw that she could make no impression upon this very proud

aristocrat, she killed herself, and Egypt became a Roman province.

As for Octavian, he was a very wise young man and did not repeat the mistake of his famous uncle. He knew how people will shy at words. He was very modest in his demands when he returned to Rome. He did not want to be a “dictator.” He would be entirely satisfied with the title of “the Honorable.” But when the Senate, a few years later, addressed him as Augustus—the Illustrious—he did not object, and a few years later the man in the street called him Caesar, or Kaiser, while the soldiers, accustomed to regard Octavian as their commander-in-chief, referred to him as the chief, the emperor, or Emperor. The Republic had become an empire, but the average Roman was hardly aware of the fact.

In 14 A.D. his position as the absolute ruler of the Roman people had become so well established that he was made an object of that divine worship, which hitherto had been reserved for the gods. And his successors were true “emperors”—the absolute rulers of the greatest empire the world had ever seen.

If the truth be told, the average citizen was sick and tired of anarchy and disorder. He did not care who ruled him, provided the new master gave him a chance to live quietly and without the noise of eternal street riots. Octavian assured his subjects forty years of peace. He had no desire to extend the frontiers of his domains. In the year 9 A.D. he contemplated an invasion of the northwestern wilderness which was inhabited by the Teutons. But Varrus, his general, had been killed with all his men in the Teutoburg Woods, and after that the

Romans made no further attempts to civilize these wild people.

They concentrated their efforts upon the gigantic problem of internal reform. But it was too late to do much good. Two centuries of revolution and foreign war had repeatedly killed the best men among the younger generations. It had ruined the class of the free farmers. It had introduced slave labor, against which no freeman could hope to compete. It had turned the cities into beehives inhabited by pauperized and unhealthy mobs of runaway peasants. It had created a large bureaucracy—petty officials who were underpaid and who were forced to take graft in order to buy bread and clothing for their families. Worst of all, it had accustomed people to violence, to bloodshed, and to a barbarous pleasure in the pain and suffering of others.

Outwardly, the Roman state during the first century of our era was a magnificent political structure, so large that Alexander's

empire became one of its minor provinces. Underneath this glory there lived millions upon millions of poor and tired human beings, toiling like ants who have built a nest underneath a heavy stone. They worked for the benefit of someone else. They shared their food with the animals of the fields. They lived in stables. They died without hope.

It was the seven hundred and fifty-third year since the founding of Rome. Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus Augustus was living in the palace of the Palatine Hill, busily engaged upon the task of ruling his empire.

In a little village of distant Syria, Mary, the wife of Joseph the carpenter, was tending her little boy, born in a stable of Bethlehem.

This is a strange world.

Before long, the palace and the stable were to meet in open combat.

And the stable was to emerge victorious.