

# The Roman Empire

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## Caesar Augustus

- **Caesar Augustus** was the nephew and adopted heir of Julius Caesar.
- After Julius was assassinated, Augustus and two others, **Lepidus** and **Marc Antony**, formed a **Triumvirate** (3 Consuls ruling together) to head the Republic.
- Augustus quietly worked against the other two. Lepidus fell out of favor and was expelled from the Triumvirate. Marc Antony was living in Egypt with Cleopatra, while Augustus was living in Rome. Augustus was able to manipulate public opinion against Antony.
- In 31 BCE, Antony and Augustus fought at the Battle of Actium, and Augustus won. In 27 BCE, Augustus declared himself Emperor. Although the Senate and Assemblies continued to exist, the Republic, for the most part, was at an end.



## Five Good Emperors

- Following the death of Augustus, 12 Caesars ruled Rome. Some were good and effective, like Vespasian and Titus, but most were corrupt or mentally unstable like Caligula, Nero and Tiberius.
- After this era, Rome was ruled by five good, non-dynastic Emperors – Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius. These Emperors ushered in an era of peace and prosperity known as the **Pax Romana**.
- Under the five good emperors the Empire expanded dramatically, reaching its greatest extent under Trajan.
- Unfortunately, following the death of Marcus Aurelius in 180 CE, the Roman government fractured into civil wars and infighting. From 235–284, (a period of 50 years) there were 22 Emperors, and almost all died violently.



## Pax Romana

- The **Pax Romana** was a period of essentially 200 years (from 27 BCE–180 CE) of peace and prosperity.
- During this time the Empire expanded and the volume of trade increased dramatically. Trade along the silk roads flourished from Rome to the Middle East and all the way to Han China. Rome also became exceedingly wealthy as loot from outlying provinces poured into the treasury.
- Many public building projects were undertaken during this time period. Augustus claimed, "I found Rome a city of bricks, and left it a city of marble."



## Extent of the Empire

- Under Emperor Trajan, around 100 CE, the Roman Empire encompassed over 2.5 million square miles! It stretched from the British Isles in the north to northern Africa, from Spain & Portugal in the west to the Middle East.
- Rome, in fact, controlled all the land around the Mediterranean Sea, and thus it was sometimes referred to as the "Roman Lake".
- The Empire slowly receded from its vastness, as nomadic tribes and internal rebellions chipped away at Rome's holdings.

