

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

