


# The Fall of the Roman Empire



# The Roman Empire at its Height

- The Roman Empire became huge
- It covered most of Europe, North Africa, and some of Asia
- The Empire reached its height under Emperor Diocletian (284-305 CE)



 *The Empire Under Diocletian, 284–305. Under pressure from external enemies, Rome pulled back from parts of western Europe, the Balkans, and Mesopotamia.*

# Expansion: Good or Bad?



- What are some problems that an empire or country might have by being stretched out too far?

# The Decline Begins



Commodus from the  
movie Gladiator

- 180 CE Marcus Aurelius died
- His son, Commodus, took control of Rome
- Commodus was a poor leader, killed by his bodyguard
- Time of disarray follows

# Political Problems



- Poor leaders weakened the government
- Frequent fights for power
- Many officials took bribes
- Talented people chose not to serve due to dangers of government life

# Social Problems



- Taxes were too great, many rich people stopped paying
- People stopped attending school
- Large number of people enslaved
- Plague (disease) spread throughout Rome, killing 1 in 10
- Famine: There was not enough food to feed people

# Economic Problems



- Farmers lost land, unable to grow and sell crops, out of work (and famine)
- People bought fewer goods, shops closed
- Inflation occurred: Rapidly rising prices. Money lost value because fewer taxes paid.
- Coins lost value: Less gold put in, people found out (caused inflation)
- Bartering grew: sell goods without using money
- No taxes, no money

# Military Problems



- Military only in it for money (mercenaries)
- No money to pay military = weak military
- Constant threat of invaders on empire's borders
- Weak military, unable to stop border invasions



# Diocletian



- 284 CE, Diocletian became emperor
- Tried reforms (political changes)
- Set price limits (if a person went beyond limits, put to death) and ordered workers to stay in jobs to death

# Dividing the Empire



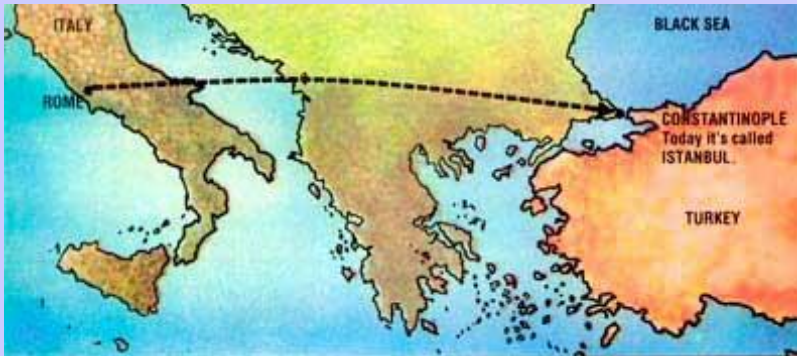
- Diocletian felt that the only way to save the empire was to divide it in half
- Created two empires: Western and Eastern
- Western Empire: Europe/ North Africa and city of Rome
- Eastern Empire: Turkey/ Asia and city of Byzantium
- Two emperors, emperor in charge of Rome was senior

# Constantine



- Diocletian retired and Constantine took his place as emperor
- Constantine (312 CE) united the empire again under one ruler
- First Christian emperor
- Edict of Milan?
- Attempted reforms
- Main reform: sons had to follow fathers' trade

# Constantinople



- Rome continued to decline
- Constantine moved the capital from Rome to city of Byzantium
- City name changed to Constantinople (today is Istanbul)

# Current Day



# Theodosius



- Constantine died in 337 CE, replaced by Theodosius
- Theodosius could not rule the empire, divided in two again
- Western Roman Empire with capital in Rome
- Eastern Rome Empire with capital in Constantinople

# Rome invaded



- Western Empire unable to hold off German tribes on its borders
- Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Vandals, Saxons
- German tribes wanted warmer area, Roman riches, and to flee the Huns

# Visigoths



- Rome agreed to allow the Visigoths to live inside of Roman boundaries
- Romans treated Visigoths badly
- Visigoths rebelled and defeated the Romans
- Visigoth leader, Alaric, captured Rome in 410 CE



# Vandals

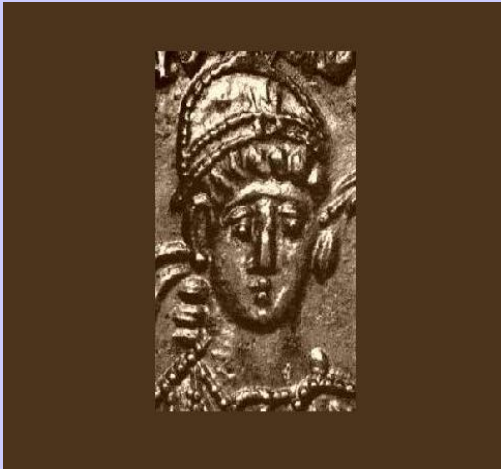


- Vandals followed Visigoths and spent 12 days stripping Rome of valuables (vandalism)
- Many more German invaders followed
- Finally, a German general named Odoacer defeated the western emperor Romulus Augustulus (14 years old, little Augustus)

# The Fall



- Augustulus was defeated in 476 CE
- For this reason, this date is given as the fall of the Western Roman Empire
- Western Empire was divided into many kingdoms that adopted many of the customs of Rome



# Odoacer



# Eastern Roman Empire



- Although the Western Empire fell in 476 CE, the Eastern Roman Empire continued to prosper for 1,000 more years
- Became known as the Byzantine Empire