

*A Changing Empire*

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| **Introduction**  |
| The Roman Empire is one of the most fascinating parts of European history for students to study. In our popular imagination, we see lots of marble—soaring columns and statues of the gods and marching legions of the Roman army. But in its span of five centuries, the Roman Empire changed greatly in culture, people, and land.This lesson will help introduce students to the multifaceted aspects of the Roman Empire as it spans its full history. Students will specifically be able to develop skills of developing and analyzing timelines and maps as they see a larger picture of the Roman Empire and how it acts as a pivotal point in the historical development of Europe. |
| **Indiana Standards Connections:**  **WH.7.2** Locate and analyze primary sources and secondary sources related to an event or issue of the past.**WH.7.5** Use technology and historical data in the process of conducting and presenting historical research.   | **Compelling Question(s):**   How did the Roman Empire change its boundaries over time?       |
| **Lesson Objectives:**  Students will:   Examine maps of the Roman Empire from the reigns of successive emperors to make connections between historical events and the reach of the Empire.Students will discuss how borders—both ancient and contemporary—are the product of warfare, colonialism, trade, and the expenditure of political power. |
| **Materials**  |
|   The necessary materials will largely be dependent on the emperors that the instructor chooses to highlight for the class (*recommended rulers: Augustus; Claudius; Trajan; Gallienus; Aurelian; Valentinian III—these are rulers for whom the boundaries of the Empire changed significantly, although teachers can use* [*this YouTube video*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5zYpWcz1-E&feature=emb_title) *to select their own)*. A complete list of Roman emperors can be found [here](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Roman_emperors). When teachers have selected the emperors they wish to highlight, they will need maps of the Empire during their reign—[this video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5zYpWcz1-E&feature=emb_title) shows the year-by-year change of the Empire’s boundaries, and teachers can select ones that they wish to highlight, maybe the beginning and end of the reign. This [site](https://www.vox.com/world/2018/6/19/17469176/roman-empire-maps-history-explained) also has some maps that might be useful.  |
| **Learning Plan**  |
| **Activities** 1. This activity will have students developing geographic skills alongside research-based analysis. Split students into small groups and assign each group a Roman emperor. Give each group a set of maps that are associated with their ruler (recommend a map at the start of their rule, the end, and at any significant points in between—3-4).
2. Students will analyze their maps and work together to label major features, trade routes, or other items that the teacher wishes to highlight. Students will then compare their maps and examine how the boundaries of the Empire changed at different points during their ruler’s reign.
3. Have students conduct research on their ruler and discover what happened during their rule to result in changes in the Empire’s borders. For example, under the reign of Septimius Severus and his extensive military campaigning, the Empire reached its greatest extent. Students can identify areas of specific wins and losses in campaigns.
4. After students have labeled their maps, they can create a timeline for their leader that reflects changes that happened during the reign of their leader.
5. When all groups have completed labeling their maps and creating their timelines, they can be posted around the classroom. Give students some time to tour around the room and see how the Empire changed before and after their own time. Some optional work could include filling out notes or worksheets for each of the map stations.
6. For wrap-up discussion, discuss similarities and differences that students observed across the different stations. What tactics for expansion were used by various rulers? What proved effective, and where were their vulnerabilities? How can we characterize the actions of the Roman Empire with regard to their changing borders? Was it military-style imperialism? Economic colonialism? What can we speculate about how the citizens of newly acquired areas might have felt about becoming part of the Empire? What kind of cultural differences would have existed across different regions of the Empire? How might that have affected the ability of Rome to consolidate a sense of identity? Can we see similarities in other countries/empires?
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| **Assessment Suggestions**    Possible assessment suggestions include reviewing the maps and timelines that students create, notes or worksheets that they complete as they compare their work with other groups, or discussion notes from a seminar-style discussion on themes that they see across time.  |
| **Extensions**  This lesson can be expanded by comparing the fluctuations that happened throughout Roman history with similar shifts in other empires (e.g. Greece under Philip the Great; the Mongol Empire; different dynasties in China; the expansion of the United States; the British Empire). Discuss how similar themes of colonialism, imperialism, and militarism can be found across time and across cultures. |

Bust of Septimius Severus Activity Possibilities

Some of the best opportunities for education are *integrative*—meaning that students are able to make connections across disciplines to reinforce the knowledge that they are developing. For example, they may be learning about Renaissance Italy in World Studies at the same time that they read Dante’s *Inferno* in English class while also studying Botticelli in Art. Feel free to combine and adapt some of the ideas across disciplines and standards to best suit your particular context. You can also collaborate with other teachers at your school or supplement the resources provided by contacting your librarian.

**Note: The following ideas are meant to give general guidance for teachers to include artifacts and other material culture in their classrooms. They are not meant to be treated as comprehensive activities or lessons that are one-size-fits-all for any classroom. They should be personalized to best fit the needs of a teacher’s individual context in accordance with prior student learning, student abilities, available resources, and any curricular guidance.**

**Art**

**Visual Arts – Presenting:**

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| VA:Pr4.1.Ia | Analyze, select, and curate artifacts and/or artworks for presentation and preservation. |
| VA:Pr6.1.2a | Analyze how art exhibited inside and outside of schools (such as in museums, galleries, virtual spaces, and other venues) contributes to communities. |

*Art cannot be understood in a vacuum—it is important to understand the context around its presentation. What stories are told in the way that an artifact is presented and described? Whose voice is used? What might be missing? What is the importance of having art presented and viewed as part of the community? As part of our culture?*

*These are all questions that students can think about as they search online for pieces of art that they would want to put together in an art exhibit. What story do they want to tell with the items they choose? How do they justify those decisions? Students can begin to develop argumentation skills by having to articulate why certain pieces of art (and the cultures they represent) should be included or excluded.*

*As students develop their exhibit, they can also practice writing the labels that would appear alongside the item. What information is critical for the audience to have? How can you take the narrative behind your exhibit and best convey it to your audience? There can also be a spatial/visual component by asking students to actually design their exhibit space and describe a particular narrative that they want to accomplish through the construction of the space and the ordering of the objects.*

**Social Studies**

**Grade 6: History, Places, and Cultures in Europe and Americas**

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| 6.1.1 | Summarize the rise, decline, and cultural achievements of ancient civilizations in Europe and Mesoamerica. Ex: Greek, Roman, Mayan, Incan, and Aztec |
| 6.2.1 | Compare and contrast major forms of governments in Europe and the Americas throughout history.Examples: Greek democracies, Roman Republic, Aztec monarchy, parliamentary government, U.S. Republic, and totalitarianism. |
| 6.3.4 | Describe and compare major cultural characteristics of regions in Europe and the Western Hemisphere. Ex: Language, religion, recreation, clothing, diet, music/dance, family structure, and traditions. |
| 6.3.11 | Differentiate between the terms anthropology, archeology, and artifacts while explaining how these contribute to our understanding of societies in the present and the past.  |

*Students (either individually or in small groups) could be assigned a civilization for study and they could use that civilization as a lens throughout the semester to study things like art, science, religion, language, etc. Students could present on these findings periodically and expand their understandings of how various civilizations developed parallel to each other.*

*Using archaeological remains (e.g. art, pottery, weapons, tools, etc.) how can these civilizations be compared? What did they value? What aesthetic tastes did they have? Have those tastes remained in any contemporary art?*

**World History and Civilization: Classical Civilization (1000 BCE to 600CE)**

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| WH.2.6 | Trace the changes that culminated in the end of the Republic and the formation of the Roman Empire. |
| WH.2.7 | Examine the spread of Christianity and Christianity’s impact on the Roman Empire. |
| WH.2.8 | Analyze the causes, conditions, and consequences of the decline and fall of the western part of the Roman Empire.  |

**World History and Civilization: Historical Thinking**

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| WH.7.2 | Locate and analyze primary sources and secondary sources related to an event or issue of the past. |
| WH.7.5 | Use technology and historical data in the process of conducting and presenting historical research.  |

*The Roman Empire provides myriad opportunities for studying change over time—a key skill for historical thinking. The Roman Empire is often seen as static and monolithic, rather than interrogated across a dynamic history of five centuries. Students can develop research skills as they investigate primary and secondary sources that describe these things.*

*A specific skill that could be developed relates to geography. Have students trace the changing borders of the Roman Empire over time. Under what circumstances did the borders expand or retract (students could identify key military conflicts or discuss the development of new colonies)? It would be worth noting that the Empire reached its greatest geographic extent during the rule of Severus. What kinds of trade opportunities were made available or were lost in the fluctuation of these borders? Students can map the borders with each successive ruler, plot trade routes and the locations of significant events, and assess the strengths and weaknesses of each ruler according to their findings.*

*Apart from geographic change over time, students can use a timeline of Rome’s leaders as a lens for analysis. Students can investigate different aspects of Roman society like culture, food, dress, or social equality across the reign of different emperors. How did society change over time? What new developments (e.g. the rise of Christianity; the split between East and West) affected the Empire and how were they addressed?*

**Language Arts**

**Grade 1 Reading Skills**:

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| 1.RL. 2.2 | Retell stories, fables, and fairy tales in sequence, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson |

*Ancient Rome provides a vast corpus of stories and tales for students to learn about. Rome’s mythology, heroic tales, and founding myth can all provide stories that can introduce students to narrative structure as well as some history.*

**Grade 5 Writing Skills:**

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| 5.W.5 | Conduct short research assignments and tasks on a topic.* With support, formulate a research question (e.g., What were John Wooden’s greatest contributions to college basketball?).
* Identify and acquire information through reliable primary and secondary sources.
* Summarize and paraphrase important ideas and supporting details, and include direct quotations where appropriate, citing the source of information.
* Avoid plagiarism and follow copywright guidelines for use of images, pictures, etc.
* Present the research information, choosing from a variety of sources.
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*There is an option for students to learn how to conduct research on people, places, or things using Roman leaders as a guide. For example:*

* *Start with a research question:*
* *Information can be acquired by showing students how to use search engines and find reliable information online, or in print.*
* *Find and dissect a source together as a class by taking out important ideas, distinguishing between paraphrasing and direct quotation, and correctly citing the source.*
* *Brainstorm ways to present the answers to your question.*

*Once the teacher has demonstrated, students can work on their own projects. This activity also provides great connections to history and social studies standards.*