

**ROMAN EMPIRE (27
BCE - 476 CE): THE PAX
ROMANA, 27 BCE TO
180 CE**



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Description

Through the investigation of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the details of the Pax Romana (Roman Peace), how the emperors of the day used their wealth to bring prosperity to the citizens and why the era ended in 180 CE with the death of Marcus Aurelius.

Subjects

Art
Art History
Urban Planning
Physical Science
Engineering
European History
World History

Grade Level

11-12

Duration

90 minutes

Tour Links

- Forum Romanum
- Curia Julia
- Vatican Museums
- Various Aqueducts
- Pantheon
- Trajan's Column

Essential Questions

- What was the "Pax Romana"? Who were the emperors of the Pax Romana?
- What changes did Augustus bring to Rome? Why is his reign considered to be the start of the Pax Romana?
- What types of building projects took place during the Pax Romana? How did ordinary Romans benefit from these projects? What role did concrete play in the building projects?
- Why did the Pax Romana end in 180 CE when Marcus Aurelius died?

Academic Summary

If anyone should carefully calculate the abundance of waters in Rome's public fountains, baths, pools, open canals, homes, gardens, and suburban estates, or the miles of delivery channels, the tall arcades, the tunnels under mountains and bridges across valleys, he would admit that there is nothing on earth more worthy of our wonder.

Pliny the Elder, Natural History (commonly known as the Encyclopedia) (approx. 77-79 CE)

... if the Greeks had the repute of aiming most happily in the founding of cities, in that they aimed at beauty, strength of position, harbors, and productive soil, the Romans had the best foresight in those matters which the Greeks made but little account of, such as the construction of roads and aqueducts, and of sewers that could wash out the filth of the city into the Tiber. Moreover, they have so constructed also the roads which run throughout the country, by adding both cuts through hills and embankments across valleys that their wagons can carry boat-loads; and the sewers, vaulted with close-fitting stones, have in some places left room enough for wagons loaded with hay to pass through them.²¹² And water is brought into the city through the aqueducts in such quantities that veritable rivers flow through the city and the sewers; and almost every house has cisterns, and service-pipes, and copious fountains ... In a word, the early Romans made but little account of the beauty of Rome, because they were occupied with other, greater and more necessary, matters; whereas the later Romans, and particularly those of to?day and in my time, have not fallen short in this respect either — indeed, they have filled the city with many beautiful structures. In fact, Pompey, the Deified Caesar, Augustus, his sons and friends, and wife and sister, have outdone all others in their zeal for buildings and in the expense incurred. ... And again, if, on passing to the old Forum, you saw one forum after another ranged along the old one, and basilicas, and temples, and saw also the Capitolium and the works of art there and those of the Palatium and Livia's Promenade, you would easily become oblivious to everything else outside. Such is Rome.

Strabo, Geographia, Book V, Chapter 3 (approx. 23 CE)

By 27 BCE, at the end of the Roman Civil Wars, Augustus Caesar stood at the pinnacle of Roman political and social society. His reign ushered in a time of peace and prosperity in the Roman Empire known as the "Pax Romana". Over the next two centuries (ending in 180 CE), emperors such as Augustus, Trajan, Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius oversaw the construction of many public works projects in the Eternal City (made with Roman Concrete – a material in widespread use by the early years of the Common Era), extended freedom and prosperity to their citizens, and generally used their power and influence to maintain a relative peace. While Imperial Rome during the Pax Romana had its daily problems such as a deep division between rich and poor, the age of Nero and the Great Fire, the almost constant persecution of Christians, and a difficulty in some provinces of maintaining control of the local populations, the era overall was a peaceful and prosperous one.

Through the investigation of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the details of the Pax Romana (Roman Peace), how the emperors of the day used their wealth to bring prosperity to the citizens and why the era ended in 180 CE with the death of Marcus Aurelius.

Objectives

1. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain the “Pax Romana” or “Roman Peace” 27 BCE-180 CE.
2. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain how Augustus, Trajan, Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius contributed to the Pax Romana.
3. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain how the building of various public works projects in Rome during the Pax Romana helped the citizens of the city.
4. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain why the Pax Romana ended with the death of Marcus Aurelius in 180 CE.

Procedures

I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: Why did the Roman Republic “evolve” into the Roman Empire during the Civil War? (5 min)
- Handouts – Copies of documents and readings from the websites listed. (5 min)

II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture / PPT – Rome in the Golden Age (20 min)
- Video – Pax Romana and Roman Aqueducts (15 min for both videos)
- Independent Activity – Students read the articles on the Pax Romana, taking notes as appropriate (20 min)
- Suggestion: Have the students read some of these articles and sources for homework before class.
- Group Activity – Socratic Seminar: Discussion on the Pax Romana: Why was Rome relatively stable during the Pax Romana? What types of prosperity did Roman citizens enjoy during the Roman Peace? (15 min)

III. Closure

- Assessment / DBQ – Essay: Explain in detail the Pax Romana, giving examples of the types of building projects different emperors undertook in the Eternal City and how those imperial public works brought prosperity to Roman citizens of the era.

Extension

On tour: Maps of Ancient Rome / Via dei Fori Imperiali

While on tour, you will visit the Forum and other ancient Roman sites. Between the Colosseum and the Vittorio Emanuele Monument is a street known as the Via dei Fori Imperiali. Coming from the Colosseum, students should look to their left. Attached to the exterior wall of the Basilica of Maxentius are 4 maps showing the growth of the Roman Empire. They are not from the Pax Romana, although the 4th map shows the extent of the empire during Trajan’s time mid-2nd century. Students with a sharp eye will notice that there seems to be a 5th map missing. The maps date from the Fascist Era and were ordered to be placed there by Mussolini in the 1930s. After the war ended, the new Italian government ordered the last panel taken down, but left the remaining ones.

Web Links

Lesson Plan Websites

- www.ushistory.org/civ/6c.asp
“The Pax Romana” website
- www.historyguide.org/ancient/lecture12b.html
The History Guide – Lectures on Ancient and Medieval European History: Augustus Caesar and the Pax Romana
- www.mariamilani.com/ancient_rome/pax_romana.htm
Pax Romana website
- penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Strabo/
Strabo: The Geography (website)
- www.ancient.eu.com/hadrian/
“Hadrian” (website)
- www.classicsunveiled.com/romeh/html/imppeaceov.html
The Imperial Peace (Website)
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_concrete
“Roman Concrete” – Wikipedia article
- archserve.id.ucsb.edu/courses/arhistory/152k/concrete.html
Roman Concrete – at the University of California at Santa Barbara website
- io9.com/5825459/the-roman-city-of-pompeii-pictures-of-a-lost-world-frozen-in-time
The Lost City of Pompeii: Pictures of an Alien World, Frozen in Time (website)
- classics.mit.edu/Augustus/deeds.html
“The Deeds of the Divine Augustus” – by Augustus, written in 14 CE. Translated by Thomas Bushnell.
- www.markville.ss.yrdsb.edu.on.ca/projects/classof2008/cotey/chung/PaxRomana.htm
Pax Romana – on the Markville Secondary School (Ontario, Canada) website
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKBc3_fKHtA
Roman Bath (video) – this 50-minute PBS video, although perhaps too long for classroom use, has great images and explanations of the Roman baths. Highly recommended for students and teachers.
- multimedialearning.org/FreeDownloads/RomeInTheGoldenAge.ppt
Rome in the Golden Age – PowerPoint Presentation
- www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1
Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video) – great 2-minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and history classes. From Shilpa Duvoor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, CA – highly recommended for teachers.
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=FN1v5FYkTLQ
Roman Engineering – Aqueducts (video)
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFbXqSoXznU
Pax Romana (video)

Background Information

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustus
“Augustus” – Wikipedia article
- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_History_\(Pliny\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_History_(Pliny))
“Natural History (Pliny)” – Wikipedia article
- www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/italy/country_profile
On the Road: Italy (country profile) – from Passports Educational Travel
- www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/italy/rome
On the Road: Rome – from Passports Educational Travel
- www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/italy/the_vatican

Other Relevant Passports Lesson Plans

- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/ancient-rome-rape-of-the-sabine-women
Ancient Rome – Rape of the Sabine Women
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/ancient-rome-romulus-and-remus
Ancient Rome – Romulus and Remus
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/roman-republic-punic-wars
Roman Republic (509 BCE – 27 BCE) – Punic Wars
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/roman-empire-nero-and-the-great-fire-64CE
Roman Empire – Great Fire of Rome 64 CE
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/roman-empire-pompeii-eruption
Roman Empire – Pompeii and Herculaneum 79 CE
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/roman-empire-pompeii-villa-of-the-mysteries
Roman Empire – Pompeii: Villa of the Mysteries
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/roman-empire-pax-romana
Roman Empire – Pax Romana
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/roman-britannia
Roman Britannia – An Overview
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/roman-britain-hadrians-wall
Roman Britannia – Hadrian's Wall
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/france/roman-gaul-gallic-wars
Roman Gaul – The Gallic Wars: Caesar's Greatest Triumph
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/spain/hannibal-barca-of-carthage-second-punic-war
Hannibal of Carthage: Enemy of Rome
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/turkey/byzantine-istanbul-constantinople
Byzantine Empire – Constantinople: New Rome

Key Terms

- Aqueduct
- Augustus Caesar
- Concrete
- Emperor
- Hadrian
- Marcus Aurelius
- Pax Romana
- Pliny the Elder
- Roman Baths
- Roman Empire
- Roman Senate

