

Name: _____

GEOGRAPHY AND THE RISE OF ROME

DIRECTIONS: READ THE PASSAGE, TRY TAKING NOTES THROUGHOUT, AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS AT THE END OF EACH SECTION (REMEMBER TO USE COMPLETE SENTENCES).

From a small town on the Tiber River, Rome grew into a mighty power. Rome's geography -- its central location and good climate -- were important factors in its success and growth. The city's rise as a military power began when the Romans went to war and conquered neighboring Italian tribes.

The Geography of Italy

Rome eventually became the center of one of the greatest civilizations of the ancient world. In fact, the people of Rome conquered many territories you would be familiar with including Greece, Egypt, and Asia Minor (Turkey).

Italy, where Rome was built is a peninsula in southern Europe. If you look at the map (on next page), you can see that Italy looks like a high-heeled boot sticking out into the Mediterranean Sea.

Physical Features

Look at the map again to find Italy's two major mountain ranges. In the north are the Alps, Europe's highest mountains. Another range, the Apennines (A-puh-nynz), runs the length of the Italian Peninsula. This rugged land made it hard for ancient people to cross from one side of the peninsula to the other. In addition, some of Italy's mountains, such as Mount Vesuvius, are volcanic. Their eruptions could devastate Roman towns. Not much of Italy is flat. Most of the land that isn't mountainous is covered with hills. Throughout history, people have built cities on these hills for defense. As a result, many of the ancient cities of Italy -- including Rome -- sat atop hills. Rome was built on

seven hills.



Several rivers flow out of Italy's mountains. Because these rivers were a source of fresh water, people also built their cities near them. For example, Rome lies on the Tiber River.

Climate

Most of Italy, including the area around Rome, has warm, dry summers and mild rainy winters. This climate is similar to that of southern California. Italy's mild climate allows people to grow a wide variety of crops. Grains, citrus fruits, grapes and olives all grow well there. A plentiful food supply was one key factor in Rome's early growth.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is a peninsula?

2. What does the shape of Italy resemble?

3. What are the two major mountain ranges of Italy?

4. Why would it be difficult for ancient people to travel through Italy?

5. How did Italy's climate help ancient people prosper?

Rome's Legendary Origins

Rome's early history is wrapped in mystery. No written records exist, and we have little evidence of the city's earliest days. All we have found are ancient ruins that suggest people lived in the area of Rome as early as the 800s BCE. *However*, we know very little about how they lived.

Would it surprise you to think that the ancient Romans were as curious about their early history as we are today? Rome's leaders wanted their city to have a glorious past that would

make the Roman people proud. Imagining that glorious past, they told legends, or stories about great heroes and kings who built the city.

Aeneas

The Romans believed their history could be traced back to a great Trojan hero named Aeneas. When the Greeks destroyed Troy in the Trojan War, Aeneas fled with his followers. After a long and dangerous journey, he reached Italy. The story of his trip is told in the *Aeneid*, an epic poem written by a poet named Virgil around 20 BCE.

According to the story, when Aeneas reached Italy, he found several groups of people living there. He formed an alliance with one of these groups, a people called the Latins. Together they fought the other people of Italy. After defeating these opponents, Aeneas married the daughter of the Latin king. Aeneas, his son, and their descendants became prominent rulers in Italy.

Romulus and Remus

Among the descendants of Aeneas were the founders of Rome. According to Roman legends, these founders were twin brothers named Romulus and Remus. In the story, these boys led exciting lives. When they were babies, they were put in a basket and thrown into the Tiber river. They didn't drown, though, because a wolf rescued them. The wolf (Lupa) cared for the boys for many years. Eventually, a shepherd found the boys and adopted them.

After they grew up, Romulus and Remus decided to build a city to mark the spot where the wolf had rescued them. While they were planning the city, Remus mocked one of his brother's ideas. In a fit of anger, Romulus killed Remus. He then built the city, and named it Rome after himself.

Rome's Early Kings

According to ancient historians, Romulus was the first king of Rome, taking the throne in 753 BCE. Modern historians believe that Rome could have been founded within 50 years before or after that date.

Roman records list seven kings who ruled the city. Not all of them were Roman. Rome's last three kings were Etruscans, members of a people who lived north of Rome. The Etruscans, who had been influenced by Greek colonies in Italy, lived in Italy before Rome was founded.

The Etruscan kings made great contributions to Roman society. They built huge temples and Rome's first sewer. Many historians think that the Romans learned their alphabet and numbers from the Etruscans.

The last Roman king was said to have been a cruel man who had many people killed, including his own advisors. Finally, a group of nobles rose up against him. According to tradition, he was overthrown in 509 BCE. The nobles, who no longer wanted kings, created a new government, the Republic.

Create a timeline using the dates mentioned in the Rome's Legendary Origins section of the reading.