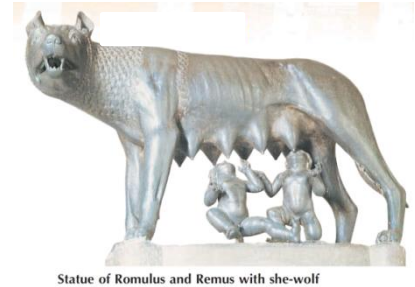


History – Chapter 1

Britain and the Roman Empire under Hadrian (AD 117-138)



Introduction.- The Roman Republic. According to Ancient legends, Rome was founded in **753 B.C.** by two descendants of the gods - the twin brothers Romulus and Remus. Rome at first was an **aristocracy**, with power in the hands of the wealthy landowning nobles, the **patricians**. Over the course of centuries, small farmers and city workers - known as **plebeians** - clamoured for democratic reforms and gained the right to elect magistrates able to defend their rights – the **tribunes** – to **enact laws** (in people's assemblies), and hold all **government offices**.



Statue of Romulus and Remus with she-wolf

In **451 B.C.**, the first written law code in Rome was carved onto twelve tablets that were set up in the central market. The **Republic** was born!

The fall of the Republic and the rise of the Imperial power - In a series of wars **Rome conquered** the Italian peninsula, captured Greek colonies around the Mediterranean Sea, conquered Greece, Egypt, and most of the Mediterranean area. These wars contributed to the **rise of powerful generals** (like Caesar), who soon competed for power: as they won victories abroad, they returned home to reap political awards. These personal struggles brought about **civil war** and put an end to the democratic **Republican system, which collapsed in 27 BCE**.

Julius Caesar eventually took full power over Rome as its dictator. After his assassination in **44 BC**, **Octavian** - Caesar's nephew - ruled and defeated his rivals at Actium (31 BC). He was then crowned Rome's first emperor, **Augustus**, "Exalted One". His reign, from 27 BC to AD 14, was distinguished by stability and peace. It was also an age of such great poets as Virgil and Horace, and historians such as Livy. At his death he was **worshipped as a protective god**, closely associated with the cult of Rome.

Key questions - *How large was the Roman Empire? What was the power of the Emperor? Did Roman subjects enjoy any rights? Why were conquered populations from northern Britain to the Middle East such willing adopters of Roman ways? What were the limitations to the power of Rome?*

1. Under Hadrian's rule- an empire still at its height.

1a – An overstretched empire

Under Hadrian, the Roman empire was still at its height, even if it was under a permanent threat of invasion. It stretched from the Atlantic to Jordan (from Britain to Arabia, i.e. modern Palestine), from Dacia to the north – Dacia was north of Danube - to northern

Africa (Mauretania, Aegyptus, etc.) to the south. It's political and economic centre was Rome – the capital- but it was mainly focused on the Mediterranean Sea as a whole. The Empire was diverse and in the course of time it split into two parts, according to an East-West dividing line, which corresponded to the limit of the Greek and Oriental cultural influence. The East - always richer and stronger - survived to the collapse of the Western Roman empire in AD 476, and continued as the Byzantine Empire through the European Middle Ages. (cf Homework 1).



1b – Defending borders.

The most difficult areas to control were **the borders**, especillay **in the north** where skilful and brave fighters - like **Germans, Britons, Goths**, etc. - always posed a threat to the Romans. Most of the legions were placed along this northern boundary. In **England**, which became a Roman province under the emperor Claudius in AD 43, the frontier was marked for many years by a **great wall** which the Romans built across the width of England, near its present border with Scotland. The wall was built during the reign of the emperor Hadrian (cf. homework 2 + quiz on Hadrian).

1c – Ruling a vast empire.

The Empire was divided into **provinces** – ruled by a military governor – and **cities**, which were autonomous. Cities enjoyed different privileges according to their status :

- **Roman colonies (*coloniae*)** were founded and settled by Romans, especially legionary veterans. The colony formed the stationary rear-guard of the army, and the four British colonies—Colchester, Lincoln, Gloucester and York—were stepping-stones in the progressive conquest of the island. These cities highly contributed to spreading the cultural and political model of Rome. People enjoyed full citizenship.

- **Municipalities**: the municipal title was an honour bestowed to native and allied towns which had reached by natural progress some size and some civilization of a Roman (or Italian) kind. In Britain, the old tribal capital of Verulam, which had received the title before the Boudiccan revolt, perhaps as a counterpart to the colonial rank awarded to (or inflicted upon) Colchester.

- **Native cities or districts (*civitates*)**: the development of agriculture and trade tended to stabilise the native populations around townships. Some were former religious or military locations, or developed at the crossroads of trade routes with Rome. Natives were subjects to Rome, without any political rights.

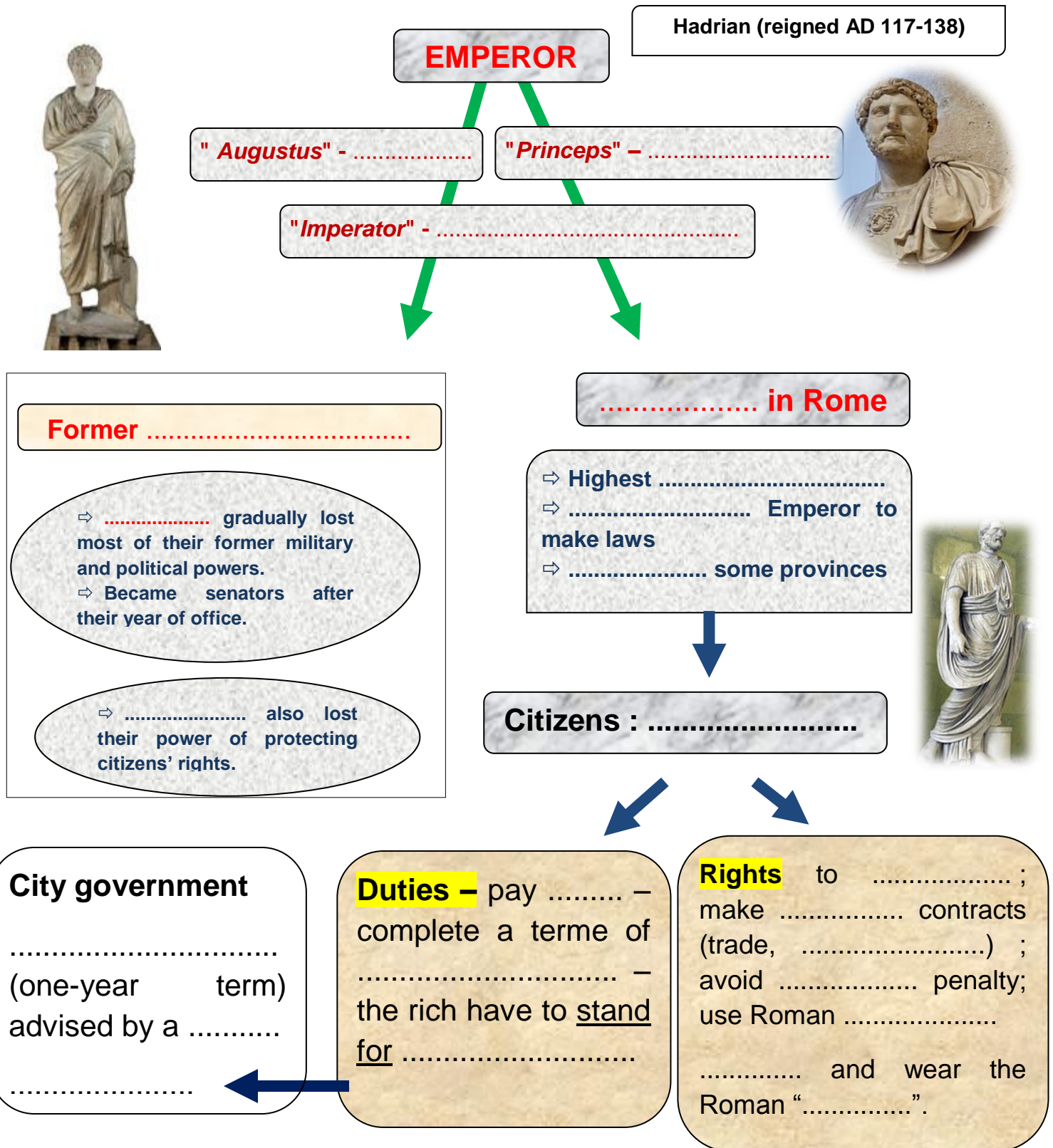
2. Imperial power & Roman citizenship.

2 a. The Emperor – an absolute master?

EMPEROR

- ✓ Chief
- ✓ of army
- ✓ Governed the city of himself
- ✓ most and.....





2b. Roman citizenship.

Despite the fall of the Republic, **citizens still enjoyed rights** (cf. chart above). A complex set of rules determined **who was or was not a Roman citizen**. One could be a citizen by virtue of one's birth, benefiting from her/his parents' rights. Citizenship was quite **open to non-Romans**, especially to **native aristocrats** who ruled their city/country on behalf of the Emperor. This was possible because **citizenship** was not defined by **nationality**. Possession of citizenship was thus desired by Romans and *barbaric* alike.

Slaves, upon being freed, became citizens. Citizenship could be bestowed as a reward for service to the state. For example, citizenship was eventually granted to all who served as **auxiliaries** (non-Roman soldiers in the Roman army, such as local people from the provinces). **In AD 212**, all free inhabitants of the empire were finally granted citizenship

3. The process of Romanisation in Britain (case study). cf. homework – worksheets 3 A-B-C-D).

3 a. What benefits? After being defeated, non-Romans had no other choice than collaborating with Roman forces. They soon understood that Romanisation offered many benefits to those who accepted to assimilate into the victors' civilisation: peace guaranteed by Roman legions along the "*limes*" (imperial border); prosperity based on trade exchanges with Rome; Roman citizenship to get integrated into Roman elites and govern local cities, etc.

3 b. What evidence? Romanisation was seen in many different ways : use of the Latin language by urban elites, foundation of colonies (Camulodunum / Colonia Vitricensis/Colchester : cf. homework) all based on a grid street plan - in which streets run at right angles to each other, forming a grid-, with theatres, circus, public baths, classical-style temples to Rome and Roman emperors, palaces and villas ornamented with marble, frescoes and mosaics... building of fortresses, walls with monumental double-arched gates, roads, aqueducts, etc.

The role of the army in Romanising Britain. In northern Britain, for example, there were few towns or villas. But there were many forts, especially along the line of Hadrian's Wall, and it is here that we see rich residences, luxury bath-houses, and communities of artisans and traders dealing in Romanised commodities for the military market. Even here, though, because army recruitment was increasingly local, it was often a case of Britons becoming Romans. Foreign soldiers settled down and had families with local women. Grown-up sons followed their fathers into the army. The local regiment became more 'British'. The new recruits became more 'Roman'.

Conclusion What limitations to the Roman Empire?

Religious practice is a key measure. Roman gods are represented mainly at forts, towns and villas. Even at such high-status sites, however, there is evidence that many native gods were also worshipped. (...) Roman archaeology is revealing ever more of the **cultural diversity of the empire**, and increasingly we sense that different ways of life, world-views and value systems could co-exist with the dominant, more uniform, Graeco-Roman culture of the elite. **Rebellions challenged Roman forces.** In Britain, when the Romans decided to rule the Iceni tribes directly, confiscated the property of the leading tribesmen, and persecuted celtic druids, the Iceni rose against Rome. In **AD 60**, Queen Boudicca's warriors successfully defeated the Roman Ninth Legion and destroyed the capital of Roman Britain, then at Colchester. They went on to destroy London and Verulamium (St Albans).

The West was severely shaken in **410**, when the city of Rome was sacked by the Visigoths, a wandering nation of Germanic peoples from the northeast. The fall of Rome was completed in **476**, when the German chieftain Odoacer deposed the last Roman emperor of the West, Romulus Augustulus.