

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## **“All Great Civilizations Experience Triumph and Trouble”**

1. Have you ever wondered why some civilizations last for a very long time, while others like Ancient Egypt seem to start out successful and then disappear before too long? Why does this happen? Civilizations can achieve greatness for a variety of reasons. Let’s begin by considering the factors that contribute to civilizations achieving greatness. Civilizations may have a great location or possess highly desirable natural resources. As a result, some civilizations engage in very profitable trade providing them with great wealth, respect, and power. Civilizations may also develop a unique culture. Artists, engineers or writers might produce great works of art, architecture, scientific discovery or literature that distinguish a civilization from others. Strong governments can also encourage greatness. Some civilizations have developed military power that sets them apart from all other civilizations. Strong militaries bring with them another nation’s respect or fear. Frequently, a strong military makes a civilization powerful. There are many examples of civilizations that have achieved greatness for these reasons. However, no civilization has been able to maintain greatness without facing some serious problems. In fact, some of those problems have led to decline or failure of a civilization.
2. What problems have led to the decline or collapse of great civilizations? Do all civilizations face similar problems? The Roman Empire was one of the greatest and most influential civilizations in world history. It began in the city of Rome in 753 BCE and lasted for well over 1000 years. During that time, Rome grew to rule much of Europe, Western Asia, and Northern Africa. Its ideal location, near the Mediterranean Sea, encouraged trade throughout the known world at that time. Rome grew wealthy and powerful as a result of trade throughout the region.
3. The leaders of Rome encouraged engineering and scientific learning. As a result, aqueducts carried water from the countryside to cities, roads connected cities throughout the empire, and great building projects were completed. For many years, talented leadership within the Roman government encouraged its success. Leaders passed laws that protected the rights of citizens. Leaders allowed the citizens to vote on laws. Leadership passed from one man to another in an orderly way.

4. As Rome grew larger, so did the need for a strong army. A great deal of money was spent training and equipping the military. Many Romans wanted to join the army because soldiers were respected and treated well. As the army grew, so did the cost of maintaining an army. As the size of the empire grew, soldiers were sent far away from home and became dissatisfied with their duty.
5. The Roman Empire reached its greatest strength around 180 CE.
6. The size of the empire was at its largest. Trade was booming and the economy was very healthy. Leadership had been honest, capable, and fair to the people. The military was at its strongest. After 180 CE, the Roman Empire began to decline. Slowly, the very reasons why the Roman Empire achieved greatness began to cause problems. The leaders of Rome tried to reverse its decline by dividing the empire in two. Some thought it was failing because the empire was too big. The division of the empire didn't stop its decline. Finally, in 476 CE, a German emperor took control of Rome. The Roman Empire the world had known was no more!