

DECLINE OF REPUBLIC

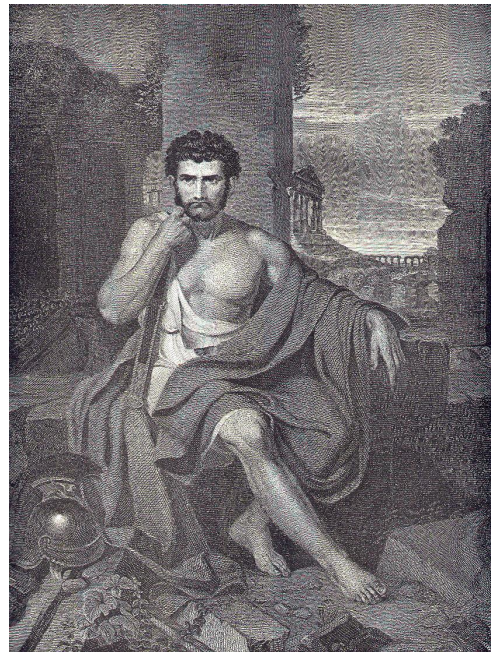
146 TO 60 B.C.

AGE OF GRACCHI TO POMPEY DEFEATS PIRATES

ERA SUMMARY – DECLINE OF REPUBLIC

The last century of the Roman Republic is one of the most eventful periods in Roman history and produced many of the best-known Roman statesmen: the Gracchii, Marius, Sulla, Pompey, Cicero, and of course, Julius Caesar. Unfortunately, many of these events were tragic and regrettable rather than glorious or laudable, as is often the case when a civilization goes from being frugal and industrious to wealthy and luxurious. The crises of the Roman republic were more due to internal corruption and infighting rather than reactions to outside enemies. There were several dangerous enemies that Rome dealt with during this period, including [Jugurtha](#) in Africa, [Mithridates](#) in the east, and the [Cimbri and Teutonic Gauls](#) in northern Italy. It was not these enemies, however, that caused the collapse of the republican government, but rather, Rome's internal conflicts. As a notorious enemy of Rome once said, on the occasion of his bribery-secured acquittal, "Rome is a city for sale, and doomed to perish as soon as it finds a purchaser!"

The final century of the republic saw an increasingly bitter struggle between the aristocratic (or *optimae*) party, which controlled the senate, and the popular (or *Marian*) party, which insisted on greater influence for the masses. It is important to note, however, that both parties were led by wealthy, powerful, and often corrupt individuals, whose own interests lay in elevating themselves to political power. Both parties had the backing of many poor and disenfranchised citizens, who often chose their leaders based on patronage rather than political philosophy, and both parties were plagued by bribery, demagogues, and villainous power-seekers. Likewise, both parties had a defensible political philosophy and a program of reform, but as it became increasingly clear that a strong central government was necessary to hold the provinces together, both embraced dictators and strongmen as leaders. The transition to empire was less a victory of one party over another than the collapse of republican pretenses altogether.



MARIUS IN THE RUINS OF CARTHAGE

The decline of the republic began with bickering over the distribution of newly acquired land, resulting from [Roman conquests in Spain](#), Africa, and the east. The Gracchi brothers, [Tiberius Gracchus](#), and [Gaius Gracchus](#) initiated land reforms that would distribute more territory to

landless Romans rather than wealthy barons, but these, naturally, were unpopular with the ruling classes. Both Gracchi were eventually murdered, but only after giving rise to a powerful party dedicated to wealth redistribution and supported by the "Roman Mob", as well as members of the deserving poor.

Two generals arose to take the lead of these two parties, during the subsequent [Jugurthine War](#) in Africa and [Mithridatic Wars](#) in the east. These were [Marius](#), who led the popular party and [Sulla](#), who led the optimates. Both leaders were popular with the army and each led an army to march on the city of Rome and seize power by force, always using the abuses of the other as an excuse for further outrages. Once in power, first Marius and then Sulla ordered proscriptions, or the systematic murder of all their enemies. Needless to say, these proscriptions, which were carried out on a large scale over several years, had a disastrous effect on civil society. Not only were many innocent people killed, but political rivals became deadly enemies, and the confiscation of property of "proscribed" citizens, ruined families and encouraged egregious corruption.

Sulla, who last held sway in Rome, essentially obliterated the Marian party within Rome, but when his murderous work was done, he returned power to the senate and retired quietly. Marian sympathizers fled to the farthest outreaches of the empire. [Sertorius](#), a well-respected general in exile from Sulla, set up a rival empire in Spain which was a haven for political refugees and other outcasts, and the Roman army was unable to subdue him for over eight years.

Other crises that arose for Rome as a result of these disruptions were a [slave rebellion](#) led by the escaped gladiator [Spartacus](#), a resumption of the Mithridatic war in the east, and the rise of pirates in the Mediterranean. These crises were put down by three new generals who had appeared on the scene after the death of Sulla and Marius. They were [Crassus](#), a wealthy land speculator who put down the rebellion of Spartacus, [Lucullus](#), a capable but notoriously luxuriant general who brought the Mithridatic War to a close, and [Pompey](#), who in less than a year put down the pirates that had been plaguing traders of the Mediterranean for the last decade. Pompey eventually rose to great political power, favoring first the Marian party but later the optimates. However, it was less political philosophy than disgust with the worst of the populist demagogues that drove him into alliance with the aristocrats.

CHARACTERS – DECLINE OF REPUBLIC

GRACCHI LAND REFORMS

Scipio the Younger	185–129 BC	Led the siege of Carthage during the third Punic War.
Cornelia	185–100 BC	Mother of the Gracchi. Highly revered Roman matron.
Tiberius Gracchus	163–132 BC	Promoted Land Reform and fought for people's rights. Murdered by senators.
Gaius Gracchus	154–121 BC	Continued reforms of his brother, but was undermined by the senate.

MARIUS/SULLA CIVIL WAR

Metellus	d. 91 BC	Commanded troops in Numidia against Jugurtha. Enemy of Marius.
Marius	155–86 BC	Renowned general. Modernized legions. Waged a bloody feud with party of Sulla.
Cinna	d. 84 BC	With Marius, raised an army, and took possession of Rome for populist Party.
Sulla	138–78 BC	Defeated Mithradates in Greece. Marched on Rome, defeated the party of his enemy Marius.
Lucullus	120–70 BC	Led Rome against Mithradates in third Mithradatic War. Known for extravagant lifestyle.
Crassus	110–53 BC	Very wealthy general. Fought Spartacus. Formed triumvirate with Pompey and Caesar.
Pompey	106–48 BC	Very renowned general. Defeated pirates. Led opposition to Caesar in civil war.

ENEMY CHIEFTAINS

Jugurtha	156–104 BC	Numidian king, flagrantly bribed senate to maintain power. Enemy of Rome.
Mithradates	160–104 BC	King of Pontus, enemy of Rome, raised rebellions in Greece and Asia Minor.
Sertorius	122–72 BC	Led rebellion against Rome in Spain; held out for 8 years.
Spartacus	111–71 BC	Gladiator who led a slave revolt. Held out for two years.

TIMELINE – DECLINE OF REPUBLIC

- 143-133 Following the destruction of Carthage, Rome [Conquers the Interior of Spain](#)
- 133 Ten-year *Siege of Numantia* is concluded by [Scipio the Younger](#)
- 133 [Tiberius Gracchus](#), a proponent of land reform, is elected Tribune, then murdered.
- 123 [Gaius Gracchus](#) is elected Tribune, passes Sempronian Laws, then is murdered.
- 111-106 [Jugurthine War](#) in Africa reveals significant corruption in Roman Senate.
- 107 [Marius](#) is elected consul, for the first of seven times. Begins reform of the Roman army.
- 105-101 **Marius leads Roman against Germanic invaders in the [Cimbrian War](#)**
- 102 Teutone tribe defeated at the *Battle of Aquae Sextiae*.
- 101 Cimbri tribe defeated at the *Battle of Vercelli*.
- 90-89 [Roman Social War](#)—Italian allies win rights of Roman citizenship.
- 90-85 [First Mithridatic War](#)—king of Pontus overruns Asia Minor and causes Greece to revolt.
- 88-83 [Civil War of Marius and Sulla](#) **between the *optimates* and *populares* political parties.**
- 88 Marius attempts to take over the army, but is exiled from Rome by Sulla's party.
- 87 With Sulla's army in Greece, Marius returns to Rome and takes vengeance on his enemies.
- 86 [Sulla](#) is victorious at *Siege of Athens* and sets up a government in exile.
- 83 Sulla returns from Greece, overthrows the Marian party and retaliates against his enemies.
- 83-72 [Sertorius](#), a former ally of Marius, leads a major [Rebellion in Spain](#)
- 75 [Pompey](#) is dispatched to put down Sertorian Rebellion.
- 72 [Spartacus](#) leads a wide-spread [Slave Revolt](#).
- 67 [Pompey](#) conquers the pirates of the Mediterranean.
- 63 [Cicero](#) discovers and puts down the *Catiline Conspiracy*.

RECOMMENDED READING — DECLINE OF REPUBLIC

CORE READING ASSIGNMENTS *

- Haaren - [Famous Men of Rome](#) [The Gracchi](#) to [Pompey the Great](#) (4)
Guerber - [Story of the Romans](#) [Roman Amusements](#) to [Pompey's Conquests](#) (12)
Macgregor - [The Story of Rome](#) [Cornelia, Mother of Gracchi](#) to [Pompey Defeats Mithridates](#) (24)

SUPPLEMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Dalkeith - [Stories from Roman History](#) [Of Tiberius Gracchus](#) to [Of Pompey the Great](#) (3)
Cowles - [Our Little Roman Cousin](#) *entire book*
Harding - [City of the Seven Hills](#) [The Gracchi and their Mother](#) to [The Wars of Caius Marius](#) (2)
Tappan - [Story of the Roman People](#) [The Rise of Marius](#) to [The Rise of Pompey](#) (3)
Weston – [Plutarch's Lives](#) [The Gracchi](#) to [Caius Marius](#) (2)
Morris - [Historical Tales - Roman](#) [The Gracchi and their Fall](#) to [Revolt of the Gladiators](#) (5)
Church - [Lucius - A Roman Boy](#) *entire book*

ALSO RECOMMENDED

- Gould - [Children's Plutarch - Romans](#) [The Noble Brothers](#) to [The Conqueror of Pirates](#) (7)
Gilman - [The Story of Rome](#) [Futile Effort at Reform](#) to [Progress of the Pompey](#) (4)
Kaufman - [Young Folks Plutarch](#) [Tiberius Gracchus](#) to [Pompey](#) (8)

* *Level I and II Study Questions are based on **Core** Reading Assignments.*