The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire

1. “What have the Romans ever done for us?”
2. “We who are about to die…”
3. The Fall of the Roman Empire
“What have the Romans done for us?”

First, some facts about the Roman empire:

a) At its height, it covered nearly 3 million square miles

b) 60 million people, one-fifth of the world’s population, were under Roman rule
c) The ruler of the empire was called the emperor
d) Love ‘em or hate ‘em, the Roman Empire did make important lasting contributions to Western civilization
The Greatness of Rome
What have the Romans ever done for us?
1. Aqueducts

- Provide fresh water for drinking, sanitation, public baths, & fountains
2. Roads

• The Romans created over 400,000 km of roads. You could circle the whole Earth 10 times with the roads.
• 80,500 km were stone-paved
The roads served two main purposes:
1) link the cities and other centres of the empire together
2) allow for quick deployment of Roman military forces
3. Education & Medicine
4. Law & Order
"We who are about to die...

- Violence played a huge part in the rise, success, and ultimately the fall of the Roman Empire.
- The entire economy centred on Rome’s massive army.
The Roman Army

• Numbered approximately 400,000 men at its peak in 200 c.e.
• Accounted for one half of expenses for the entire empire!
• Compare that to the United States... only around 20% of government spending ($720 billion dollars)
• The only way to make an economy based on your military work in the long term is to keep expanding your empire...
The Roman Soldier

- Gladius
- Galea
- Pilum
- Scutum
The people that once bestowed commands, consulships, legions, and all else, now concerns itself no more, and longs eagerly for just two things: bread and circuses!

Juvenal
“Football, beer, and above all gambling, filled up the horizon of their minds.

To keep them in control was not difficult.” - George Orwell
Gladiators

Thracian  Samnite  Retarius
Damnatio ad bestias
Chariot Races

• The most popular spectator sport in ancient Rome (yes, more popular than the gladiator fights!)
Rome’s *Circus Maximus*

- 150,000 seating capacity
- Chariot races lasted 7 laps
• Race lasted for a distance of about 3 miles, and was usually completed in 8 or 9 minutes
The Fall of Rome

• In the year 410, Rome was sacked by the Visigoths, led by Alaric I
Why did Rome fall?

1. Small business suffered when Romans began using slaves to supply goods and services.

2. Romans spent more money than they should have on entertainment and expensive luxuries (sound familiar?)
3. Contagious diseases, brought to Rome by soldiers in the Roman Legions, killed thousands (maybe even millions)
ANTONINE PLAGUE (180 CE) .................. 5 M
In 165 CE, troops returning from campaigns in the east of the empire brought back a disease which killed an estimated **five million people**. Known as the Antonine Plague (after Marcus Aurelius Antoninus) one of two Roman emperors who died from the disease, it killed a quarter of those who caught it. This was history’s first outbreak of SMALLPOX. **Emperors killed:** ONE (Marcus Aurelius)

PLAGUE OF CYPRIAN (251 CE) ................. ???
Smallpox returned in the 3rd Century. Blamed on the Christians, it killed **5,000 per day**. **Emperors killed:** ONE (Claudius II)
4. After the Roman republic ended in 30 B.C.E., Rome was ruled by emperors rather than a government that respected individual freedom.

Emperor Caligula
(r. 37 – 41 C.E.)
5. Because the empire was so large and contained such a wide variety of terrain, the empire became impossible to defend.
6. The empire grew weak from repeated attacks by Germanic peoples (ex. Ostrogoths, Visigoths)
What do you think?