

# The Fall of Rome

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## Political Problems...

•By the 3rd century CE, the empire was under external attack by multiple tribes, and was experiencing internal strife. In the early 200s, the empire experienced constant civil war. There were 22 Emperors in 50 years, and nearly all died by violent means.

•Emperor Diocletian decided that the empire was too large to be ruled by one person. He divided the empire into eastern and western halves, and he ruled from the east.

•The government of the western part of the empire had become corrupt, and money was draining out of the west to the east.

•All of the quality government and army officials fled to the east, abandoning Rome. The quality of the Roman army and government continued to decline.



## Economic Problems...

•The division of the empire resulted in economic trouble for Rome (the western half). Incoming trade from China and the east stopped at the eastern capital of Constantinople. Rome suffered.

•Rome was an enormous slave-holding state, and this created unemployment in the lower ranks of society. These unemployed workers were supported by the welfare of the empire.

•The expense of welfare coupled with disastrous harvests and the necessity of hiring mercenary soldiers caused the empire to raise taxes to enormous heights.

•Some Emperors devalued the gold currency by cutting the gold with less valuable metals like copper or iron. By doing this, they tried to create twice as many "gold" coins to pay for expensive programs. But instead, all this created terrible inflation.



## Social Problems...

•Roman society had become increasingly depraved over the years. Entertainments became more violent and more excessive.

•Additionally, Rome had become a welfare state, with much of the population depending on the empire for support. These people felt entitled to this support, and did not feel a sense of civic duty.

•As a result, people avoided their civic duty of serving in the army, and felt a sense of apathy toward the crumbling empire.

•Physically, the empire was crumbling. Lack of economic funds resulted in deterioration of buildings and this further eroded social morale.



## Tribal Problems

•The Roman Empire was constantly challenged on its frontiers by tribes.

•The wave of tribal invasions in the 3rd century was valiantly beaten back, but it took a heavy toll on the empire, physically, economically, and socially.

•In the 5th century, a nomadic tribe from Central Asia, the Huns, began migrating westward. These Huns, led by Attila, came into violent contact with Rome. Eventually, the city of Rome was overrun and sacked by Germanic tribes in 476 CE.



1. Politically, what happened to the Empire in the 200s CE?
2. What decision did Diocletian make? Why?
3. What was the impact of this decision on:  
The East --  
  
The West --
4. Economically, why did the West face income trouble?
5. What impact did slavery have on the deterioration of the Roman economy?
6. Why did Rome raise taxes?
7. How did inflation occur?
8. How did welfare erode society?
9. What were other indicators of deteriorating social morale or civic duty?
10. What challenge did the Empire face in the 3rd century?
11. What caused the fall of Rome?