HUI216
Italian Civilization

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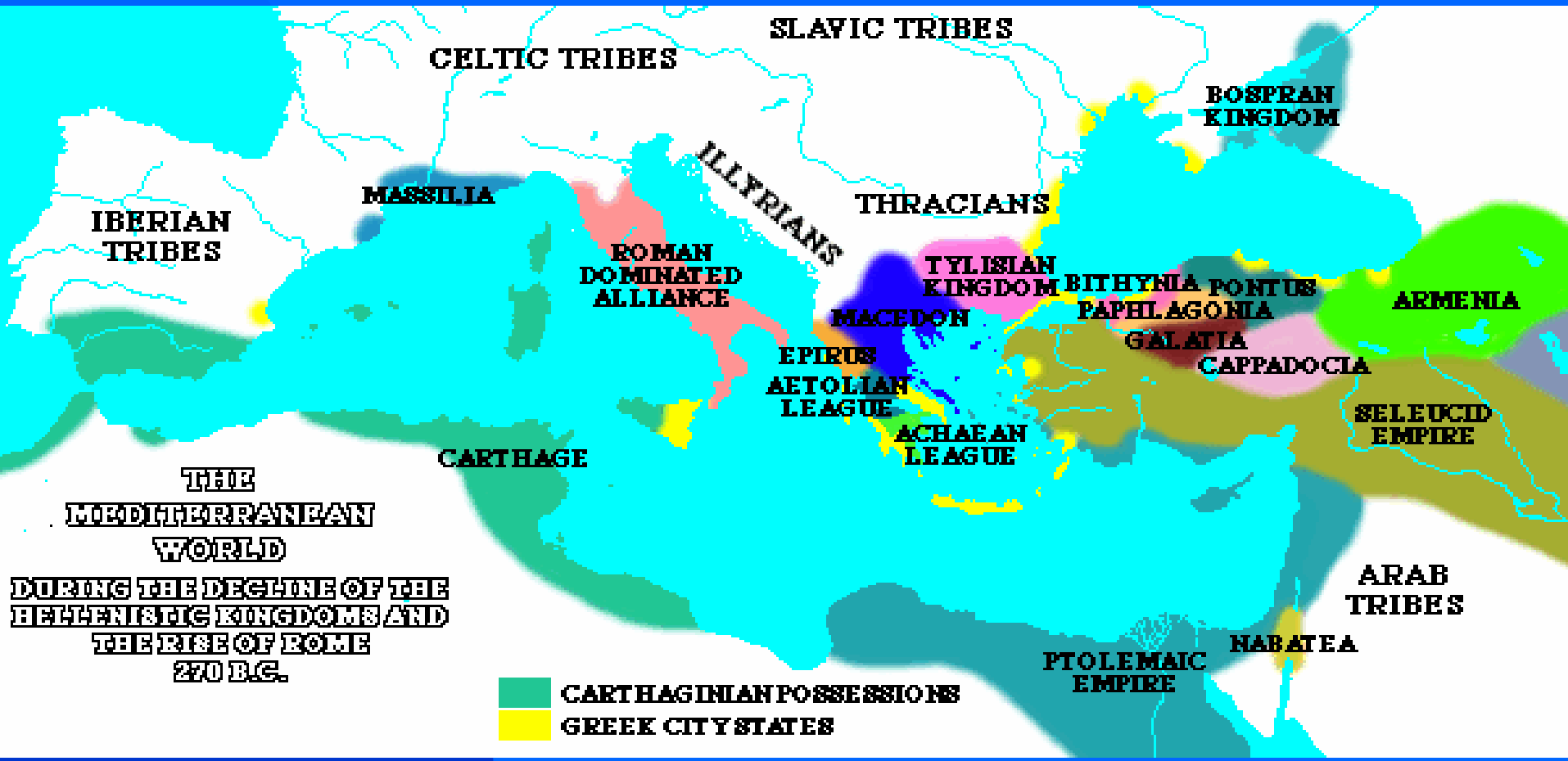
8.1 Rome vs. Carthage (270 BCE)



8.1 The 3 Punic wars

- One of the pivotal moments in the expansion of the Roman republic was the wars against the Carthaginians, wars which soon became part of Roman culture and folklore (see Vergil's poem, *The Aeneid*)
- Carthage was, long before Rome, the power to reckon with in the Western Mediterranean Sea
- Rome, in contrast, was lagging behind in the technology of naval warfare, so much so that according to Roman historians the Romans studied a captured Carthaginian ship to improve the characteristics of their warships

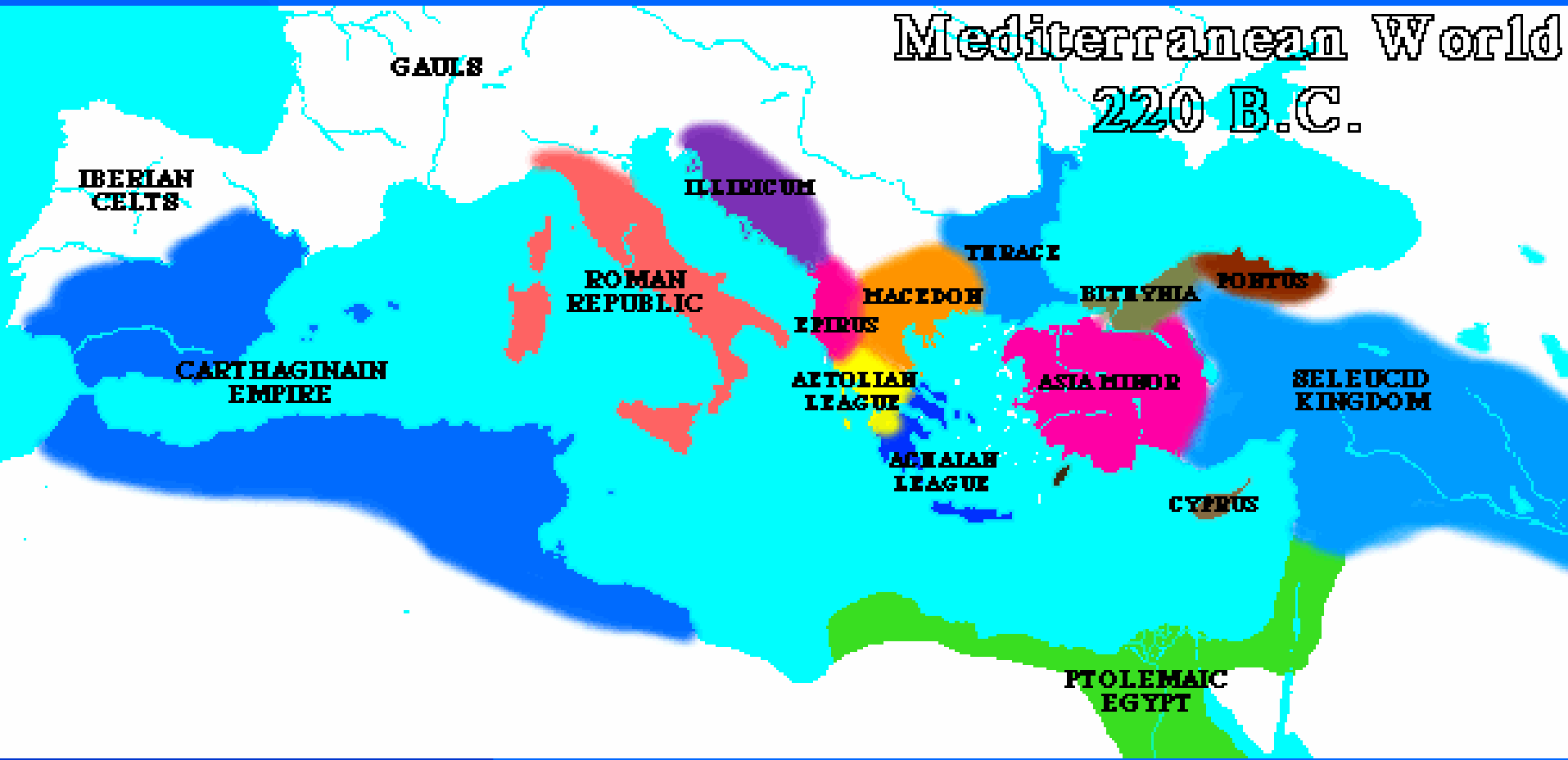
8.1 264-241 BCE: the First Punic War

- Rome and the Greek colonies of Eastern Sicily fought against Carthage
- Rome played the role of big brother, pretending to come to the rescue of Sicilian cities which were very important to the Romans, strategically (because of their central position in the Mediterranean), and economically (because of their thriving commerce and agriculture)
- At the end of this war Rome assumes control of Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica

8.1 The next 2 Punic wars

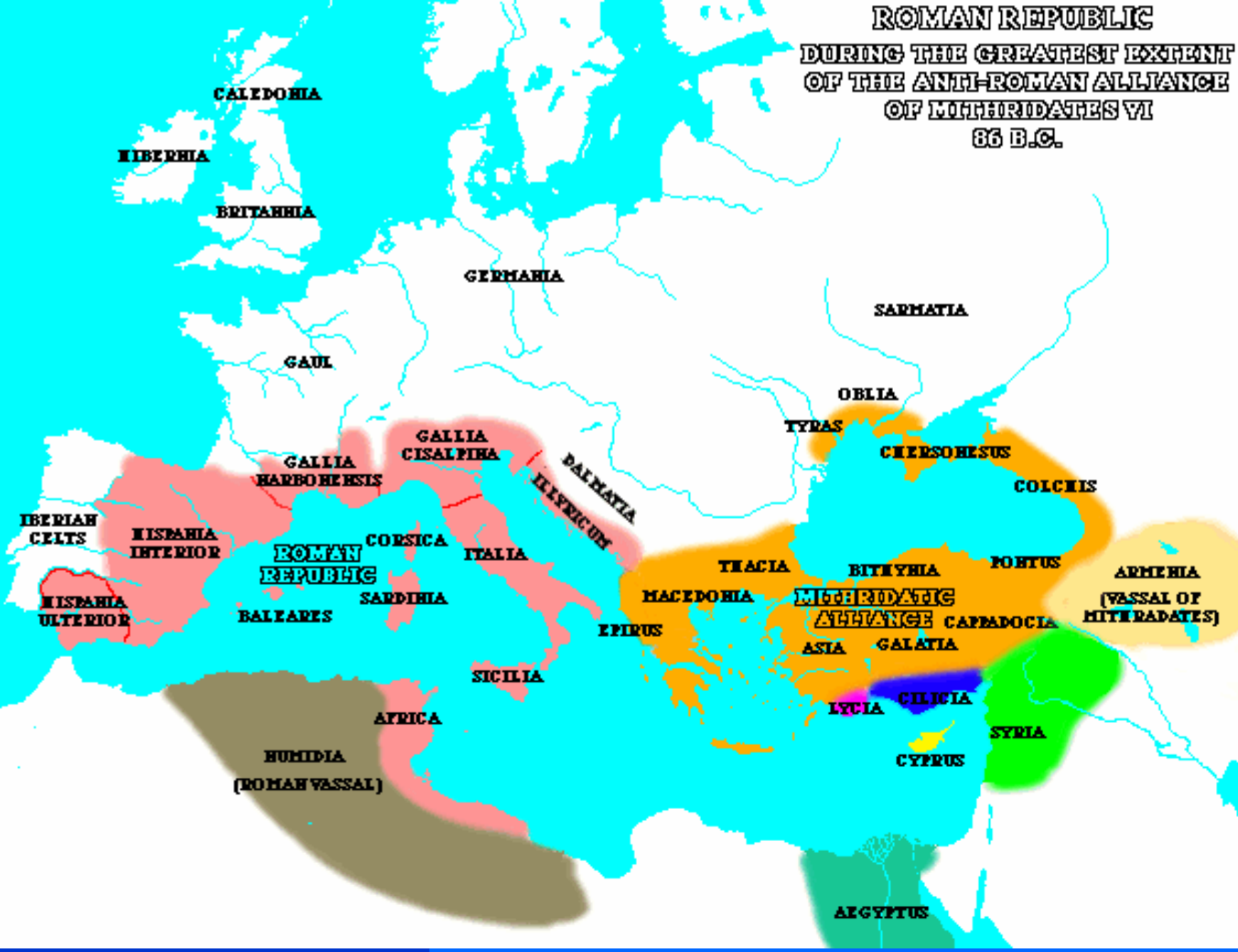
- 218-201 Second Punic War
  - Famous Carthaginian general Hannibal crosses the Alps
  - Rome becomes the new ruler of Western Mediterranean
- 149-146 Third Punic War
  - Destruction of Carthage, Africa annexed as a province
  - War against the league of Greek cities
  - Fearing that Carthaginians, whose powers were already fading, might come back to pose new threats, Romans fought another war and concluded it with the complete destruction of Carthage
  - Some historians, even among the Romans, argued that this war was an easy political victory, and that it was initiated to enhance the reputation of Roman leaders

8.1 After the first Punic war (220 BCE)



8.1 Roman historian Livy on the 2nd Punic war (bk. 21)

- A number of things contributed to give this war its unique character:
  - in the first place, it was fought between peoples unrivaled throughout previous history in material resources, and themselves at the peak of their prosperity and power;
  - secondly, it was a struggle between old antagonists, each of whom had learned, in the first Punic War, to appreciate the military capabilities of the other;
  - thirdly, the final issue hung so much in doubt that the eventual victors came nearer to destruction than their adversaries.
  - Moreover, high passions were at work throughout, and mutual hatred was hardly less sharp a weapon than the sword... The intensity of the feeling is illustrated by an anecdote of Hannibal's boyhood...


ROMAN REPUBLIC
DURING THE GREATEST EXTENT
OF THE ANTI-ROMAN ALLIANCE
OF MITHRIDATES VI
86 B.C.
CALEDONIA
HIBERNIA
BRITANNIA
GERMANIA
SARMATIA
GAUL
OBLIA
TYRAS
CHERSONESUS
COLCHIS
GALLIA CISALPINA
GALLIA NARBONENSIS
DALMATIA
ILLYRICUM
IBERIAN CELTS
HISPANIA INTERIOR
CORSICA
ITALIA
ROMAN REPUBLIC
SARDINIA
HISPANIA ULTERIOR
BALEARES
EPIRUS
THRACIA
BITHYNIA
PONTUS
ARMENIA
(VASSAL OF MITHRADATES)
MACEDONIA
MITHRIDATIC ALLIANCE
CAPPADOCIA
ASIA
GALATIA
SICILIA
CILICIA
LYCIA
SYRIA
AFRICA
CYPRUS
NUMIDIA
(ROMAN VASSAL)
AEGYPTUS

ROMAN EMPIRE
UNDER THE REIGN OF
AUGUSTUS CAESAR
25 B.C.
CALEDONIA
HIBERNIA
BRITANNIA
GERMANIA INFERIOR
GERMANIA MAGNA
BELGICA
GALLIA LUGDUNENSIS
GERMANIA SUPERIOR
GALLIA AQUITANIA
GALLIA ALPINA
GALLIA CISALPINA
GALLAECIA
GALLIA NARBONENSIS
LUSITANIA
TARRACONENSIS
BAETICA
BALEARES
CORSICA
ITALIA
SARDINIA
SICILIA
MAURETANIA
NUMIDIA
DALMATIA
ILLYRICUM
MOESIA
MACEDONIA
EPIRUS
ACHAEA
CRETA
CYRENAICA
THRACIA
BITHYNIA
PONTUS
GALATIA
ASIA
LYCIA
CILICIA
CYPRUS
SYRIA
IUDEA
ARABIA PETRAEA
AEGYPTUS
SARMATIA
OBLIA
TYRAS
BOSPORAN KINGDOM
CHERSONESUS
COLCHIS
ARMENIA
PARTHIAN EMPIRE
CAPPADOCIA
OSROENE
ASSYRIA
MESOPOTAMIA
ARABIA MAGNA
CLIENT STATES OF ROME

8.2 Contemporary Italian songs on Hannibal

- A 1993 Italian rap song on Hannibal in Italian, and the English translation of its lyrics
  - http://www.italianrap.com/artists/artists_bios/almamegretta/lyrics/figli_di_annibale.html
  - http://www.italianrap.com/artists/artists_bios/almamegretta/lyrics/figli_english.html
- There's another Italian song about Hannibal, "Prova a pesare Annibale," by Giorgio Gaber (composed in 1970, reminiscent of a text written by Roman poet Juvenal)
- Niccolò Machiavelli mentioned Hannibal and Scipio in a key passage of the *Prince* (1512-15)
  - http://www.constitution.org/mac/prince17.htm (in English)

8.2 The rap on Hannibal

- The rap, which some may find inappropriate, is still worth of our attention
- It makes reference also to the passage of the American army through Italy and Europe in WWII, and to the children born during that period from interracial relationships
- The topic was somewhat popular in the Italian folklore of the postwar era. The most famous example inside the world of popular music is that of a 1944 Neapolitan song whose lyrics were written by Guido Nicolardi (music composed by E.A. Mario), "Tammurriata nera"
  - you can find the text in Neapolitan here
    - http://www.dentronapoli.it/Canzoni_Classiche/tammurriata_nera.htm
  - info about the song, in Italian, at the following link:
    - http://www.scudit.net/mdcannapolitam.htm
  - The song became popular all over again during the 1970s, when it was reproposed by a group called Nuova Compagnia di Canto Popolare, under the direction of Roberto de Simone

8.3 The last 100 years of the Roman Republic

- The last years of the Roman Republic were characterized by internal fights and social tensions, violence and instability, a situation that is clearly reflected in Latin literature
- The following slides illustrate some of the facts that caused concern in Roman society
- Eventually, many Romans would be willing to accept the trade-off, which some may have believed to be just temporary, between the peace and stability guaranteed by the Emperors and the military, and democracy (no matter how limited)

8.3 The first Slave war -- Tiberius Gracchus

- 135-132 BCE: the first Slave war in Sicily
  - Tens of thousand of slaves, employed in the area's large farms start a rebellion
  - They want freedom for themselves, don't have other sociopolitical goals, such as the elimination of slavery
  - The Roman army has to intervene and fight all-out military battles
- 134-133: Tiberius Gracchus, a member of the Roman elite, becomes the people's Tribune and proposes a reform to redistribute large portions of public land (until then leased mostly to the rich landowners), and to assign land more liberally to members of the lower class, giving them a chance to become independent farmers and small entrepreneurs

8.3 Tiberius Gracchus and his reform

- His proposal becomes a law, but he is assassinated before provisions necessary to implement that law could be approved
- Small farmers were the backbone of the Roman economy during the first centuries of its history
- Later on, with the expansion of the Roman republic, large portions of the regions conquered by the Romans were appropriated by the Roman government and leased to Roman citizens, especially to the patricians

8.3 Patrician landowners vs. small farmers

- The patrician landowners, thanks to this leased public land and to the land they acquired reinvesting their profits, created huge estates mostly worked by the slaves (which also were made available in large numbers and at cheap prices by wars)
- Little by little it became difficult for the small farmers to compete with those large estates, and many of them lost or sold their land, and moved into Rome or other large cities
- The expansion of Rome also made it easier to import cheaper wheat from Sicily, North Africa or Egypt, increasing the competition

8.3 Small farmers during the Roman era

- In spite of those difficulties, a considerable number of small farmers always got by: for example, retired soldiers would get as a severance package a small parcel of land, often close to the borders of the Roman state, so that they could act as a military reserve in times of crisis, and they would spend the last years of their lives working that land
- Towards the end of the Empire, burdened by heavy taxes and with profits eroded by ever growing inflation, the small farmers had to borrow money from the large landowners and when they could not repay those debts, they would offer their services instead
- Through this process, the independent small farmers of Italy and Western Europe changed into the serfs of the Middle Ages, while some of the wealthy landowners were able to turn their economic power and their social prestige into political power and they became noblemen.

8.3 Another Gracchus -- 3 more wars

- 121: Gaius Gracchus, Tiberius's brother, tries to finish the agrarian reform, but he too is killed, together with hundreds of supporters
- 104-100: the Second Sicilian slave war
- 91-89: the Social War (Rome vs. its Italian allies, "Social" from the Latin *socii*, "partners")
  - At the end of this war all Latins, Etruscans, and Umbrians are given access to Roman citizenship
- 82: the first Roman Civil War is fought in Italy by two well-known generals of the Roman army, Sulla and Marius
  - They both use the troops under their command to support their political agendas, using exchanges of favors and exploiting the soldiers' personal loyalty to them

8.3 Other wars fought too close to Rome

- At the end of this civil war Sulla is victorious
- Proscriptions are used for the first time in Rome (they are lists containing names of 'public enemies of the State,' whose properties can be seized and whose lives can be terminated without due process or the normal legal consequences)
- Sulla becomes dictator, but he soon resignes and inexplicably retires to private life; dies in 78 BCE

- 73-71: the Third Slave War (the one the movie *Spartacus* was based on)
  - Roger Ebert reviews the movie *Spartacus*
  - A selection of primary sources, in translation, on slavery in Roman society and on the three slave revolts
    - http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/asbook09.html#Slavery
- 67: Pompey, skillful general and one of the leaders of Rome's conservative party, sweeps off the pirates operating in the central area of the Mediterranean sea

8.3 The Civil War between Caesar and Pompey

- 49-45: large-scale Civil War between the armies of Pompey and of Julius Caesar
- 49-48: Caesar marches on Rome, occupies it
- Caesar defeats Pompeians in Spain, Greece
- Pompey flees to Egypt where he is murdered by the local king, who thought Caesar would appreciate it
- Caesar goes to Egypt, and makes Cleopatra Queen of Egypt as a symbolic gesture to dissociate himself from indiscriminate violence and political murder
  - The theme of clemency dominates Caesar's works (esp. *De bello civili*)

8.3 Caesar and the Pompeians -- Cato

- 46-45: Caesar crushes the remaining Pompeian forces in Africa and Spain
- Cato, a famous member of the Pompeian party, commits suicide in Africa, showing that one should value freedom and democracy even more than life itself
  - For centuries Cato will be referred to as a cultural and political icon, as the defender of republican values (the values of democracy and freedom), and the best example of moral integrity
  - Medieval poet Dante will even promote him (a pagan and a mortal sinner), to the position of guardian of Purgatory, under the direct jurisdiction of God!
  - Matilde Asensi, *The Last Cato* (2006)

8.3 The Roman Empire

- 44: before he can become Emperor (if that was indeed his plan), Caesar is murdered by Brutus, Cassius and other high-level conspirators
  - The fate of Brutus and Cassius, Judas, in Dante's hell
- 27: Octavian Augustus becomes the first Emperor
  - His official title was not Emperor, but rather the less threatening title of *Princeps Senatus* = First in the Senate
  - For more than 200 years the Republican institutions (the Senate, the Consuls) are kept alive under the Empire
  - Emperors feared that too drastic a change could renew fights and internal divisions
  - Other titles used by the Roman emperors:
    - *Augustus* = superior/venerable (from it the month of August)
    - *Caesar* (from it the German *Kaiser* and the Russian *Czar*)

8.3 Conclusions: time, history, life

- Inside the Greco-Roman civilization many believed that communities or social organizations are not different from any other biological organism that exists in nature: they are born, they develop and grow old, then decline and eventually die
- According to this view, which was very popular also during the Renaissance, there are cycles in history and politics as there are in nature
- It was only with the advent of Christianity and with the spread of biblical ideas which had been first developed inside Jewish culture, that our own image of time as an arrow, speeding constantly in one direction, became prevalent

8.3 The Christian timeline -- Simple progress vs. constant progress

- Christians represented the whole of history as a line that originates from the creation of the universe by God, advances towards the pivotal moment of the first coming of Jesus, and will one day reach the final point of arrival, with the second coming of Jesus and the so-called Judgment day, which represents the fullness of time, the time when all humanity is able to rejoin its creator
- And even though the Jewish/Christian linear image of time and history, quite different from the cyclical view of Greeks and Romans, already implied the idea of positive developments, it was mostly after the Enlightenment and the introduction of the cultural ideas of the French Revolution, at the end of the 18th-century, that the original Christian idea of time was associated to and almost replaced by the notions of constant, practically unavoidable progress and social evolution

8.3 The cyclical movement of time

- The concept of a cyclical evolution of time, and the idea that a community, small or large (a town or a state), is similar to a biological organism, going through various ages like all creatures in nature (youth, adulthood, old age), was indeed common among the Romans and the Greeks, as it was later on in Renaissance Florence (for ex., you find that idea in many passages written by Machiavelli), or Venice
- Obviously there are exceptions and apparent inconsistencies: even if you read Aristotle, you can find references both to a cyclical idea of time and to a linear representation of it
- The evidence that one finds in literary or historical texts, or in letters and personal journals, is often in the form of pessimistic comments interpreting dramatic historical or political events as symptoms of malaise, signs of the end that is presumed to be inevitable and imminent

8.3 Cyclical time in Machiavelli's politics

- Greek historian Polybius and, much later, Florentine historian/politician Machiavelli expressed this idea of the cyclical evolution of political institutions
- Machiavelli claimed that sooner or later every democracy is bound to degenerate (naturally, with the passing of time) into a period of anarchy, up to the point when the failing democracy is replaced by monarchy; in turn monarchy will degenerate into tyranny, tyranny may give birth to democracy, etc.
- Already some of the 15th century humanists, for example Leonardo Bruni, identified the decline of Roman civilization with the political crises of the first century BCE, which in their opinion derived from the gradual devaluation of the traditional Roman virtues

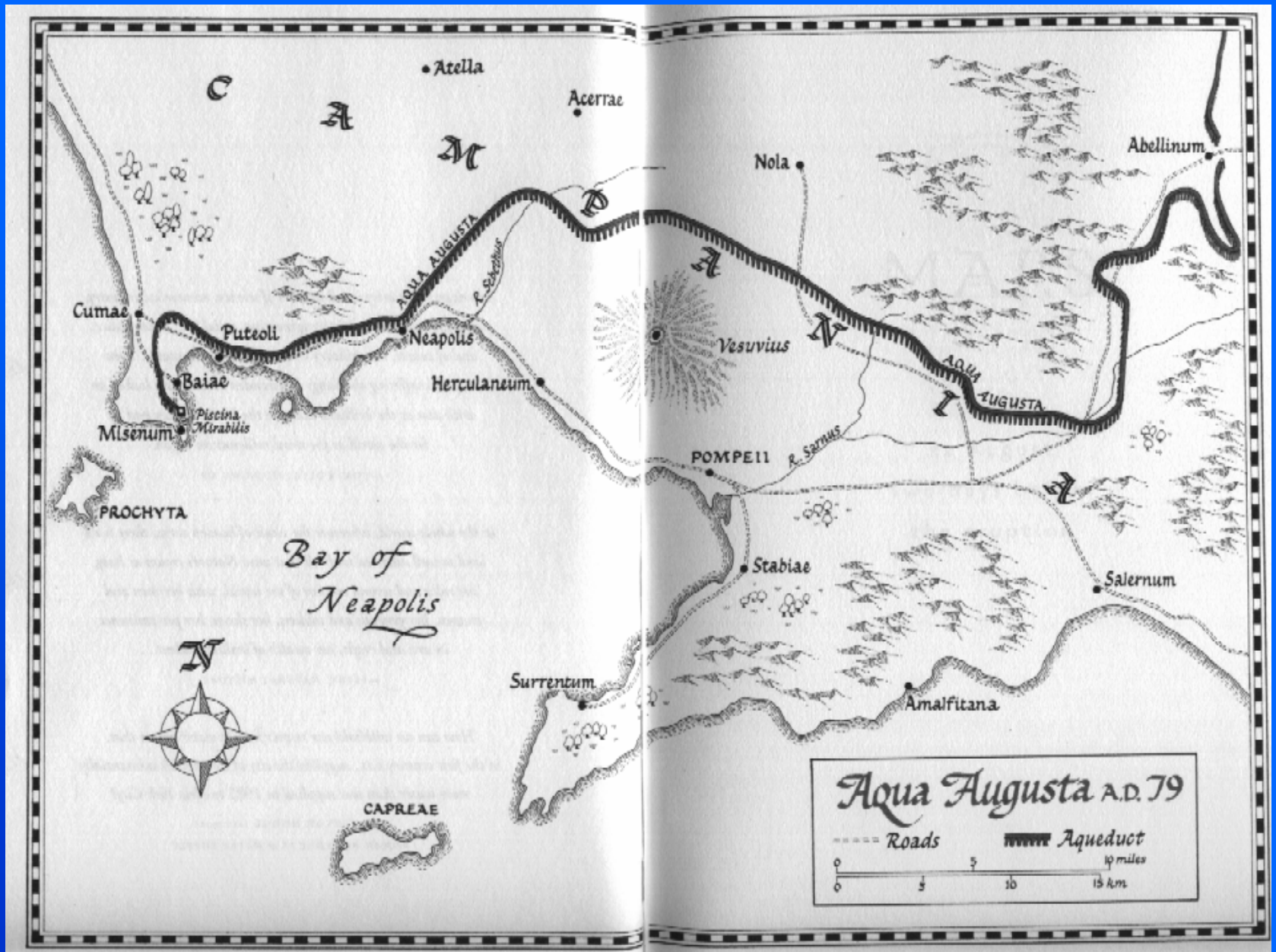
8.4 Historical novel *Pompeii* (2003), by Robert Harris -- First quote after the title page

- "American superiority in all matters of science, economics, industry, politics, business, medicine, engineering, social life, social justice, and of course, the military was total and indisputable. Even Europeans suffering the pangs of wounded chauvinism looked on with awe at the brilliant example the United States had set for the world as the third millennium began." (Tom Wolfe, *Hooking up*)

8.4 Historical novel *Pompeii* (2003), by Robert Harris -- Second quote after the title page

- "In the whole world, wherever the vault of heaven turns, there is no land so well adorned with all that wins Nature's crown as Italy, the ruler and second mother of the world, with her men and women, her generals and soldiers, her slaves, her pre-eminence in arts and crafts, her wealth of brilliant talents…" (Pliny, *Natural history*)

8.4 A map of Campania with the aqueduct known as Aqua Augusta (from Robert Harris, *Pompeii*)



8.4 The main characters in the novel

- Attilius: *aquarius* (fourth-generation aqueduct engineer), sent from Rome to replace Exomnius; a widower supporting his mother and sister
- Exomnius: engineer of the local aqueduct since the time before the earthquake, a Sicilian from Catania
- Ampliatus: freedman, crafty businessman, *pater familias*
- Corelia, his rebel daughter
- Pliny the Elder and Pliny the Younger, his nephew
- Romans inside caves and underground, caught as they are about to become ghosts from the past

8.4 The plot and the organization of the events: The first day (Aug. 22, 79 CE)

- Looking for water, before dawn
  - Fear and suspicion (directly related to the plot)
  - Romans vs. locals: competence, work ethics and dedication to the service of the community vs. religion and superstition (related to the general theme of civilization)
- Style and punishment, our hero to the rescue
  - The individual and society, public and private life, the *bella figura* (Gloria Nardini)
  - Searching for greater meaning or immediate satisfaction (Epicureans vs. Stoics)
  - "...he had been taught to lead his life according to the Stoic school: to waste of time on nonsense, to do one's job without whining, to be the same in all circumstances -- intense pain, bereavement, illness -- and to keep one's lifestyle simple" (20)

8.4 The first day (Aug. 22, 79 CE)

- The pool of wonders and its present problems
  - Technology and society
- The meeting with Pliny, the educated admiral
  - Strategic planning and heroic accomplishments (Hollywood-style well-timed "operation")

8.4 The second day (Aug. 23, 79 CE)

- On board the Minerva, en route to Pompeii
  - Then and now: the shores
- Pompeii
  - Multiculturalism and capitalism
  - Roman decadence and sexuality
  - The baths: technology and architecture, civilization
  - Corruption (then and now)
    - Parcelization of power and civic duties
    - Self-interest, amoral familism (farmers and citizens stealing water)

8.4 The second day (Aug. 23, 79 CE)

- The dinner and its sources: Petronius (*Satyricon*), Tacitus
  - Epicureanism
  - Decadence
  - Emptiness (Nero's mooray)
- Exomnius's room in the brothel
  - Work ethics, technology and society ("all to carry water to such brutes as these")
- Corelia
  - Proto-feminism and Victorian love

8.4 The second day (Aug. 23, 79 CE)

- Pliny's measures (ancient vs. modern science)
- The Empire (power, intrigue, conspiracies)
- Riots for the water (the ignorant brutes and the sophisticated intellectual)
  - Then and now: abusing nature
  - The expert mind in awe of technology
- The operation continues out of Pompeii
  - Followers and leaders, the mind and the muscles
  - Puritan work ethics: satisfaction for a work well done
  - "he would try to fix the Augusta overnight. To confront the impossible: that was the Roman way!"
  - Our heroine to the rescue (with incriminating evidence)

8.4 The third day (Aug. 24, 79 CE)

- Technology: cement underwater
- Love and fate
  - "One was shackled to it from birth as to a moving wagon. The designation of the journey could not be altered, only the manner in which one approached it -- whether one chose to walk erect or to be dragged complaining through the dust" (183)
- Pliny's discovery in the pool of wonders
- Water back in Pompeii
- The never-tired Attilius climbs the Vesuvius

8.4 Third and fourth day (Aug. 24-25, 79 CE): the eruption

- The destruction of Rectina's library (an entire culture and civilization vanishing under our very eyes)
- "Pliny took it from the slave and inhaled it, catching in its musty aroma of the whiff of the old republic: of men of the stamp of Cato and Sergius; of a city fighting to become an empire; of the dust of the Campus Martius; of trial by iron and fire" (243)
- "Who knows? Perhaps, two centuries from now, men will be drinking the vintage from this year of ours, and wondering what we were like. Our skill, our courage" (243)
- "Popidius's eyes were blank holes in the musk of his face. He looked like one of the ancestral effigies on the wall of his house." (248)

8.4 Historical elements and themes associated with them

- Aqua Augusta
  - technology = civilization?
- The Roman fleet
  - military power
  - the empire triumphant over nature
  - citizenship and multiculturalism
  - cooperation and accomplishments
- Pliny and his books
  - human intelligence and the continuous progress of science

8.4 Historical elements and themes associated with them

- The eruption
  - nature, death and decline
- The freedman
  - the evils of capitalism
  - social mobility in Roman society
- The relationships between Rome and the local administrations
  - State politics vs. local and individual interests

8.4 Celebrating the might of the aqueduct: Aqua Augusta

- Oh, but she was a mighty piece of work, the Augusta -- one of the greatest feats of engineering ever accomplished.
- … Somewhere far out there, on the opposite side of the bay, high in the pine forested mountains of the Apenninus, the aqueduct captured the springs of Serinus and bore the water westward -- channeled it along sinuous underground passages, carried it over ravines on top of tiered arcades, forced it across valleys through massive siphons -- all the way down to the plains of Campania, then around the far side of Mount Vesuvius, then south to the coast at Neapolis, and finally along the spine of the Misenum peninsula to the dusty naval town, a distance of some sixty miles, with a mean drop along her entire length of just two inches every one hundred yards.

8.4 The Aqua Augusta: leadership and technology

- She was the longest aqueduct in the world, longer even than the great aqueducts of Rome and far more complex, for whereas her sisters in the north fed one city only, the Augusta's serpentine conduit -- the matrix, as they called it: the motherline -- suckled no fewer than nine towns around the bay of Neapolis: Pompeii first, at the end of a long spur, then Nola, Acerrae, Atella, Neapolis, Puteoli, Cumae, Baiae, and finally Misenum. (7)

8.4: The Aqua Augusta: technology and civilization

- "... the engineer could stand here, listening and lost in thought, for hours. The percussion of the Augusta sounded in his ears not as a dull and continuous roar but as the notes of a gigantic water organ: the music of civilization. … in those moments, he felt himself to be not in a reservoir at all, but in a temple dedicated to the only God worth believing in." (18)