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THE PENGUIN
**HISTORICAL ATLAS
OF ANCIENT ROME**

The Unification of Italy

The Roman conquest of Italy was slow and hard-fought, but by the middle of the 3rd century BC, they were masters of the peninsula.

Right: this 3rd-century BC pottery dish from Campania shows an Indian elephant equipped for war—probably one of the 20 brought to Italy by Pyrrhus, which would have been the first the Romans had seen.



Below: this ivory plaque, one of a pair from Palestrina in Italy, gives a good impression of the armour and equipment used by Roman soldiers in the 3rd century BC.



From the early days of the Republic, Rome behaved as an expansionist power, fighting frequent wars to gain new territory and safeguard its security. The first major gain was the capture of Veii, the southernmost of the Etruscan cities, in 396 BC. Any elation was shortlived, however, as six years later a Celtic raiding party descended from northern Italy, defeated the Romans at the River Allia and captured and sacked Rome itself. This proved

merely a temporary setback, and during the

rest of the 4th century BC the Romans steadily expanded their political and military influence through central Italy. They did this by an astute mixture of warfare and diplomacy, fighting only where necessary. They also adopted a policy of founding Roman colonies at strategic places to consolidate their hold on newly conquered territory.

The Romans gained mastery of Latium in the Latin war of 340–38 BC, and then defeated their erstwhile allies the Samnites in the Second and Third Samnite Wars of 327–304 and 298–90 BC. This extended their power east to the Adriatic and southwards to the Bay of Naples. Their next major war was against a foreign invader, Pyrrhus, King of Epirus in northwest Greece. In 280 he landed in southern Italy with an army of 25,000 men and 20 elephants, the first the Romans had encountered. Despite several victories, Pyrrhus was unable to make significant headway and withdrew back to Epirus five years later. This left the Romans free to consolidate their hold on southern Italy, and cast their eyes across the straits to Sicily where, in 264, they came into direct conflict with the Carthaginians (► pages 24–25).

2/The languages of Italy, 5th century BC

Italic group:

- East Italic
 - Faliscan
 - Latin
 - Osco-Umbrian
 - Venetic
- other Indo-European:
- Celtic
 - Greek
 - Messapic
- unclassified:
- Etruscan
 - Ligurian



The Wars with Carthage



Above: this portrait bust, found near Naples, is believed to be of Hannibal (247–183 BC), although the workmanship dates from the 2nd century AD. A talented military strategist, Hannibal was the son of Hamilcar Barca, who had conquered Spain for the Carthaginians.

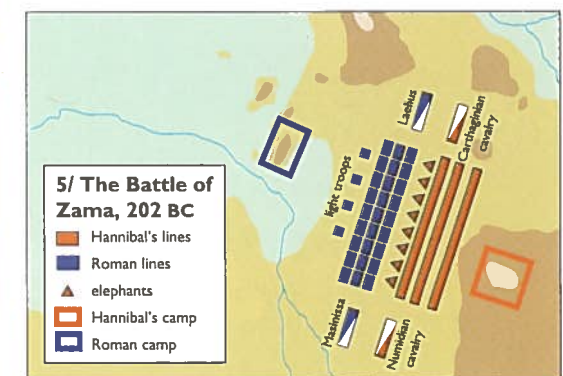
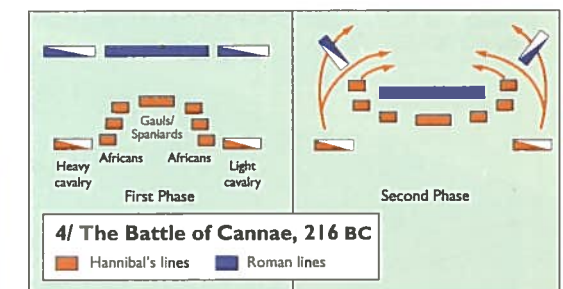
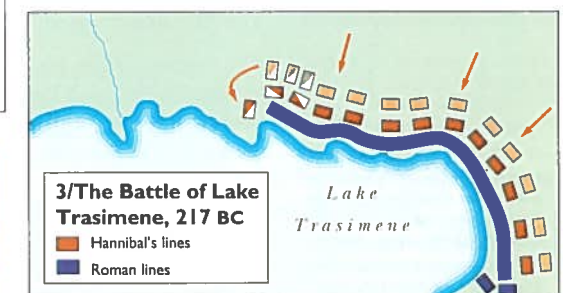
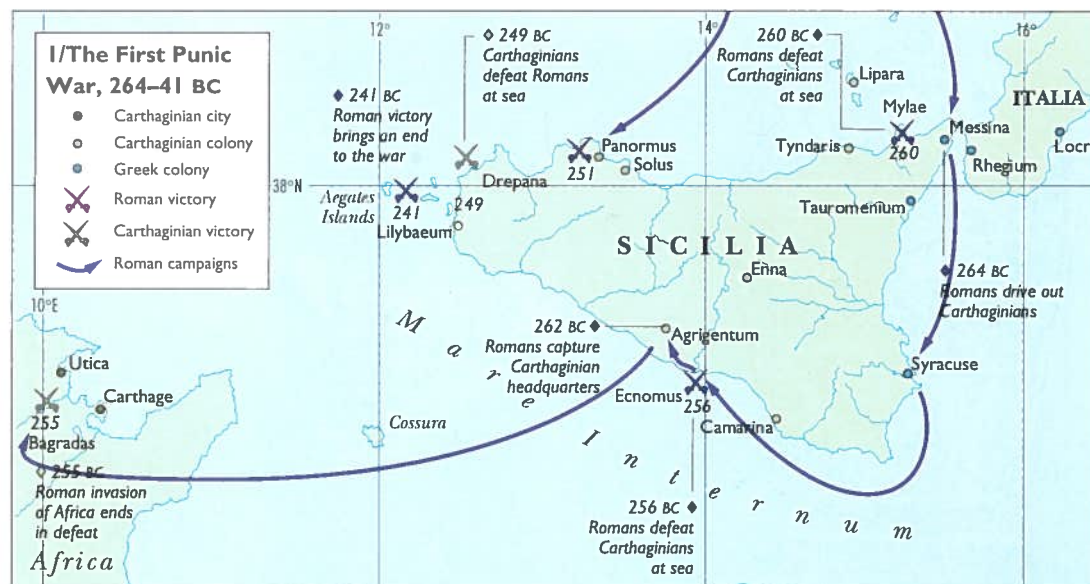
Opposite: Carthage was founded in the 9th century BC by Phoenician traders and grew into the capital of a powerful maritime empire. This street of substantial, well-built houses dates from shortly after the Second Punic War, testimony to its continued prosperity.

Rome's expansion into southern Italy brings it into conflict with the other major power in the Central Mediterranean: Carthage.

By the 3rd century BC, Carthage had become the centre of a maritime empire stretching along the coasts of southern Spain and North Africa and including the western part of Sicily. The major enemies of the Carthaginians had for many years been the Greek cities of Sicily and southern Italy, and Sicily had become a frequent battleground between the two sides.

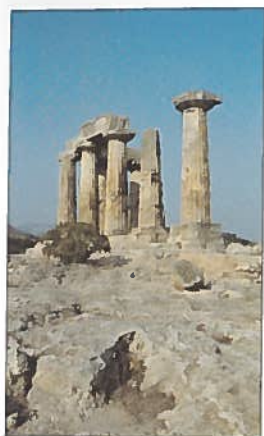
Rome was sucked into the Sicilian quarrel in 264 BC when Italian mercenaries at Messina called for their help against the Carthaginians. To counter the powerful Carthaginian navy, the Romans had to build their own fleet. They were successful against the Carthaginians on land at Agrigentum (262) and at sea off Mylae (260) and Ecnomus (256), but their invasion of Africa was a disaster, and their fleet was destroyed at Drepana in 249. Eight more years of war followed before the Romans won a final victory in a sea battle off the Aegates islands.

Victory in the First Punic War gave the Romans control of Sicily, but did not deter the Carthaginians from launching a second war, directed at Rome itself, in 218. The leader of the Carthaginian forces was Hannibal, who marched his army from southern Spain across the Alps into northern Italy, defeating the Roman armies sent against him. For 16 years he campaigned in central and southern Italy, winning crushing set-piece battles at Lake Trasimene and Cannae. Hannibal could not capture Rome itself, however, and although at the height of his success much of southern Italy defected to him, he was unable to break the Romans' hold on the peninsula. At last, in 203, he was forced to return to Africa to defend Carthage itself against a Roman counter-attack. His defeat by the Roman general Scipio at Zama in 202 brought the Second Punic War to an end and confirmed Rome's standing as the regional superpower.



Rome's Conquest of the East

In the space of a century, Rome became the dominant political and military power in the eastern Mediterranean.



Above: the ruins of the temple of Apollo at Corinth. The sack of the city by the Roman general Mummius in 146 BC sent shock waves through the Greek world. The historian Pausanias recorded that "the majority... were put to the sword by the Romans, but the women and children Mummius sold into slavery." Mummius became rich on the proceeds, and built a temple to the god Hercules at Rome.

From the end of the 4th century BC, the eastern Mediterranean was dominated by the Hellenistic states which Alexander the Great's generals had carved out of his empire after his death: Macedonia; the Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt; the Seleucid realm and, in the 3rd century, Pergamum. In theory, the Seleucid kings ruled a vast empire stretching from the Aegean to Afghanistan, but in practice their control was weak and patchy.

Rome entered into eastern politics at the time of the Second Punic War, when King Philip V of Macedon made an alliance with Hannibal. To contain Philip's ambitions on the Dalmatian coast, the Romans went to war in 214 and again in 200, winning a crushing victory at Cynoscephalae in 197. This was their first success over the formidable formation of spearmen known as the Macedonian phalanx. Five years later the Romans became involved in a still more distant war when the king of Pergamum appealed for help against his eastern neighbour, the Seleucid ruler Antiochus III. The Romans crushed Antiochus's land army at Magnesia in 190.

The legions were back in action in Macedonia 20 years later, this time against Philip's son Perseus. At the battle of Pydna in 168 the Romans won a decisive victory and reduced Macedonia to a Roman province. Greece was added in 146, after a war in which the Romans destroyed the leading Greek city, Corinth. Rome acquired its first territory beyond the Aegean in 133, when the last king of Pergamum bequeathed his kingdom to the Roman people; it became the province of Asia. In 101 Romans established a further province of Cilicia in an effort to stamp out piracy. It was not until the wars of the 1st century, however, that Rome cast its imperial noose around the entire region, from the Black Sea to Syria and Egypt.

