**UNIVERSITY OF 8 MAI 1945, GUELMA**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**Lecture in Culture and Civilization**

**First year, LMD**

**Rome Becomes an Empire**

**Conflicts at Home.**

As Rome expanded, many wealthy Romans neglected their civic duties. They thought only about gaining even more power and wealth. This increased the distance between rich and poor. As a result, the threat of uprisings grew as the common people increasingly resented the power and privileges of the wealthy.

**Reform Fails**

Reformers tried to relieve these problems. They wanted to give land to the poor. But the wealthy landowners in the Senate felt threatened. They opposed the reforms and had the reformers killed.

**Civil War**

At the same time, generals who had conquered other lands became ambitious for power at home. They hired poor farmers to serve under them as soldiers. Increasingly, these soldiers shifted their loyalty from the republic to their general. The generals’ desire for power led to conflict. Eventually, civil war broke out.

On one side were the generals who supported the cause of the plebeians. On the other were generals who were backed by patricians and senators. A general named **Marius** fought for the plebeians, while a general named **Sulla** fought for the patricians. The struggle went on for many years. Finally, in 82 B.C., the patricians won. Sulla took power and became a dictator.

1. **Julius Caesar.**

After Sulla died, other generals rose to power. One of them was **Julius Caesar**, general, politician, and dictator. Caesar was born around 100 B.C. into an old noble family. He was a man of many talents and great ambition. But to achieve real power, he knew he had to win on the battlefield.

**Military Leader** Caesar first saw military action in Asia Minor —part of present-day Turkey—and Spain. But he proved himself to be a great general in Gaul, the area now known as France. The Gauls were fierce fighters. But in a brilliant military **campaign**, Caesar defeated the Gauls and captured the entire region. His conquests won new lands and great wealth for Rome.

**Dictator for Life** In addition to his military skills, Caesar was also a good politician. He gained a reputation as a reformer who supported the common people. This, plus his military fame, made him popular with the plebeians. But Caesar also had enemies. Many powerful Romans, including patrician senators, opposed Caesar. One of his opponents was **Cicero**, a key Roman consul and perhaps the greatest speaker in Roman history.. He distrusted Caesar and the ruler’s great desire for power .When Caesar returned from Gaul he led his soldiers into Italy and began fighting for control of Rome. After several years, Caesar emerged victorious. In 46 B.C., he returned to Rome, where he had the support of the people and the army. That same year, the Senate appointed him the sole Roman ruler.

**Caesar’s Reforms** Caesar governed as an absolute ruler, but he started a number of reforms. He enforced laws against crime and created jobs for the poor. Despite these reforms, some Romans feared that Caesar would make himself king. Not only would he rule for a lifetime, but his family members would also rule after him.

**Assassination and Legacy** Concern over Caesar’s growing power led to his downfall. The Senate, Rome’s governing body, resented his power. On March 15, 44 B.C., some of the senators took action. The Senate held a meeting on that fateful day. The senators entered one by one and, finally, Caesar came into the chamber. He was surrounded and then assassinated by a group of senators. Historians still disagree about Caesar’s rule, just as Romans did at the time. Some say he was a reformer who worked to help the common people. Others say he was a power-hungry tyrant. In either case, Caesar’s rule and his death would bring an end to the republic.

**Emperors Rule Rome**

After Caesar’s death, several Roman leaders struggled to gain power. One of these men was Caesar’s great-nephew, Octavian. This struggle led to another civil war, which lasted for years. The war destroyed what was left of the Roman Republic. Eventually, Octavian defeated his enemies. In 27 B.C., he became the ruler of Rome. In time, he took the name **Augustus**, which means “exalted one,” or person of great rank and authority.

**Augustus Rebuilds Rome** Augustus preferred to be called “first citizen.” He restored some aspects of the republican government. Senators, consuls, and tribunes once again held office. But Augustus had power over all of them. Augustus governed well. He brought the provinces under control and strengthened the empire’s defences. He also began a **civil service**, a group of officials employed by the government. The Roman civil service collected taxes, oversaw the postal system, and managed the grain supply. Augustus also rebuilt and beautified Rome. He built grand temples, theatres, and monuments. He replaced many old brick buildings with structures made of **marble**. Under Augustus, Rome became a magnificent imperial capital.

**The Roman Peace** The reign of Augustus began a long period of peace and stability in the Roman Empire called the ***Pax Romana***, or “Roman Peace.” The *Pax Romana* lasted for about 200 years. During this time, the empire grew to its greatest size, about two million square miles. Under Augustus, the Roman army became the greatest fighting force in the world. Around 300,000 men served in the army. They guarded the empire’s frontiers. They also built roads, bridges, and tunnels that helped tie the empire together. In addition, Augustus created a strong Roman navy that patrolled the Mediterranean Sea. In this way, Rome was able to make its power and influence felt throughout the Mediterranean world.

**Agriculture:** Agriculture and trade helped the empire prosper. Agriculture was the most important economic activity in the empire. The majority of people were engaged in farming. Most Romans survived on the produce from their local area. Farming remained the basis of the Roman economy, but industry also grew. The manufacture of pottery, metal goods, and glass increased. So did the production of wine and olive oil, as well as other food products.

**Trade** The Empire fostered economic growth through the use of trade routes. Traders sailed across the Mediterranean Sea to Spain, Africa. They also travelled by land to Gaul and other parts of Europe. Through trade, Rome acquired valuable goods not available at home. Traders brought back grain, ivory, silk, spices, gold and silver

**Currency** The Roman economy was also united by a common currency, or money. In Augustus’ time, a silver coin called a denarius was used throughout the empire. A common form of money made trade between different parts of the empire much easier. Traders could buy and sell without changing their money into another currency.

Rome’s expanding economy largely benefited those who were already wealthy. As a result, the division between rich and poor became deeper.