

# EPILOGUE

66 CICERO

## THE LEGACIES OF ANCIENT ROME

In many ways, cities and empires are like people. You are the same person you were at age six, but you're also very different. A big event—such as moving to a new city, a divorce in the family, or the birth of a younger brother or sister—may have made a huge difference in your life. But you are still you—the same, yet different.

This could also be said of Rome. Many things changed after 476 CE, but others stayed the same. In the decades after

Rome's fall, some Italian cities were abandoned. Grand build-

ings collapsed. Roman civilization, once so glorious, no longer blanketed the

known world. In some places, Roman culture completely disappeared. But

the 90 percent of the people who worked on the land went on as

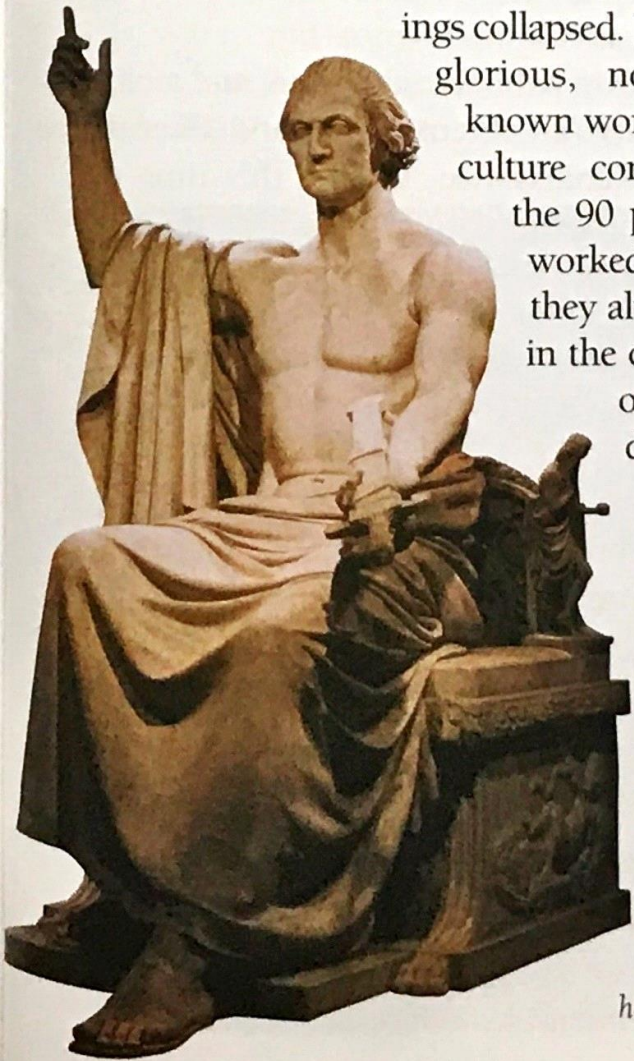
they always had. People still lived in the city of Rome. They bought

olive oil, grain, wine, sandals, and cloth, using the

same coins they had used before. Most government

officials stayed the same. And they still conducted

their business in Latin.



*The first President of the United States, George Washington, is portrayed as the bare-chested Roman god Jupiter. The Presidential feet wear sandals, and his hand holds a Roman sword.*



## THE BISHOP OF ROME

The Pope of Rome is still the head of the Roman Catholic Church. In “church Latin,” the word *papa* means father or daddy. And the English word “popo” comes from *papa*. Once again, Rome’s most powerful leader was described as a father.

*re + nasci =*  
 “again” + “to be born”  
 “Renaissance” means  
 rebirth—to be born again, or  
 recreated. Whenever some-  
 thing begins to be popular  
 again, it may be called a  
 “renaissance.” This old thing  
 that becomes new again can  
 be a style of art, clothing,  
 music . . . even ideas.

Rome’s civic or state government failed, but its religious government grew stronger than ever. The bishops of Rome, or popes, became the most powerful leaders in the Christian Church. The activities that surrounded the Church made Rome the leading city in Europe for many centuries. For this reason, churchmen, foreign ambassadors, and scholars kept using Latin as their official language for more than 1,000 years.

We find traces of Rome all over Europe, Britain, and the Mediterranean world. Arrow-straight roads, aqueducts, temples, public baths, walls, and fortresses all say: “Rome was here.” The use of cement in ancient buildings, such as the huge baths built in Paris, points to Rome as well—the Romans invented the technology for making cement, the main ingredient in concrete. But Rome’s influence is not found just in tangible things—things we can touch. Roman ideas of contracts, property, and inheritance form the basis of European—and American—law.

In the 15th century, Italian painters, sculptors, and architects “rediscovered” the art of ancient Rome and Greece. This is what we call the **Renaissance**. During this time of rebirth, Roman domes and Greek columns appeared once again in churches and state buildings all over Europe.

Later, in the 18th century, many government buildings and monuments of the newly formed United States of America showed the influence of Greek and Roman art and architecture. The U.S. Capitol, with its gleaming white marble, looks as if it might have been designed for Rome itself. This was no accident. The founding fathers borrowed many ideas from Rome in their search for a balanced democracy. It made sense that their buildings should also echo Rome.

The United States government follows the pattern set by the founders of the Roman republic with a division of power between its two houses: the Senate and the House of Representatives. As in ancient Rome, a system of checks and balances keeps any one branch of the government from having too much power. The French Republic of the 1790s also had a “Senate” and “Assembly” modeled on Rome.

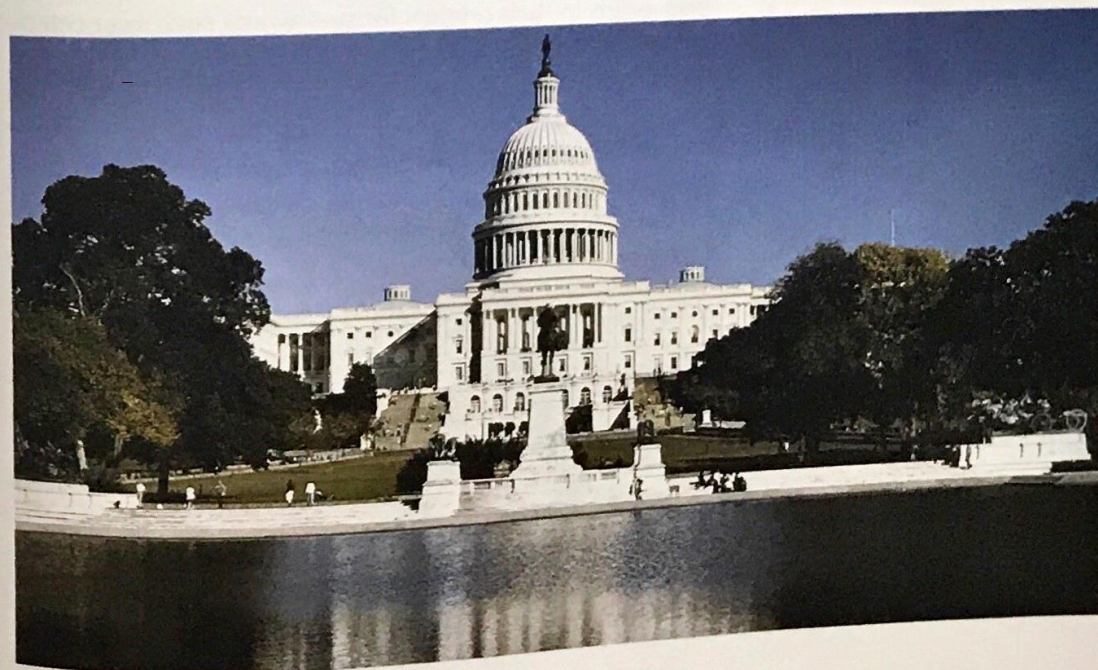
The idea of civic duty is borrowed from Rome as well. When you vote, not too long from now, or serve on a jury, you will be celebrating your Roman heritage. If you take an unpaid office in your town, work in a homeless shelter, or join the volunteer firemen, you will be doing your civic duty. Civic duty takes countless forms. When a football or basketball star visits a children’s hospital, the ghost of old Cicero smiles. “The private individual ought . . . to live on fair and equal terms with his fellow citizens . . . and to work for the peace and honor of the state, for such a person we . . . respect and call a good citizen.”

Imagine Roma, that legendary spirit of the city, once again. She is old and writing her will, deciding what she will leave to others. To whom will she give her gifts, her legacies? The good news is that Roma named you in her will. And you use her legacies every day of your life.

Many of the books that you read and study are based on Roman tales—the stories of the city’s founding, its heroes, its wars, and romances. Shakespeare based many of his plays on Roman comedies. Hundreds of modern books, movies, and plays are also based upon the history of Rome.

☞ Cicero, *On Duties*, 44 BCE

*Arches, stately columns, and a huge dome mark the U.S. capitol building as a descendant of Roman architecture. The governing system inside also reflects Rome: “the Republic for which it stands.”*





The Los Angeles Coliseum was built for the Olympic games of 1932 and hosted the 1984 games. Its tall arches echo the original Colosseum (the Latin spelling) in Rome.



*et + cetera* =  
 “and” + “other things”  
*circus* = “round”  
*audire* = “to hear”  
*video* = “I see”

Words are among Roma’s most generous gifts. It’s true that Latin died out as a spoken language long ago. But like a big bag of flour that disappears, only to return as bread, cookies, noodles, and cakes, Latin formed the basis of other languages—Italian, French, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, and Romanian. English, too, is enriched by Latin. We use many Latin words in their original forms—words such as *et cetera*, *circus*, *auditorium*, and *video*. Thousands more English words come from Latin—words such as library, nation, factory, and victory. Even “school” comes from the Latin *schola*. And the book you are holding right now is another gift from Roma. It’s written with the Roman alphabet.

You’ll never escape the influence of ancient Rome—don’t even try!