

## THE STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY: THE PUNIC WARS

'Most historians have prefaced their work by stressing the importance of the period they propose to deal with; and I may well, at this point, follow their example and declare that I am now about to tell the story of the most memorable war in history: that, namely, which was fought by Carthage under the leadership of Hannibal against Rome.'<sup>1</sup>

LIVY



The Battle of Mylae, Sicily, in 260 BCE as depicted on a playing card from 1913.

# OVERVIEW

## ROMAN SUCCESS

- For much of the third century BCE, Rome was involved in long and costly wars with Carthage
- Rome began to make contact with the Greek eastern Mediterranean, drawing the city into further conflict
- Roman control of the sea, strong alliances and effective senatorial leadership contributed to Roman success
- By the end of the third century BCE, Rome clearly had an empire and controlled a number of overseas provinces



### QUINTUS FABIUS MAXIMUS

Fabius was appointed dictator in response to the Roman loss at the Battle of Lake Trasimene in 217 BCE. Fabius recognised Hannibal's military superiority and developed the unpopular strategy of harassing Hannibal's forces rather than facing him in a direct fight.

### PUBLIUS CORNELIUS SCIPIO

There are two Scipios by this name—a father and son. The father was the leader of Roman forces in Spain during the Second Punic War and died in 211 BCE. His more famous son (236–183 BCE) took over command of Roman troops in Spain and was immediately successful. After the Roman victory at Zama, the son became known as Scipio Africanus.

	BEFORE 265 BCE	FIRST PUNIC WAR 264–241 BCE	SECOND PUNIC WAR 218–201 BCE	THIRD PUNIC WAR 149–146 BCE			
<b>ROME</b>	Republic based in Italy	<b>GAINS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• navy</li> <li>• new provinces (Sicily, Corsica and Sardinia)</li> </ul>	<b>GAINS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• new provinces (Spain)</li> <li>• senatorial wealth and prestige</li> </ul>	<b>GAINS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• new provinces (Africa)</li> </ul>	<b>VICTOR</b>		
<b>RELATIONSHIP</b>	friendship	open conflict	hostility	open conflict	hostility	open conflict	<b>END OF RIVALRY BETWEEN ROME AND CARTHAGE</b>
<b>EVENTS</b>		Sicily caught in the middle	Romans invade Spain Carthaginians invade Italy	Carthaginians go to war in North Africa			
<b>CARTHAGE</b>	Republic based in North Africa	<b>LOSSES:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• territory</li> <li>• compensation to Rome</li> </ul>	<b>LOSSES:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• territory</li> <li>• compensation to Rome</li> <li>• navy</li> <li>• the right to go to war</li> </ul>	<b>LOSSES:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• territory</li> <li>• city (destroyed)</li> <li>• people (enslaved)</li> </ul>	<b>LOSER</b>		
	BEFORE 265 BCE	FIRST PUNIC WAR 264–241 BCE	SECOND PUNIC WAR 218–201 BCE	THIRD PUNIC WAR 149–146 BCE			



### HAMILCAR BARCA

The father of Hannibal Barca, Hamilcar was a commander of Carthaginian forces in Sicily during the First Punic War and the commander of Carthaginian forces in Spain between the two wars. Hamilcar did much to re-establish Carthage's presence in Spain, and he died there in 229 BCE.



### HANNIBAL BARCA

Hannibal was a Carthaginian general (247–183/182 BCE) in the Second Punic War and one of the greatest military strategists in history. He is famous for crossing the Alps with an army that included elephants. Despite his incredible military successes, he was not effectively supported by Carthage. His family members are collectively known as the 'Barcids' (based on their family name 'Barca').

### HASDRUBAL BARCA

Hasdrubal is a common Carthaginian name and it can be unclear which Hasdrubal is being referred to. One Hasdrubal was the son-in-law of Hamilcar Barca and took over the management of Spain when Hamilcar died; this Hasdrubal died in 221 BCE. Another Hasdrubal Barca was the brother of Hannibal; when Hannibal invaded Italy in 218 BCE, Hasdrubal remained in Spain to fight the Romans. A third Hasdrubal, the son of Gisco, was also a commander in Spain at the same time as Hannibal's brother, and a fourth Hasdrubal was a commander of Carthaginian troops during the Third Punic War.

## THE FIRST PUNIC WAR (264–241 BCE)

**CASSIUS DIO:** 'The Carthaginians, who had long been powerful, and the Romans, who were now growing in strength, viewed each other with suspicion; and they were led into war, partly out of a desire to keep getting more, just like the majority of human beings [and especially when they are doing well, of course], but also partly out of fear.'



### THE PUNIC WARS

At the end of the Pyrrhic War in 265 BCE, Rome was master of central and southern Italy. Although Rome and Carthage (a city in modern-day Tunisia) had been aware of each other for centuries, they had enjoyed peaceful relations. No one in 265 BCE assumed that these two city-states would come into conflict with each other, let alone fight three devastating wars until one wiped out the other.<sup>2</sup> At the end of the *Punic* Wars, Rome would be undisputed master of the Mediterranean.

The unexpected event that triggered the conflict was the behaviour of the aptly named Sons of Mars (as Mars was the Roman god of war). The Sons of Mars—also known as the *Mamertines*—were a band of mercenaries formerly in the employment of Agathocles of Sicily. In 288 BCE the Sons captured the city of Messana, near the Strait of Messina and used it as a base to attack other towns in Sicily and ships sailing through the strait. Around 264 BCE, Hiero II of Syracuse attacked Messana and came close to liberating it. The Sons of Mars became alarmed at the thought of Syracuse taking control and called upon Carthage to help them; Carthage responded by sending a garrison into Messana. The Sons of Mars then became alarmed at the thought of the Carthaginians controlling of Messana, so they called upon the Romans to help them.



### SOURCE 4.01

Hiero II's ship, in Syracuse, Italy.

There was considerable debate in Rome about the request for intervention. The Mamertines were from Campania—which was under Roman control—and thus had a 'moral claim on the Republic's protection'.<sup>3</sup> The Senate was aware that interference in Sicilian affairs might well draw Rome into conflict with Carthage, but Syracuse was seen as a greater threat than Carthage at the time. Hiero II seemed to be presenting himself as the champion of the Greeks and might end up trying to liberate the Greek cities in the south of Italy (following the example of Pyrrhus). Unsure of what to do, the Senate took the unusual step of allowing the consuls to present the matter to the Centuriate Assembly without any advice from the Senate. The consuls stressed the prospect of gaining loot in a Sicilian war and the assembly voted in favour of sending an army to help the Sons of Mars.

Two legions under the command of the consul Appius Claudius Caudex headed for Messana in 264 BCE. When the Carthaginians heard that the Romans were on the way, the commander of the Carthaginian garrison withdrew with his troops (the commander was later crucified by the Carthaginian Senate for having failed to even try to hold onto Messana). The Carthaginians quickly made an alliance with Syracuse; together they set up camp around Messana and blockaded the city at sea. The Carthaginians famously declared that they would not even let the Romans wash their hands in the sea let alone have freedom of movement on the water. Appius Claudius slipped past the blockade at night, landed his army and pushed the Syracusans and Carthaginians out of Messana.

## CARTHAGE

Greek and Roman accounts often present the Carthaginians as cruel and self-indulgent people who were interested in pleasure and profit rather than community or productivity. The Romans and Greeks even claimed that the Carthaginians practised human sacrifice, including the sacrifice of their own children—and there is some archaeological evidence to support this. The 'lurid stories' of Carthaginian religion have endured—unfair as they may be to the people of Carthage<sup>4</sup>—so students of ancient history should be cautious when reading Roman and Greek accounts of the Carthaginians.

The city of Carthage was settled by the Phoenician people around 750 BCE. The word 'Punic' comes from the Latin *Punicus*, which was the Roman way of saying 'Phoenician'. The Phoenicians had come from the city of Tyre, on the east coast of the Mediterranean, and were famous for their skills in navigation, trade and naval warfare. Carthage was originally a trading station in northern Africa, facing towards Sicily—where Tunisia is today. When Phoenician cities like Tyre in the east started to fall under the control of empires such as Babylonia and Persia, Carthage took on the role of protector of Phoenician interests in the western Mediterranean. By the beginning of the third century BCE, Carthage controlled much of the North African coast—from the Gulf of Syrtis to the Strait of Gibraltar—as well as southern Spain, the Balearic Islands, Sardinia, Corsica and western Sicily.

The city of Carthage was built around an excellent harbour; it was defended by stout walls and its stables were filled with elephants and horses. There were perhaps 200 000 residents of the city and another 2 million people in Carthaginian territory in the third century BCE.<sup>5</sup> The wealthy Carthaginians exported large amounts of agricultural produce and controlled mines in Spain—but their real source of wealth came from commerce.<sup>6</sup> Carthaginian caravans traded in Africa and Egypt, while merchants sailed beyond the Pillars of Hercules (the Strait of Gibraltar) to Britain and Senegal.<sup>7</sup>

The political and social structure of the Carthaginians shared similarities with Rome and classical Athens. Those citizens of Carthage who had the required level of wealth and social status gathered into an assembly to debate matters proposed to them. The assembly elected officials and military commanders. Two executive officers called *suffetes* (similar to the Roman consuls) were elected annually and had significant civil authority. The Carthaginian Senate gave advice to the *suffetes* but if the *suffetes* and the Senate could not agree, the assembly of the people would be consulted, a practice that was quite different to the role of the Roman assemblies. The Senate had a great deal of responsibility for Carthaginian policy and its members formed committees that supervised legal,

financial and military matters. Those military matters included managing the large number of mercenaries who made up Carthage's armed forces and keeping a close eye on ambitious generals—the usual punishment for a general who ran afoul of the Senate was crucifixion.



### SOURCE 4.02

Bones of a sacrificed Carthaginian youth recovered from the ruins of Carthage.



UNESCO:  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SITE OF CARTHAGE



UNESCO: 3D  
RECONSTRUCTION  
OF CARTHAGE

### ACTIVITY

#### CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Where did the Carthaginians originally come from?
2. What were some of the distinctive features of the city of Carthage?
3. In what ways were the Romans and Carthaginians similar?

### SOURCE 4.03

Punic ruins in Byrsa, Carthage, Tunisia.

## ACTIVITY

## CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Why did the Sons of Mars ask the Romans for help?
2. How did the Romans establish themselves in Sicily in 264 and 263 BCE?
3. To what extent were the Carthaginians responsible for starting the First Punic War? Use evidence to support your response.

The Carthaginians retreated to the west of Sicily to protect their cities there while the Romans focused on Syracuse. In 263 BCE, the Romans persuaded Hiero II of Syracuse to become an ally. Once again, the Roman skill in consolidating military gains with alliances was successful and Hiero II remained a firm friend to Rome until his death in 216 BCE. The two consuls of 263 BCE arrived in Sicily with 40 000 men and captured some of the cities under Carthaginian control in the west of the island. The Romans may have done this to discourage Carthage from resisting Rome's newly established involvement in Sicily.<sup>8</sup> But it had the opposite effect.

The Carthaginian Senate realised that Rome now posed a direct threat to their position in Sicily. Either Rome would eventually try to expand and push Carthage out of Sicily, or the Sicilian towns under Carthaginian control would be tempted to ally with Rome. Carthaginian forces—including North African allies and mercenaries from Spain and Gaul—began to build up at the city of Agrigentum on the south-west coast of Sicily. The Romans responded by sending both consuls with their armies in 262 BCE. Agrigentum was captured in early 261 after a five-month siege.

## WAR IN SICILY (261–256 BCE)

The First Punic War had started in Sicily and it would be carried out over the next twenty years in and around that island. The problem for the Romans was that they had virtually no ships and no skill in naval warfare, while the Carthaginians ruled the waves. It became clear to the Romans by 261 BCE that they would need a fleet. According to Polybius, the Romans found a stranded Carthaginian warship and copied the design. Supposedly, within two months the Romans had built 100 *quinqueremes*, the type of battleship used by the Carthaginians. Each ship was crewed by about 300 rowers and carried 120 soldiers on board. These *quinqueremes* were the first of many ships the Romans would build.

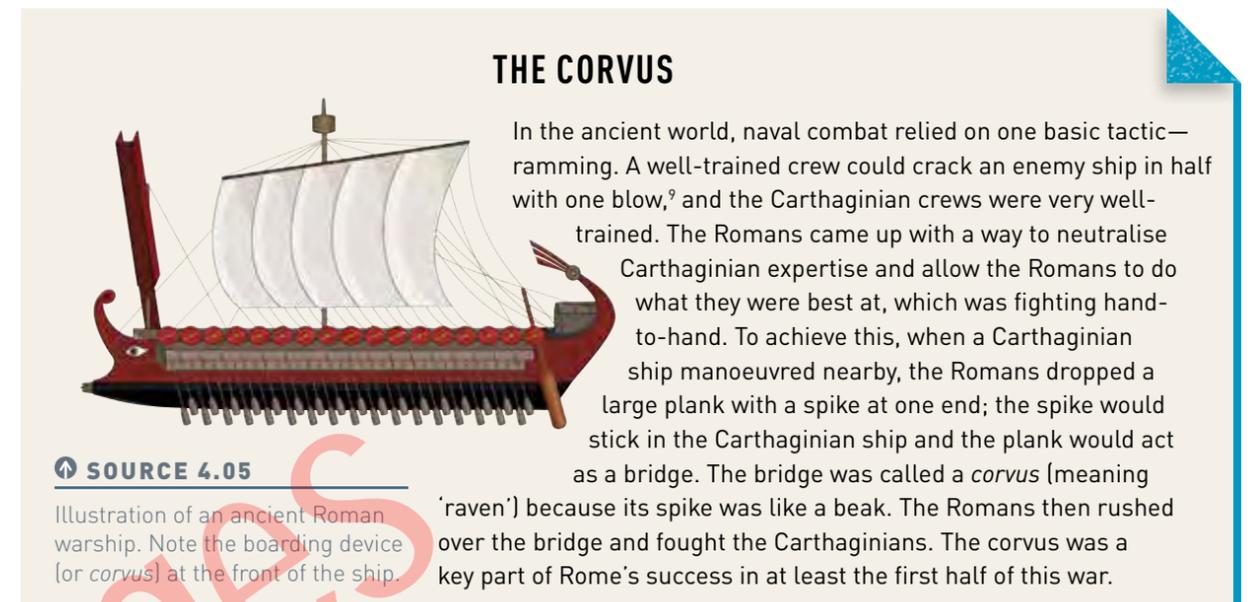
When the Roman fleet was ready, it fought the Carthaginian fleet off the north coast of Sicily near the town of Mylae. Rome, the naval newcomer, soundly defeated Carthage, the former maritime masters. The consul for 260 BCE, Gaius Duilius, celebrated the first naval triumph in Roman history.

The Romans had won their first major sea battle against Carthage—but the struggle was far from over. One of the consuls of 259 BCE, Lucius Cornelius



## SOURCE 4.04

Modern-day Sicily, showing the agricultural richness of the island.



## THE CORVUS

In the ancient world, naval combat relied on one basic tactic—ramming. A well-trained crew could crack an enemy ship in half with one blow,<sup>9</sup> and the Carthaginian crews were very well-trained. The Romans came up with a way to neutralise

Carthaginian expertise and allow the Romans to do what they were best at, which was fighting hand-to-hand. To achieve this, when a Carthaginian ship manoeuvred nearby, the Romans dropped a large plank with a spike at one end; the spike would stick in the Carthaginian ship and the plank would act as a bridge. The bridge was called a *corvus* (meaning

'raven') because its spike was like a beak. The Romans then rushed over the bridge and fought the Carthaginians. The corvus was a key part of Rome's success in at least the first half of this war.

## SOURCE 4.05

Illustration of an ancient Roman warship. Note the boarding device (or *corvus*) at the front of the ship.

Scipio, captured Corsica, and his successor, Gaius Sulpicius Paterculus, won Rome's second naval battle at Sulci in Sardinia in 258 BCE. The battles around Corsica and Sardinia were, however, a secondary theatre of the war. In 257 BCE, the consul Gaius Atilius Regulus won Rome's third naval battle at Tyndaris.

## WAR IN AFRICA (256–255 BCE)

By establishing themselves in Sicily, the Romans were now a relatively short distance by sea from Carthage itself and it was possible that an invasion of Africa could bring the war to an end. The fleet was increased to 250 ships, eighty transport ships and about 100 000 men for the crews. This would have made the invasion force larger, relative to population, than the Allied forces in the D-Day invasion of 1944 during World War II—and one of the most massive military operations in the ancient world.<sup>10</sup> The invasion, under the command of consuls Marcus Atilius Regulus and Lucius Manlius Vulso, began well, with Rome's fourth naval victory at Cape Ecnomus. Vulso returned to Rome with most of the fleet while Regulus remained in Africa with the remaining ships and two legions (about 15 000 men), plundering the countryside around Carthage.

When it became clear that Marcus Atilius Regulus would be a real threat in North Africa, the Carthaginians were willing to discuss peace terms. Regulus, however, proposed such unfair terms—the details of which are unclear—that the Carthaginians decided it was better to keep fighting. The Carthaginians hired new mercenaries, including a Spartan named Xanthippus who took charge of the Carthaginian war effort. When the Romans met Xanthippus in 255 BCE, he had a concentrated mass of about 100 elephants at the front of his 12 000 troops and about 4000 cavalry waiting on the wings. The Romans formed into a compact mass—but this was exactly what Xanthippus wanted. Xanthippus' cavalry kept the Romans from spreading out and the elephants trampled the legions underfoot. Only about 2000 of the



## DID YOU KNOW?

A column put up to celebrate a naval achievement is called a rostral column. It is named after the Roman word *rostrum*, which was the 'beak' of the bow of a ship, used for ramming other ships. Rostral columns today can be seen in cities such as St Petersburg and New York.

## SOURCE 4.06

Reproduction of the rostral column erected by Gaius Duilius to commemorate his victory in the Battle of Mylae, 260 BCE.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Roman armies carried sacred chickens around with them, and the army could only fight if the chickens ate before a battle. When the Romans were getting ready for the sea battle at Drepana in 249 BCE, the chickens would not eat, so the consul in charge impatiently said, 'Then let them drink' and threw them overboard. The Romans went into battle and lost. The gods, it seems, were displeased.

15 000 Romans escaped while 500 others were taken prisoner, including Marcus Atilius Regulus—this was the first time a Roman consul had ever been captured. A Roman fleet of about 250 ships picked up the survivors. This fleet was attacked by the Carthaginians at the Hermaean Promontory but the Romans won, making this their fifth naval victory. The Roman fleet was then hit by a terrible storm and only 80 ships survived; as many as 100 000 sailors and soldiers may have drowned.<sup>11</sup> The North Africa campaign was over.

**WAR IN SICILY (254–241 BCE)**

The war shifted back to Sicily, with battles continuing on land and at sea. The Romans rebuilt their fleet and had 220 ships by 254 BCE. The Romans were soon able to confine the Carthaginians in Sicily to the western edge of the island, most significantly in the strongholds of Drepana and Lilybaeum. But the Romans could not decisively take control of Sicily and their fortunes at sea took a turn for the worse. They lost another fleet in a storm off Cape Palinurus (253 BCE) and suffered their only naval defeat of the war at Drepana (249 BCE), while a third fleet was forced into a storm by the Carthaginians on the south-east coast of Sicily. The war was at a stalemate.

A new Carthaginian commander arrived on the scene in 247 BCE. His name was Hamilcar Barca. Hamilcar launched continual raids against Roman positions in Sicily and on the coast of Italy, and reasserted Carthaginian control of the sea. By 242 BCE, the Roman state had run out of ships and had to borrow money from wealthy individuals to build another 200 ships. The Roman fleet blockaded Drepana and Lilybaeum in Sicily, cutting Carthaginians off from reinforcements and supplies. In 241 BCE, Carthage made one last attempt to send ships to help their besieged countrymen in Sicily but the new Roman fleet met them at the Aegates Islands and defeated them. Carthage could not continue the war and a peace treaty was negotiated between Hamilcar Barca and the Roman consul, Gaius Lutatius Catulus.



**SOURCE 4.07**

Carthaginian commander Hamilcar Barca.

**ACTIVITY**

**CONTINUITY AND CHANGE**

Discuss how Roman technology and military tactics changed as a result of the First Punic War.

**HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

**THE PEACE TREATY BETWEEN ROME AND CARTHAGE**

The terms of the peace treaty meant that Carthage had to give up control of Sicily and the small islands on the north coast (but not Sardinia or Corsica), return prisoners of war, not attack or try to recruit Rome's allies (such as Syracuse) and pay compensation of 3200 *talents* of silver to Rome. (A *talent* was an ancient unit of weight, roughly 26 kilograms). The First Punic War had been costly for Rome—it had lost 200 000 men at sea (both Romans and allies) and at least 500 ships<sup>12</sup>—but the twenty-four years of conflict had shown that Rome could access far more men for its armies than Carthage could, thanks to the alliances it had created with conquered city-states. While Carthage could afford to pay the compensation demanded by the treaty, the loss of Sicily, with its rich grain fields and strategic location, meant that Carthage slid into second place behind Rome as the most important power in the western Mediterranean.

**THE FIRST PUNIC WAR: MAP TASK**

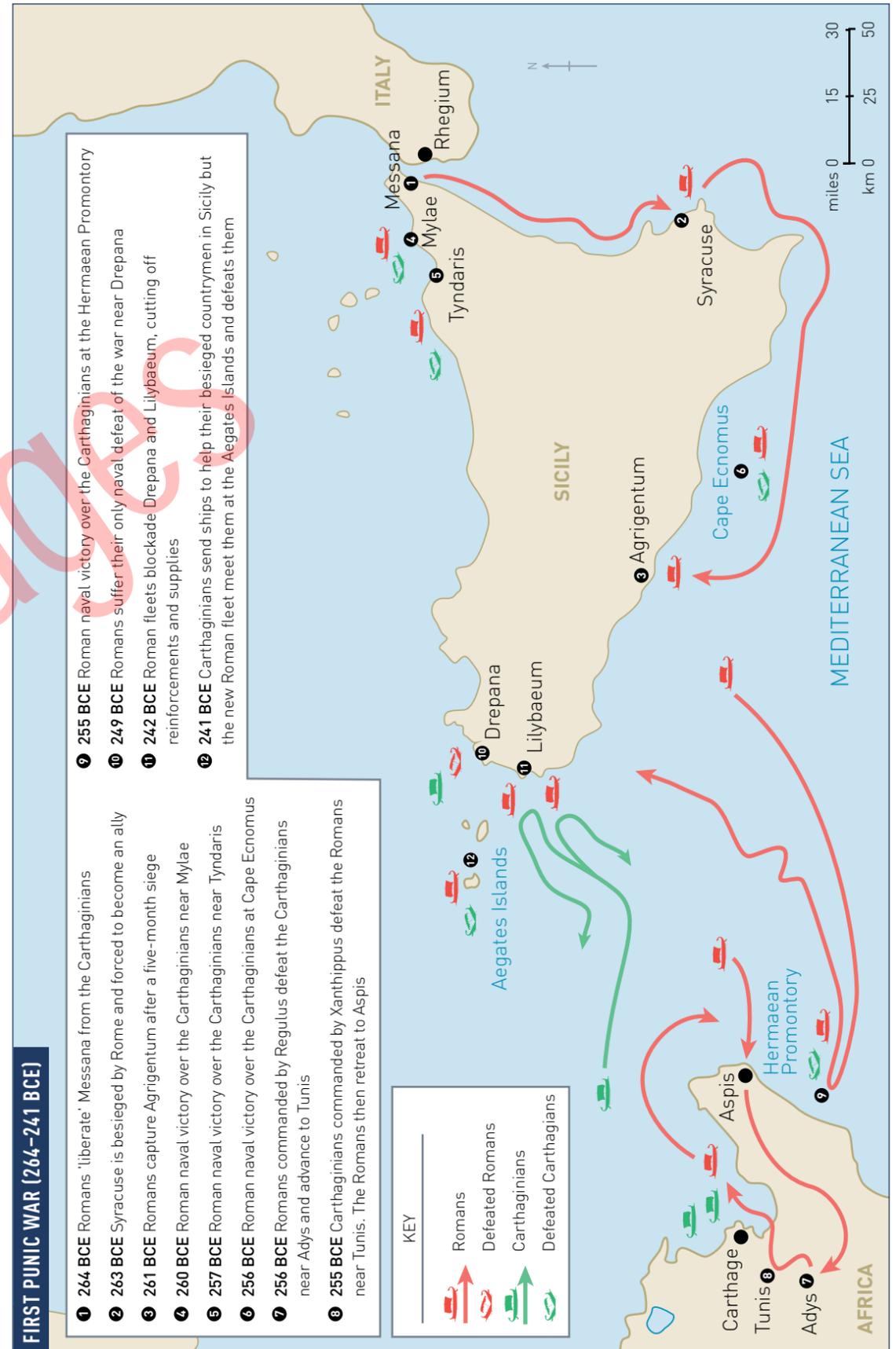
**KEY MILITARY EVENTS OF THE FIRST PUNIC WAR**

**FIRST PUNIC WAR (264–241 BCE)**

- 1 264 BCE Romans 'liberate' Messana from the Carthaginians
- 2 263 BCE Syracuse is besieged by Rome and forced to become an ally
- 3 261 BCE Romans capture Agrigentum after a five-month siege
- 4 260 BCE Roman naval victory over the Carthaginians near Mylae
- 5 257 BCE Roman naval victory over the Carthaginians near Tyndaris
- 6 256 BCE Roman naval victory over the Carthaginians at Cape Ecnomus
- 7 256 BCE Romans commanded by Regulus defeat the Carthaginians near Adys and advance to Tunis
- 8 255 BCE Carthaginians commanded by Xanthippus defeat the Romans near Tunis. The Romans then retreat to Aspis
- 9 255 BCE Roman naval victory over the Carthaginians at the Hermaean Promontory
- 10 249 BCE Romans suffer their only naval defeat of the war near Drepana
- 11 242 BCE Roman fleets blockade Drepana and Lilybaeum, cutting off reinforcements and supplies
- 12 241 BCE Carthaginians send ships to help their besieged countrymen in Sicily but the new Roman fleet meet them at the Aegates Islands and defeats them

**KEY**

- Romans (Red arrow)
- Defeated Romans (Red arrow with slash)
- Carthaginians (Green arrow)
- Defeated Carthaginians (Green arrow with slash)



## SOURCE 4.09

An engraving from the 1890s, showing nine-year-old Hannibal swearing an oath against Rome.



## BETWEEN THE WARS

**JUVENAL:** ‘Hannibal is the man for whom Africa was too small a continent.’

The period between the first two Punic Wars was significant for a number of reasons. Carthage’s allies in Sardinia rebelled in 239 BCE. Rome helped these rebels and forced Carthage to surrender Sardinia and

Corsica to Rome. This did much to stir up resentment in Carthage against the Romans. Hamilcar Barca made his nine-year-old son swear an oath that he would never be friends with Rome. The boy’s name was Hannibal.

Rome also became involved in conflicts on the eastern side of the Adriatic Sea when it fought two wars against Illyria (in 229–228 BCE and 220–219 BCE). As a result of the first war, Illyria was forced to give up control of a number of cities in 228 BCE, and these cities entered into a new kind of relationship with Rome. This relationship was based on ‘friendship’ rather than conquest or a formal alliance. These friends are often called ‘clients’ by historians; like the client–patron relationships that existed in Roman society and politics, good faith between Rome and its friends was the basis of mutual benefit.

In Italy, the Romans recognised that they faced further attacks as long as the north of the peninsula was occupied by Gauls. To prevent this, the Romans undertook a series of bitter campaigns against the Gauls between 225 and 222 BCE; by 219 BCE, all of Italy south of the Alps was under Roman control. The Gauls fiercely resented the Roman presence there—but no Gallic army ever crossed the Apennine Mountains again.<sup>13</sup> The Romans tried to secure the area by founding nearby colonies at Placentia and Cremona, building a new road (the *Via Flaminia*) into the region and forcing the locals to pay tribute, but the Gauls were clearly discontented and would not need much of an excuse to revolt.

## THE FIRST ROMAN PROVINCES

With the First Punic War over, Rome faced a new challenge, and that was how to administer three large islands that had no traditional connection to Rome—Sicily, Corsica and Sardinia. In the 230s BCE, Rome began to experiment with the administration of these non-Italian territories. This led to the creation of Rome’s first *provinces* (from the Latin *provincia*, meaning a task assigned to an official and, later, the area such an official was in charge of).<sup>14</sup> At first Sicily was viewed as a source of income in the form of tribute and so a quaestor—whose role was mostly financial—was appointed to oversee the island and report to the officials in Rome. This turned out to be inadequate and in 227 BCE two new praetorships were created. One praetor would be the governor of Sicily and the other praetor would be the governor of both Sardinia and Corsica. A praetor, unlike a quaestor, had *imperium* and thus could use the full range of military and judicial authority to govern the province—and could do so with virtually no supervision or limit to his power.<sup>15</sup>

This new system represented a shift in Roman imperial policy. Previously, consuls and praetors had raised an army only for the summer campaigning season and the soldiers—most of whom were farmers—would be able to tend to their farms during the autumn harvest.<sup>16</sup> The First Punic War showed that Rome would be

facing longer periods of fighting further from home. As a result, many soldiers would not be able to look after their farms, and they risked losing their land and their livelihoods. If soldiers were to remain in the army for long periods of time, as part of a garrison in Corsica or Sardinia perhaps, then they would have to be paid, supplied and transported. All of this would cost much more money than the Roman state had ever needed to spend in its previous wars—and the demand for this money would be ongoing.

## THE SECOND PUNIC WAR (218–201 BCE)

**LIVY:** ‘Scipio and Hannibal had excited everyone’s spirits—the commanders were pitted against each other as though for the final battle.’

Meanwhile, Carthage had not been idle. In 237 BCE, Hamilcar Barca was sent to reassert Carthaginian authority in Spain. He did this very successfully, using a combination of ruthlessness and lenience to establish the *Barcids* in Spain. Hasdrubal Barca built the city of New Carthage and he and Hannibal both married Spanish princesses, further committing the family to Spain. Hamilcar’s successes in the region meant that Carthage would now be able to recruit large numbers of tough Spanish mercenaries and access incredibly valuable silver, copper and iron mines—the silver mines alone produced 2000–3000 talents every year<sup>17</sup>—and both the mercenaries and the money could be used to fight Rome again if needed. Hamilcar died in 229 BCE, but Hasdrubal proved to be a worthy successor. The Romans were growing increasingly nervous about growing Carthaginian power, and in 226 BCE they negotiated a treaty with Carthage stating the Carthaginians would not cross the River Ebro in the north of Spain. Such a crossing would be the logical place to begin a move towards the north of Italy. Hasdrubal died in 221 BCE and was succeeded by Hannibal, who was twenty-five years old and destined to become one of the greatest military geniuses of history or legend.

## THE SECOND PUNIC WAR

A number of things contributed to give this war its unique character: in the first place, it was fought between peoples unrivalled 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 a sword; on the Roman side there was rage at the unprovoked attack by a previously beaten enemy; on the Carthaginian, bitter resentment at what was felt to be the grasping and tyrannical attitude of their conquerors.

## SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

Examine Source 4.10 and complete the tasks below.

1. Outline the reasons why, according to Livy, the Second Punic War had a ‘unique character’.
2. Explain how the Carthaginians and Romans might have viewed each other just before the war started. In your response, use your own knowledge and the source.
3. Evaluate the extent to which the consequences of the First Punic War contributed to the causes of the Second Punic War. Use evidence to support your response.

## ACTIVITY

## CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Create a concept map or diagram showing how the Romans interacted with other Italian communities in the fourth century BCE as compared with the third century BCE.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The temple of the god Janus in Rome had large double doors that would be opened during times of war. They had remained opened for 400 years until they were closed in 235 BCE. They only stayed closed for eight years.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The consul for 222 BCE, Marcus Claudius Marcellus, killed the chieftain of the Gauls, Viridomarus, in single combat. This gave Marcellus the right to take the armour and weapons of the defeated enemy leader as trophies. These trophies were called the *spolia opima* and were dedicated to Jupiter. Marcellus was the third and final Roman ever to win the *spolia opima*.

ORBIS: ‘THE GOOGLE MAPS OF ANCIENT ROME’

ROMAN TRANSPORTATION TASK

## SOURCE 4.10

Livy, *The History of Rome XXI.1*, trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt, ed. Betty Radice (London: Penguin Books, 1972).

## ACTIVITY



**SOURCE 4.11**

The Siege of Saguntum, 219 BCE. This battle triggered the Second Punic War.

**ACTIVITY**

**KEY PLAYERS**

On slips of paper, write down the key players in the Second Punic War and their apparent reasons for fighting. (Refer to text and maps in this section.) Sort the slips of paper into groups according to who was fighting who. Why did Livy say that 'high passions were at work' in the war?

**SOURCE 4.12**

An engraving showing Hannibal and his army crossing the Alps into Italy, 218 BCE.

**THE WAR IN ITALY (218–209 BCE)**



At some point after the Ebro River treaty, Rome became involved with the internal politics of the city of Saguntum on the east coast of Spain. The Romans helped to set up an anti-Carthaginian government<sup>18</sup> and sent diplomats to warn Hannibal to leave Saguntum alone. Hannibal recognised that a pro-Roman Saguntum could serve as a base for the Romans if they tried to establish themselves in Spain. Hannibal announced that *he* was the real protector of Saguntum; the Romans had unjustly interfered in the internal politics of the city and Hannibal would set matters right. The Roman diplomats left, sure that war was now unavoidable.

Hannibal's next move was to attack Saguntum. The Roman Senate decided not to help such a

distant friend—besides, it was dealing with the Second Illyrian War at the time—and Saguntum was captured by the Carthaginians in 219 BCE after an eight-month siege. The reasons behind Hannibal's actions have long been a matter of historical argument. One tradition, seen in Polybius, argues that the Barcid family had been planning a war of revenge on Rome for years and the now-confident Hannibal used the events in Spain to deliberately provoke Rome into declaring war. However, Hannibal may have simply wanted to secure Carthage's position in Spain. In any case, the Roman response was swift and definite. Rome sent ambassadors to Carthage, demanding Hannibal's surrender. The Carthaginian Senate refused to hand Hannibal over and Rome declared war, starting the Second Punic War—which is also known as the 'Hannibalic War'.

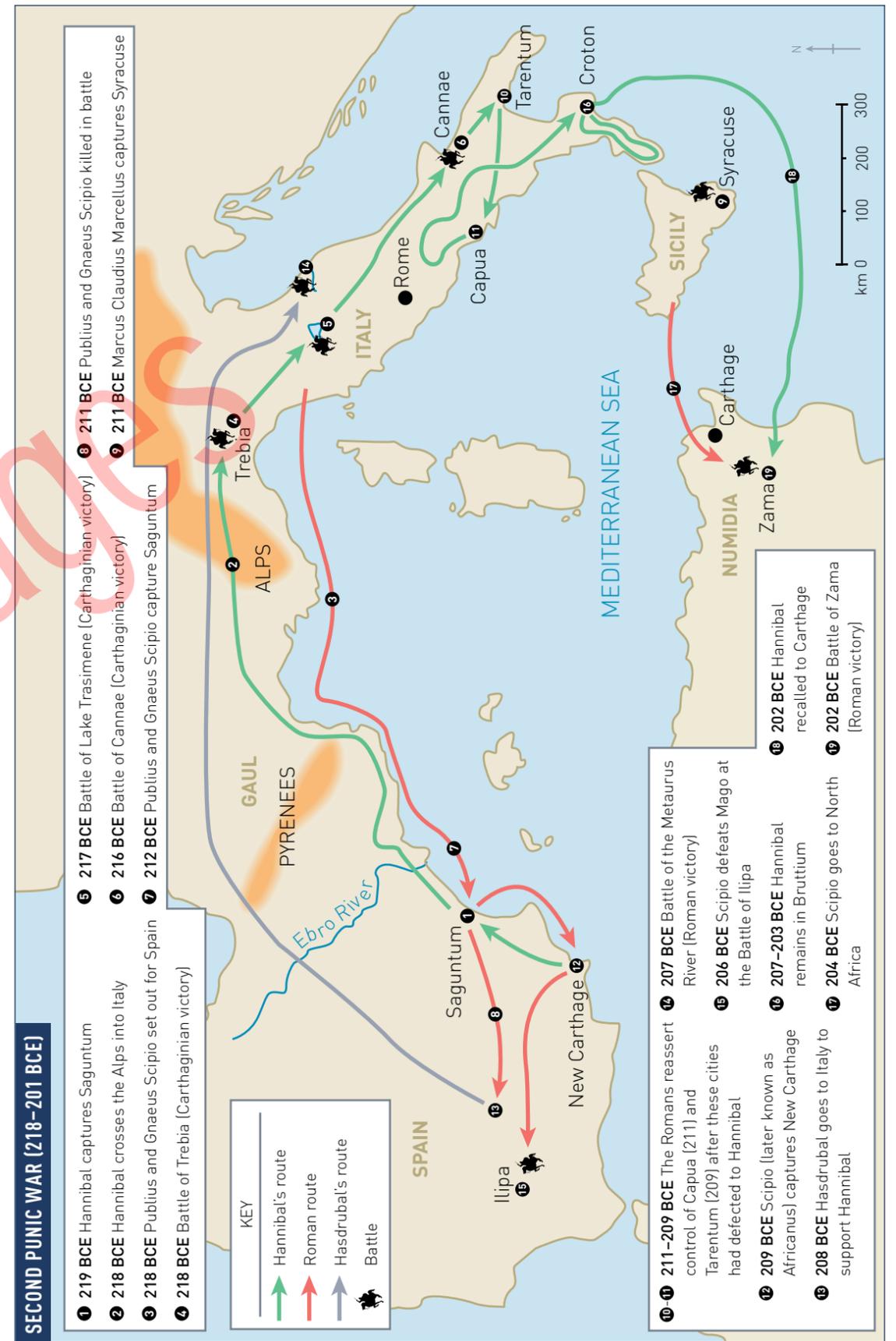
The Romans assumed that there would be two main theatres of war. In 218 BCE, they sent out each of the two consuls with an army—Publius Cornelius Scipio went to Spain and Tiberius Sempronius Longus went to Sicily (from where he could launch attacks on the Carthaginian heartland of North Africa). Hannibal had anticipated this and marched north from Spain, through southern Gaul (modern France) and down over the Alps into Italy, attacking the Roman homeland while the Roman armies were away. It is not certain what Hannibal's war aims actually were: initially at least it seems that he wanted to force Rome to come to a quick peace agreement, hopefully one that would force Rome to give up its influence in Sardinia or even Sicily.<sup>19</sup>

**THE SECOND PUNIC WAR: MAP TASK**

**SOURCE 4.13**

**KEY MILITARY EVENTS OF THE SECOND PUNIC WAR**

**SECOND PUNIC WAR (218–201 BCE)**



## SOURCE 4.14

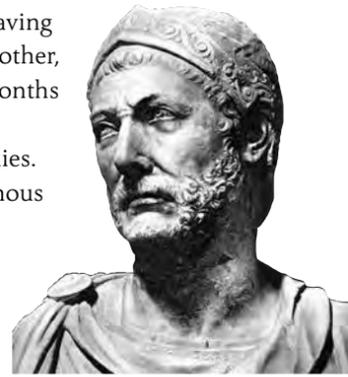
A bust of Hannibal, sculpted in the first century BCE.

## ACTIVITY

## FAMILY TREE

Create a family tree for the Barca family (often referred to as the 'Barcids'). Annotate the family tree to show the significant achievements of the members of the family.

Hannibal set out from Spain in mid-218 BCE, leaving one brother, Hasdrubal, in charge and another brother, Mago, as a senior officer. It took Hannibal five months to reach Italy, along with 50 000 infantry, 9000 cavalry, 37 elephants and a large amount of supplies. The greatest challenge—and Hannibal's most famous exploit—was the crossing of the Alps. This accomplishment took fifteen days and has been romanticised ever since. Many historians, both ancient and modern, emphasise the deadly conditions—snow and ice, dangerous trails, landslides and hostile local peoples—as well as various fanciful events, such as the appearance of a divine guide to aid Hannibal. While parts of the tale are clearly exaggerated, there is no doubt that it was an impressive and traumatic undertaking.<sup>20</sup> The army that arrived in Italy was significantly reduced, with about 20 000 infantry and 6000 cavalry surviving. The elephants seem to have survived until winter set in, when all but one perished. On the other side of the Alps, Hannibal met the Gauls of the Po Valley. The Gauls were resentful of their harsh treatment by the Romans and eagerly joined forces with Hannibal. The two consuls raced back to Italy to meet Hannibal, although Scipio left a large part of his army in Spain with his brother, Gnaeus, to keep an eye on Hannibal's brothers.



The first major clash of the war took place at the end of 218 BCE at the Battle of Trebia. Hannibal lured Roman legions into an ambush and his victory over them was unambiguous—20 000 Romans were killed and the invaders had control of northern Italy. In early 217 BCE, the Senate sent Scipio back to Spain and elected a new consul, Gaius Flaminius. Hannibal headed south and trapped Flaminius' army on the narrow shore of Lake Trasimene. Flaminius died along with 15 000 Romans. The way to Rome was open—but Hannibal was unable to exploit his victories. He lacked the equipment and supplies to besiege the city of Rome and none of the Italian communities swapped sides to join him the way the Gauls had. Hannibal marched on to the south-eastern heel of the Italian peninsula, wrecking large parts of the countryside and looting everything else—but not directly threatening Rome itself.

## SOURCE 4.15

Modern view of Lake Trasimene where in 217 BCE Hannibal defeated the Romans.



After the Battle of Lake Trasimene, the terrified Romans appointed Quintus Fabius Maximus as the first dictator in thirty years. Fabius knew he could not outwit the military genius of Hannibal or outmanoeuvre the superior Carthaginian cavalry. Fabius' strategy was to avoid major battles with Hannibal while continually harassing the Carthaginians with skirmishes. This strategy

earned Fabius the nickname of *Cunctator* which means the 'Delayer'. It was not a compliment—the strategy was unpopular because it meant that for six months Hannibal was able to destroy whatever he wanted outside of Rome, including the precious farmland of so many Roman citizens.

When Fabius' term as dictator expired, the Romans rejected him and his unpopular strategy. They elected new consuls for 216 BCE, Gaius Terentius Varro and Lucius Aemilius Paullus, and raised another army of eight legions to take the fight to Hannibal. The Romans learned that Hannibal had captured the town of Cannae and decided to fight him there. The Romans outnumbered the Carthaginians at least four to one and they expected that their superior numbers, arranged in a strong, dense mass, would be more than a match for Hannibal no matter how superior his tactical powers may have been. They were wrong. The Battle of Cannae that followed was the worst defeat the Romans ever suffered—and it remains one of the most studied battles in military history.

Hannibal allowed the centre of his battle line to slowly retreat, bending his battleline back in a crescent, making it look like the Carthaginians were giving up and the Romans were winning. But then he used the ends of the battleline to fold in on the sides of the Romans while the strong Carthaginian cavalry attacked from behind, closing the trap on the Romans. The consul Lucius Aemilianus Paullus died in battle along with most of his army—he was the third consul to be killed in three years. Modern historians tend to put the figure at around 30 000 Romans killed, wounded or missing. Against this, Hannibal lost 5700 men, mostly Gauls, and wiped out the largest army the Romans had ever sent onto the battlefield.<sup>21</sup>



## SOURCE 4.16

The victorious Hannibal after his crushing victory over the Romans at Cannae.



## SOURCE 4.17

This sculpture is entitled *Hannibal Barca counting the rings of the Roman knights killed at the Battle of Cannae*. Note the rings in the urn at the right and the upside-down Roman standard in Hannibal's right hand.

## SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

Examine Source 4.17 and complete the tasks below.

1. Outline the features of the image that imply Hannibal was victorious over the Romans.
2. Explain how the Carthaginians won the Battle of Cannae. In your response, use your own knowledge and the source.
3. Analyse the extent to which Roman failures in the Second Punic War were the result of decisions made by the Senate. Use evidence to support your response.

The disaster at Cannae was more than a military defeat—it was a savage blow to Roman confidence. Over 100 000 Romans and their allies had died since Hannibal had entered Italy—'one in every seven Italian men of fighting age alive in August 218 was dead by August 216'.<sup>22</sup> The Roman Senate showed the determination that would win Rome the war. The Senate banned public mourning, forbade gossip in the streets, armed all males over the age of sixteen, raised two more legions by freeing slaves, limited the purchase of luxury items to make more money available for the war—and even made human sacrifices to call upon the

## ACTIVITY



#### ➦ SOURCE 4.18

A monument to commemorate the Battle of Cannae in 216 BCE. The monument, near the Italian city of Barletta, overlooks what is believed to be the site of the battlefield.



#### HANNIBAL'S BATTLE TACTICS

#### ➔ SOURCE 4.19

*Livy, The History of Rome XXII.61, trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt, ed. Betty Radice (London: Penguin Books, 1972).*

#### ➔ SOURCE 4.20

*Polybius, The Histories Volume 2, Books 3–4, III.118, trans. W. R. Paton, revised by Frank W. Walbank and Christian Habicht (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).*

#### ACTIVITY

#### CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE

1. To what extent do Livy and Polybius (see above) agree with each other in their assessment of the consequences of the battle and the Roman response to their loss at Cannae?
2. Do you think these ancient authors are correct in their assessments? What other research might you need to do to develop a fuller understanding of the consequences of the Battle of Cannae?

support of the gods. Despite these efforts to boost morale, no Roman army would dare to fight Hannibal in Italy again and about half the Roman allies in Italy swapped sides, particularly those in Samnium, Apulia, Lucania and Bruttium. By 212 BCE, Hannibal had the support of key cities such as Tarentum and, most significantly, Capua. Capua was the second biggest city in Italy and populated by Roman citizens with connections to the senatorial elite. Capua's decision to join Hannibal sent a signal to the rest of Italy that the system of alliances was starting to crack. Rome was forced to return to the Fabian strategy, sending

smaller armies to recapture the cities that had swapped sides while constantly harassing Hannibal's army. The Romans focused on keeping Hannibal bottled up in Italy and pursuing the war more aggressively in Spain and Sicily.

#### AFTER CANNAE

How much more serious was the defeat at Cannae than those which had preceded it can be seen by the behaviour of Rome's allies: before that fatal day their loyalty had remained unshaken; now it began to waver, for the simple reason that they despaired of the survival of Roman power ...

But neither the defeats they had suffered nor the subsequent defection of all these allied peoples moved the Romans ever to breathe a word about peace ... So great, in this grim time, was the nation's heart, that the consul, fresh from a defeat of which he had himself been the principal cause, was met on his return to Rome by men of all conditions, who came in crowds to participate in the thanks, publicly bestowed upon him, for not having 'despaired of the commonwealth'. A Carthaginian general in such circumstances would have been punished with the utmost rigour of the law.

#### AFTERMATH OF CANNAE

The Carthaginians by this action became at once masters of almost all the rest of the coast ... and the eyes of all were now turned to the Carthaginians, who had great hopes of even taking Rome itself at the first assault. The Romans on their part owing to this defeat at once abandoned all hope of retaining their supremacy in Italy, and were in the greatest fear about their own safety and that of Rome, expecting Hannibal every moment to appear ... Yet the Senate neglected no means in its power, but exhorted and encouraged the populace, strengthened the defenses of the city, and deliberated on the situation with manly coolness. And subsequent events made this manifest. For though the Romans were now incontestably beaten and their military reputation shattered, yet by the peculiar virtues of their constitution and by wise counsel they not only recovered their supremacy in Italy and afterwards defeated the Carthaginians, but in a few years made themselves masters of the whole world.

## THE WAR IN SPAIN (218–207 BCE)

From 218 BCE, Roman forces led by Gnaeus and Publius Cornelius Scipio had been dealing with Hannibal's brother, Hasdrubal, in Spain, keeping the Carthaginians there tied down so they could not reinforce Hannibal. In 211 BCE, however, both Scipios were killed and their armies crushed by Hasdrubal. Fortunately for Rome, the Carthaginian generals did not cooperate in using Spain to gather reinforcements for Hannibal. Capua had also just been recaptured and so additional Roman forces were available to be sent to Spain.



At this time, the son of Publius Cornelius Scipio (who had the same name as his father but would later be called Scipio Africanus Major) presented himself to the Centuriate Assembly and asked to be granted *imperium* so that he could take command of the war in Spain. Scipio was only twenty-five years old and a private citizen. He had had some military experience—having fought at the battles of Ticinus, Trebia and Cannae, and had previously been aedile—but he did not hold any official rank and should not have been eligible to command an army. The Centuriate Assembly nevertheless granted him *imperium* by passing a special law and giving him the rank of proconsul. Although no one knew it yet, Hannibal's equal—and eventual conqueror—had at last appeared.

The young Scipio arrived in Spain and took command of about 28 000 soldiers. He persuaded Carthaginian allies in Spain to swap sides and join the Romans, and in 209 BCE he captured the Carthaginian capital in Spain, New Carthage. This success gave Scipio access to an excellent base in Spain, huge amounts of money and the opportunity to further endear himself to the local peoples by releasing all the Spanish hostages. Scipio also trained his legions in new ways; he kept the basic manipular legion structure but gave it a more flexible formation, arranged into cohorts made up of one maniple each of *hastati*, *principes* and *triarii*<sup>23</sup> (see page 82 in Chapter 3) that could operate more freely on the battlefield. He also replaced the Italian stabbing sword with the superior Spanish sword that could be used for cutting *and* stabbing. In 209 BCE, Rome's fortunes looked like they were about to improve.

## HANNIBAL'S RETREAT (208–202 BCE)

Despite Scipio's military skill, he could not prevent Hasdrubal slipping out of Spain to reinforce Hannibal in Italy with 20 000 men. Hannibal had continued to have some success—he had defeated Roman consuls in 210 and 208 BCE—but he was running out of soldiers and desperately needed reinforcements. Hasdrubal crossed the Pyrenees and headed through Europe, planning to link up with Hannibal in central Italy and crush the Romans once and for all. One of the consuls for 207 BCE, Gaius Claudius Nero, found out about the plan and took a risk by leaving Hannibal unwatched in the south and heading north to join his consular colleague, Marcus Livius Salinator, and cut off Hasdrubal. The risk paid off: Hasdrubal and most of his troops were killed at the Battle of the Metaurus River, which was the only real Roman victory in Italy during the war. The Romans delivered the news of Hasdrubal's defeat by throwing Hasdrubal's severed head into Hannibal's camp. Hannibal retreated south to Bruttium and remained there for four years, grieving and

#### ➦ SOURCE 4.21

Bust of Scipio Africanus, excavated from the town of Herculaneum after it was destroyed by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE.

#### ➦ SOURCE 4.22

*Hannibal Recognising the Head of his Brother Hasdrubal* by Giambattista Tiepolo, c.1728–30.



believing that the Italian campaign was lost. The Carthaginians sent Hannibal's other brother, Mago, in 205 BCE to reinforce him. Mago enjoyed minor successes in the north but was then recalled to Carthage. He died on the way home.

#### SOURCE 4.23

Livy, *The History of Rome XXVIII.12*, trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt, ed. Betty Radice (London: Penguin Books, 1972).

#### HANNIBAL IN ADVERSITY

During this year there was no direct action against Hannibal ... the Romans were content to leave him alone so long as he remained inactive—such was the power they felt still to reside in this one man, even though everything around him was tumbling into ruin. Indeed I hardly know whether Hannibal was not more wonderful when fortune was against him than in hours of success. Fighting for thirteen years in enemy territory, far from home, with varying fortunes and an army composed not of native troops but of a hotch-potch of the riff-raff [collection of undesirables] of all nationalities, men who shared neither law nor custom nor language, who differed in manner, in dress, in equipment, who had in common neither the forms of religious observance nor even the gods they served, yet he was able, somehow or other, to weld this motley crowd so firmly together that they never quarrelled amongst themselves nor mutinied against their general, though money to pay them was often lacking and provisions to them were often short ...

#### ACTIVITY

#### SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

Examine Source 4.23 and complete the tasks below.

1. Describe the people who made up Hannibal's army, according to Livy.
2. Explain why Hannibal had difficulties in conquering Italy. In your response, use your own knowledge and the source.
3. Evaluate the extent to which the Second Punic War posed a challenge for the Carthagians. Use evidence to support your response.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Hannibal Barca's brother, Mago, spent time on the Mediterranean island of Minorca and the island's capital was named after him. The name eventually changed into the Spanish form Mahón and the city is the birthplace of a sauce made of egg, oil and vinegar named *salsa mahonesa*—or, as we know it, *mayonnaise*.

Back in Spain, 207 BCE was Scipio's year. He won the last major battle in Spain at Ilipa and by the end of the following year Carthaginian forces in Spain had been defeated. Scipio returned to Rome as a hero, was elected consul in 206 BCE and began planning his next move at once—an attack on Africa that would complete the original Roman battle plan of 218 BCE. The Senate agreed to give Scipio two legions stationed in Sicily, which were the disgraced survivors of the Battle of Cannae. Scipio finished his preparations and in 204 BCE landed on the coast of North Africa with about 30 000 men. Once there, Scipio spent time pretending to seriously consider peace talks with the Carthaginians so that he could gather military intelligence and find local allies. The Carthaginians believed that they could not win the war and began to ratify a peace treaty. At the same time, however, they summoned Hannibal back to Africa. The Carthaginian Senate hoped that a good result in one last battle would help to make the inevitable peace terms with Rome gentler than they would be if the result were a crushing defeat for the Africans.<sup>24</sup>

#### THE END OF THE SECOND PUNIC WAR

Hannibal had been in Italy continuously for fifteen years and in Spain for the nineteen years before that. He at last came home as Carthage's last chance, hoping to win one more battle in a lost war. Hannibal landed in Africa in 202 BCE for the final showdown with Scipio. The two forces, each with numbers roughly equal

to the other, approached Zama, near Carthage. On the day before the battle, Hannibal invited Scipio to meet him face-to-face for a personal meeting on neutral ground. The event sounds like dramatic fiction but it seems to have really happened. Hannibal suggested that they avoid a fight and agree to the peace terms that had recently been proposed. Scipio replied that only a battle could decide what sort of peace would exist between Rome and Carthage. The two great commanders of this most dramatic of all Roman conflicts returned to their respective camps.



#### SOURCE 4.24

Scipio Africanus meets Hannibal before defeating him at Zama in North Africa.

The next day the Battle of Zama was fought. Lacking the cavalry that had been such a crucial element of his military successes, Hannibal had to rely on young, untrained elephants—which panicked during the battle and stampeded into the Carthaginians' own battlelines. Scipio copied Hannibal's tactics from Cannae, folding the wings of his forces onto the Carthaginians and almost wiping them out. The last fighting was between the Roman survivors of Cannae and Hannibal's veterans, who had served with him in Italy for fifteen years. When the battle was over, 20 000 of Hannibal's men lay dead and almost as many were taken prisoner.<sup>25</sup> Hannibal survived, retreated to Carthage and urged the Senate there to accept peace terms.

The peace terms that followed the Roman victory were harsher than those that had been discussed in the half-hearted negotiations of the previous year. The final peace treaty offered was designed to prevent Carthage from ever recovering and threatening Rome again. Carthage had to surrender all of its territory apart from the capital city and the surrounding territory. Additionally, the Carthaginians had to pay compensation of 10 000 talents over a period of fifty years and hand over all prisoners of war, war elephants and all but ten warships. Finally, the Carthaginians could not engage in any war, even to defend themselves, without Roman permission. Carthage's government structure and leading citizens, however, were not touched. The neighbouring kingdom of Numidia emerged from the conflict as a strong ally of Rome. Publius Cornelius Scipio returned to Rome in triumph, adding 'Africanus' to his name to signify his great victory in Africa. Hannibal turned to politics in his homeland, becoming one of the executive officers of the Carthaginian Republic in 196 BCE.



HANNIBAL: THE FALL OF CARTHAGE

#### SOURCE 4.25

Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus Pardons a Suppliant during the Second Punic War. French tapestry from the seventeenth century.



#### CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. How did the Romans win the Battle of Zama?
2. In what sense were the Roman victory conditions harsh?
3. To what extent was Scipio responsible for Rome's victory in the Second Punic War?

#### ACTIVITY

## HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

## THE SECOND PUNIC WAR

Rome's victory in the Second Punic War meant that it had no rival for supremacy in the western Mediterranean and it had rapidly accelerated the growth of its empire. Balanced against this success was the huge cost in terms of life; most of the Roman dead were farmers and much of the Italian farmland they had worked on had been destroyed by Hannibal.

Bruttium, for example, where Hannibal had been based for long periods of time, remained a 'wilderness' for years afterwards.<sup>26</sup> The struggle between Carthage and Rome was probably the greatest the ancient world ever witnessed and had called forth the Roman virtues of courage, determination and self-sacrifice in a way that later generations of Romans would admire and strive to copy.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to these qualities, Rome had three major factors in its favour during the war:

1. First, Rome was in control of the sea. With about 200 ships and 50 000 sailors, Rome was able to move men and supplies around the Mediterranean with ease while preventing Carthage from doing the same thing. Hannibal had, after all, gone the long way around by land to invade Italy because the sea belonged to Rome.
2. Second, Rome was able to raise larger armies from its citizen body and from its allies; in the fifteen years that Hannibal was in Italy, Rome was able to maintain a military force of about 100 000 men plus allies. Carthage, on the other hand, had to rely on mercenaries, who became more difficult to pay as the war went on, and subjects, whose loyalty eroded over time. To put it bluntly, 'In a slogging match, Rome could simply outlog Carthage.'<sup>28</sup>
3. Third, throughout the war the usual process of government continued and the Senate exercised consistent and focused leadership. The Roman military leaders were generally cooperative and free of rivalries—which was not the case in Carthage. There were as many as twenty-five legions active at the height of the war in 212 BCE and these legions required officials with *imperium* to command them; normally there were only six such officials at a time (two consuls and four praetors) and each official would not usually command more than two legions. The Romans showed their ability to adapt through the use of *promagistracies*, which allowed them to keep competent generals in the war after their year of service as consul or praetor expired, or even to grant *imperium* to men who had held office in previous years.

With all these advantages, we might think that the Romans should have won this war much more quickly—but even the above factors could not cancel out the brilliance of Hannibal prior to Scipio's arrival. In many ways, it was a struggle of a mighty imperial state against one extraordinary individual.



## SOURCE 4.26

A Roman Triumph by Peter Paul Rubens, c.1630.

## ACTIVITY

## CONCEPT MAP

Create a concept map, diagram or infographic that shows the range of factors that contributed to the Roman victory in the Second Punic War.

## HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Historian John F. Lazenby claims that, 'In a slogging match, Rome could simply outlog Carthage'. What evidence can be found to support this claim? How significant was this factor compared to others in understanding why Rome won the Second Punic War?

## ROME AFTER THE SECOND PUNIC WAR

POLYBIUS: 'The Romans—after defeating the Carthaginians in this war and considering themselves to have achieved the most decisive and greatest move towards mastery of the world—then first felt confident about stretching out their hands upon the rest.'

## THE NOBILITY

The basic structure of Roman politics did not change between the beginning of the First Punic War (264 BCE) and the end of the Third Punic War (146 BCE). An oligarchy of nobles (both patricians and plebeians) controlled the Senate and gave 'advice' to the consuls and other officials. Politics was dominated by nobles with an ancestor who had been consul and the nobles aspired to the same achievement. Over time these nobles made up the vast majority of Roman officials and the Senate; officials passed through a process called the *cursus honorum* to gain their positions (see over). This elite group resisted the entry of any senator without a consular ancestor—such a social climber was known as a *novus homo* ('new man'). Of the 108 consuls elected between 200 and 146 BCE, only eight new men were admitted to that office and by the end of the second century BCE, control of Roman government and policy was in the hands of only twenty senatorial families.<sup>29</sup>

Unlike a modern state, there was no military bureaucracy or high command in Rome that handled logistics and financial demands. The contest with Carthage had shown the Senate was capable of managing the Republic in a more complex way than ever before.<sup>30</sup> By doing this so successfully, the Senate increased its



prestige and, on the basis of this prestige, rather than legal power, it increased its authority. The advice it issued, the *senatus consultum*, often had the force of law and was presented to the assembly for approval as a mere formality.

The power of the people was even more limited by the middle of the second century BCE. Although there were about 400 000 male adult citizens

eligible to vote, the Campus Martius where the Centuriate Assembly met could hold a maximum of only 70 000<sup>31</sup> persons, suggesting that relatively few Roman commoners actually participated in the political process. Those who did turn up to vote had no real way to exercise their power; as had been the case from the beginning, voting was limited to accepting or rejecting a proposal. Moreover, the wording of the proposal was set by the official who had summoned the assembly and that official (a consul, praetor or tribune) chose who would be allowed to address the assembly. Finally, from the middle of the second century BCE, tribunes were able to join the Senate at the end of their year of office. The tribunes, once the champion of the people but now aligned with the interests of wealth and power, could block any proposal that had not previously met with the approval of the Senate.



## SOURCE 4.27

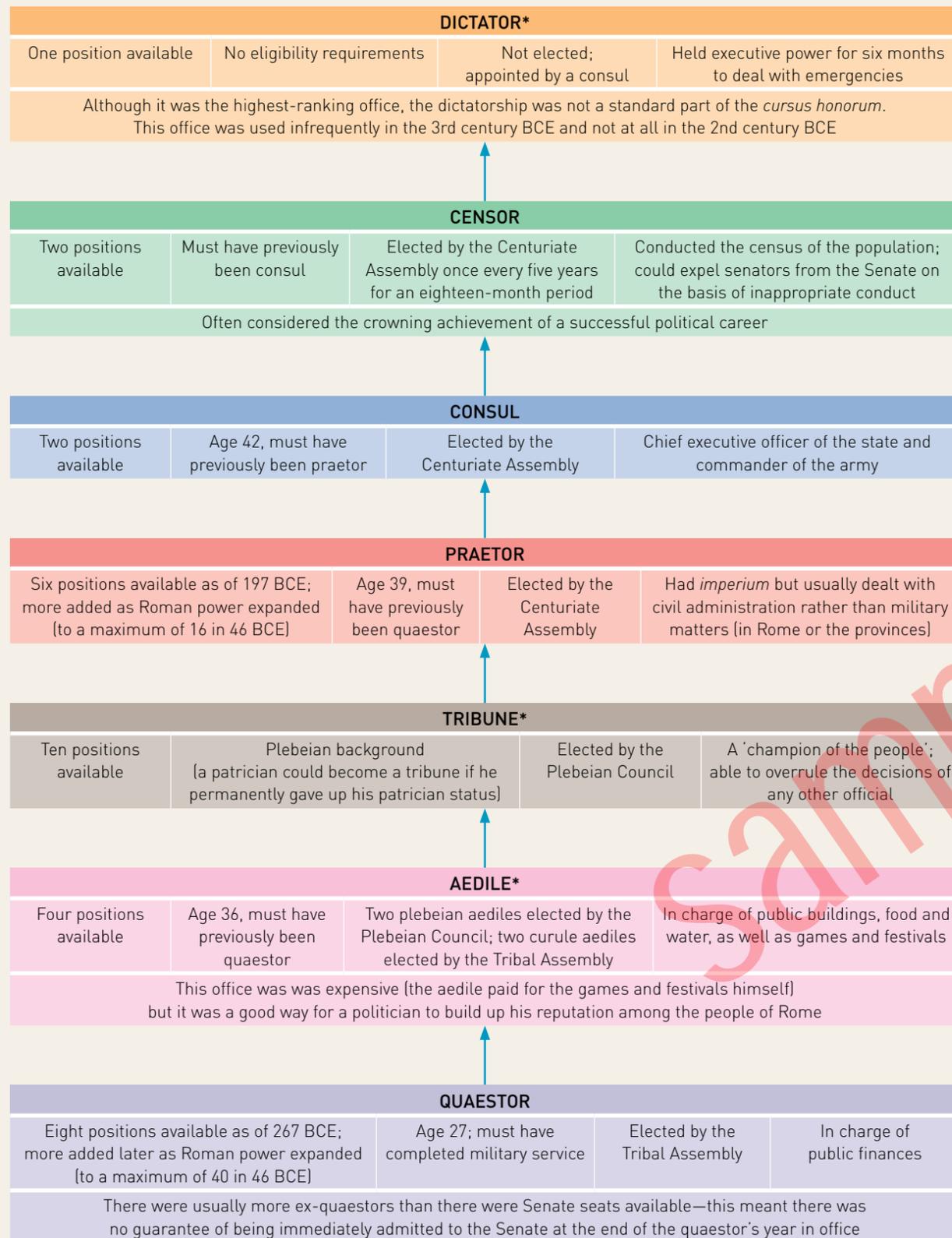
Campus Martius ruins, Rome, Italy.

## ACTIVITY

## CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What is an 'oligarchy of nobles'?
2. To what extent were the people of Rome able to exercise political power by the middle of the second century BCE?
3. What social and political position did the Senate hold?

### THE CURSUS HONORUM



\* This office was not a required stage of the *cursus honorum*

The typical career path of official positions that an aspiring politician followed was called the *cursus honorum* ('course of honours'). There were conventions in place that indicated the order in which these offices should be achieved but it had traditionally been a fairly loose system. At the end of the Second Punic War the system became stricter; access to political office had to be regulated so it could be shared among the competitive nobles. The Villian Law of 180 BCE established a minimum age for each of the offices and ten years of military service was required before a noble could even start on the *cursus honorum*. For a noble to achieve one of these offices at the youngest age possible (*anno suo* or 'in his year') was seen as a political success. This law also formalised the order in which the offices should be held and stated that there had to be a two-year gap between the end of one office and the beginning of the next. A ten-year gap was meant to elapse before an individual held the same office again. This helped to slow the progress of any one individual, opening up opportunities for others and keeping the careers of aristocrats roughly equal with those of their peers.<sup>32</sup>

The table opposite outlines the key features of the *cursus honorum*. Variations to the details occurred at different times but, overall, it became more strictly regulated from 180 BCE.

#### ACTIVITY

#### BELIEFS AND VALUES

What beliefs and values were reflected in the *cursus honorum*?

### LAND AND WEALTH

Many of the farmers who had survived the Second Punic War did not return to the devastated farmland. They drifted into the cities looking for work, lacking property and political opportunities, while agricultural production declined. Wealthy senators, banned from engaging in overseas trade by a law in 218 BCE, bought up large amounts of abandoned farmland and land confiscated from Italian allies who had sided with Hannibal; the huge supply of Carthaginian slaves provided those senators with the labour they needed to become even richer from their enormous new estates. The great estates were known as *latifundia* and they enabled the senatorial nobles who owned them to produce a surplus of food that could be sold for huge profits during the food shortages of the post-war years. Some historians have challenged this view, suggesting that the rest of the farming family—women, children and the elderly—would have been able to maintain the farms in the absence of the male soldier-farmer and the population of Italy could have recovered quickly.<sup>33</sup>

Even as the elite in the Senate were gaining more property and wealth in the countryside, the number of poor and unemployed Romans in the city was increasing. The term 'city mob' is usually used to describe these people, from the Latin term *mobile vulgus* ('the unreliable commoners'). This mob raised the population of Rome from about 200 000 people in 200 BCE to as many as half a million by the middle of the second century BCE.<sup>34</sup> The mob found work in a construction boom funded by military conquests and tributes from the provinces. This boom saw the creation of new aqueducts, harbours, roads, bridges, courts and temples (for example, twenty-one new temples were built between 200 and 146 BCE<sup>35</sup>) but never provided more money than the mob needed to live on from day to day. The gulf between the rich and poor in Rome yawned even wider. The *senatorial aristocracy*, encouraged by their success in handling the Punic Wars, saw no reason to reform the political or economic systems.

#### SOURCE 4.28

Ancient roman aqueduct, *aqua marcia*, constructed 144–140 BCE.



## THE MANAGEMENT OF PROVINCES

As the Republic grew, it was the Senate that decided how it would be managed. At the end of the First Punic War, the Roman provinces were Sicily, Corsica and Sardinia. After the Second Punic War, the Romans divided their new territory in Spain into two provinces: Nearer Spain along the eastern coast, and Further Spain along the south. Rome profited from Spain in the same way that Carthage had—by recruiting soldiers and exploiting its agricultural and mineral resources.

The Senate wrote up regulations for each province, which specified the relationship between Rome and the people of that province; in general, the level of government was very low.<sup>36</sup> The nature of these relationships echoed the connections that Rome had built with other communities over the centuries. Broadly speaking, some communities in each province had formal alliances with Rome; others were considered close friends (but without the protection or obligations of a formal alliance); while a third group, the largest of all, were politically independent of the Roman provincial government. The first two groups had to obey Roman foreign policy and provide troops, while the third group paid tribute to Rome in the form of taxes or supplies.<sup>37</sup>

Collecting taxes was an effort for the provincial administration, so the system of professional tax collectors (*publicani*) developed. They competed for the right to pay the Roman state a lump sum up front that represented the amount of tax that the province should provide. The tax collectors could then use whatever methods they wanted to recover the amount they had already spent plus whatever other profit they could squeeze out of the people in the provinces. Many corrupt tax collectors enriched themselves immensely, often with the help of the provincial governors. Public outrage at these practices led to the passing of the Calpurnian Law of 149 BCE, which created law courts that heard cases of misconduct in the provinces. However, these courts, made up of senatorial juries, tended to make decisions that favoured senatorial governors.<sup>38</sup>

### ACTIVITY

#### CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

1. Brainstorm how the Second Punic War led to changes in the way wealth and land was controlled in the Roman Republic.
2. Create a Venn diagram comparing the way Rome managed its provisions before and after the Second Punic War.
3. Debate the following proposition: 'Despite the upheaval of the First and Second Punic Wars, Rome maintained stability surprisingly well.'

#### SOURCE 4.29

An ancient Greek silver drinking vessel called a *rhyton*, from the fourth century BCE.



## ROME GOES EAST

APPIAN: 'The Romans paid no attention to Philip, the Macedonian, when he began war against them.'

The eastern Mediterranean had been changed significantly by the Macedonian king, Alexander the Great. When Alexander died at the age of thirty-three in 323 BCE, he had conquered huge amounts of territory and

exported *Hellenistic* culture through this area. The Hellenistic period (named after *Hellas*, the Greek word for 'Greece') was notable for its artistic, academic and scientific achievements. When Alexander died, his empire was divided among his generals, Antigonos, Ptolemy and Seleucus, who began fighting each other. The three greatest kingdoms were Antigonid Macedonia, Ptolemaic Egypt and the Seleucid Empire, which loosely held the vast region from Syria to the borders of India. Sandwiched between these were smaller kingdoms in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) such as Pergamon, Pontus, Cappadocia and Bithynia, while the island of Rhodes became a powerful maritime state. In Greece, some larger cities, such as Sparta and Athens, remained independent, while other cities joined together into leagues, the two largest being the Aetolian League in the north and the rival Achaean League in the south.<sup>39</sup>



In the Illyrian Wars of the 220s BCE, the Romans 'made a demonstration of their awesome power' but 'took care to avoid any formal commitments in the East'.<sup>40</sup> However, Roman intrusion into this part of the world aroused the resentment of Philip V of Macedonia. When the Carthaginian victory at Cannae in 216 BCE made the Romans look vulnerable, Philip allied with Hannibal. Rome declared war on Macedonia and allied with a coalition of Greek states called the Aetolian League. The Romans used their fleet to stop the Carthaginians and the Macedonians directly helping each other. Rome ended hostilities with Macedonia in 205 BCE. Rome maintained connections to its 'client' cities but did not change its relationship with the East generally. For most of the second century BCE, the Roman Senate tried to influence rather

than control the region. Direct administration would require Roman legions stationed in provinces under a *promagistrate* (an official acting in the place of a consul or praetor) and be a drain on Rome's resources. But as the century wore on, it became increasingly clear that more direct involvement in the East would be needed.

The Romans fought three more wars against Macedonia (200–196 BCE, 172–168 BCE and 149–148 BCE) and one war against the Seleucids (the Syrian War of 192–188 BCE). Rome used the justification that it was protecting its friends to intervene in these conflicts; as a result Rome ended up with yet more states bound to it through alliances and treaties. After the Second Macedonian War, the Roman general Flaminius graciously announced that the Greek city-states were free. But Rome soon faced problems in the Greek world arising from conflicting definitions of freedom. The Romans assumed that the Greeks understood they were only independent



#### SOURCE 4.30

Bronze relief depicting Alexander the Great and his army in battle.

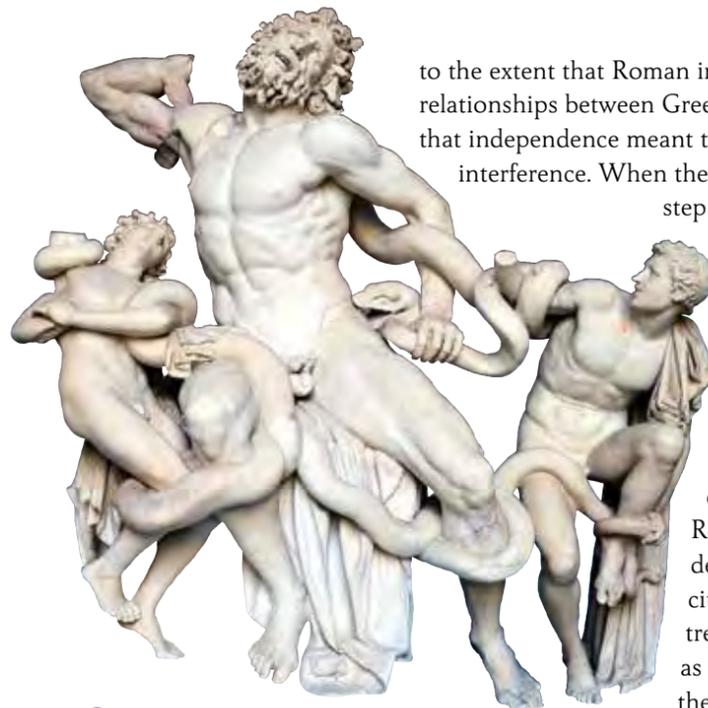
#### SOURCE 4.31

Bust of Philip V, King of Macedon 221–179 BCE.

#### SOURCE 4.32

A golden hairnet from the third century BCE.





to the extent that Roman interests were respected—that foreign policy and relationships between Greek cities was for Rome to arrange. The Greeks assumed that independence meant that they could do whatever they wanted without interference. When the Greeks resumed their usual disputes, Rome had to step in and exert more control in the area.

By the middle of the second century BCE, Rome was consolidating its influence over the East, developing 'a much more forceful Roman posture and a determination to bend the Greek world to Roman will'.<sup>41</sup> The Romans rewarded their friends and punished their enemies—when the Fourth Macedonian War broke out in 149 BCE, supported by other Greeks who revolted against Roman involvement, Rome's response was swift and clear. The Roman armies defeated Macedonia and the Greek cities—notably the city of Corinth in 146 BCE, which was destroyed, its treasures sent off as Roman loot and its inhabitants sold as slaves. Macedonia was turned into a province, while the cities of Greece were forced to enter into individual arrangements with Rome; those cities that had supported Rome—such as Sparta and Athens—became allies, those who opposed Rome became tribute-paying subjects. The client system in Greece had failed to ensure peace, so now Rome applied more direct measures of control. This client system had also been applied to Carthage for fifty years after the Second Punic War and, as had happened in Greece, it was not a system that would last.

#### 📍 SOURCE 4.33

This statue of *Laocoön and His Sons* is from around the second century BCE, and shows the superb skill of Hellenistic artists.

#### 📌 DID YOU KNOW?

According to ancient historian Polybius, when Flaminius declared the Greek cities were free, the cheering of the Greeks was so loud that birds were knocked dead out of the sky.

#### ➔ SOURCE 4.34

Polybius, *The Histories Volume 1, Books 1–2*, 1.9, trans. W. R. Paton, revised by Frank W. Walbank and Christian Habicht, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

#### THE BEGINNING OF ROMAN POWER IN THE EAST

The date from which I propose to begin my history is the 140th Olympiad [220–216 BCE] ... Previously the doings of the world had been, so to say, dispersed, as they were held together by no unity of initiative, results, or locality; but ever since this date history has been an organic whole, and the affairs of Italy and Libya have been interlinked with those of Greece and Asia, all leading up to one end. And this is my reason for beginning their systematic history from that date. For it was owing to their defeat of the Carthaginians in the Hannibalic War that the Romans, feeling that the chief and most essential step in their scheme of universal aggression had now been taken, were first emboldened to reach out their hands to grasp the rest and to cross with an army to Greece (in 200) and the continent of Asia (in 190).

#### ACTIVITY

#### SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

Examine Source 4.34 and complete the tasks below.

1. Why does Polybius begin his 'systematic history' from the 140th Olympiad?
2. Explain how the defeat of the Carthaginians contributed to the Romans coming into conflict with the people in the eastern Mediterranean. In your response, use your own knowledge and the source.
3. Analyse the extent to which the Romans treated the people in the East in the second century BCE in the same way they had treated people in Italy in the fourth century BCE. Use evidence to support your response.

## THE THIRD PUNIC WAR (149–146 BCE)

POLYBIUS: 'Scipio, seeing the city then utterly ending in complete and final destruction, is said to have wept and openly lamented for his enemies.'

Carthage was humbled but not crippled by the treaty that ended the Second Punic War (201 BCE). The Carthaginians focused on rebuilding their commerce and paying the compensation demanded by Rome. The steady revival of Carthaginian fortunes added to Roman fears and they watched the Punic city closely. In the first half of the second century BCE, Carthage often found itself in disputes with the neighbouring kingdom of Numidia, which was allied with Rome. Whenever Rome was called in to settle these disputes, it decided in favour of Numidia. By 154 BCE, Numidia had grabbed all but 13 000 square kilometres of the 78 000 square kilometres of land Carthage had been left with at the end of the Second Punic War.<sup>42</sup>

In 151 BCE, Carthage finished paying compensation to Rome and, feeling that the peace treaty with Rome had now come to an end, attacked Numidia. As far as the Romans were concerned there was no expiry date on the peace treaty—and the Carthaginians had just broken it by starting a war without Rome's permission. Carthage lost this minor war against Numidia and when Rome declared war, Carthage surrendered immediately. The Roman judgement was harsh and cunning: the Carthaginians had to leave Carthage and settle at least sixteen kilometres from the sea. This would destroy Carthage's ability to trade at sea and thus destroy Carthage itself. In the face of this judgement, the desperate Carthaginians thought that they should at least die fighting. The Third Punic War began in 149 BCE just as the Romans intended.

The Carthaginians prepared for a siege with great energy and commitment; one story goes that the women of the city even cut off their hair so it could be used for bowstrings. For two years the Carthaginians bravely defended their city while ineffective Roman commanders failed to dislodge them. Then in 147 BCE, a new commander arrived on the scene. This was Scipio Aemilianus, the grandson-by-adoption of Scipio Africanus. Scipio Aemilianus was appointed consul even though he was ineligible and at once proved himself worthy of the Scipio name. This younger Scipio increased the pressure on the besieged Carthaginians—and in 146 BCE his troops broke into the city. The Romans captured the city after six days of fierce fighting through the streets. The 50 000 Carthaginian survivors were sold as slaves, the city was completely destroyed, the ground was cursed and the Carthaginian civilisation ceased to exist. The Romans created a new province from the former territory of Carthage. This newest province was called Africa and became part of Rome's empire, which now included Macedonia, Nearer Spain, Further Spain, Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica.



#### 📌 DID YOU KNOW?

The tough old Roman senator, Cato the Elder, ended every speech he made in the Senate with the words *Carthago est delenda*—'Carthage must be destroyed'.

#### 📍 SOURCE 4.35

Carthage destroyed by the Roman army, Third Punic War, 146 BCE.

#### ACTIVITY

#### FACT FILE

Construct a table, list or infographic showing the following facts for 2–3 provinces in Rome's empire by the middle of the second century BCE:

- **When** the province came under Roman control
- **How** the province came under Roman control
- **Why** Rome wanted to control the province
- **What** challenges the province posed for Rome.

### WARS THAT ESTABLISHED ROME'S SUPREMACY

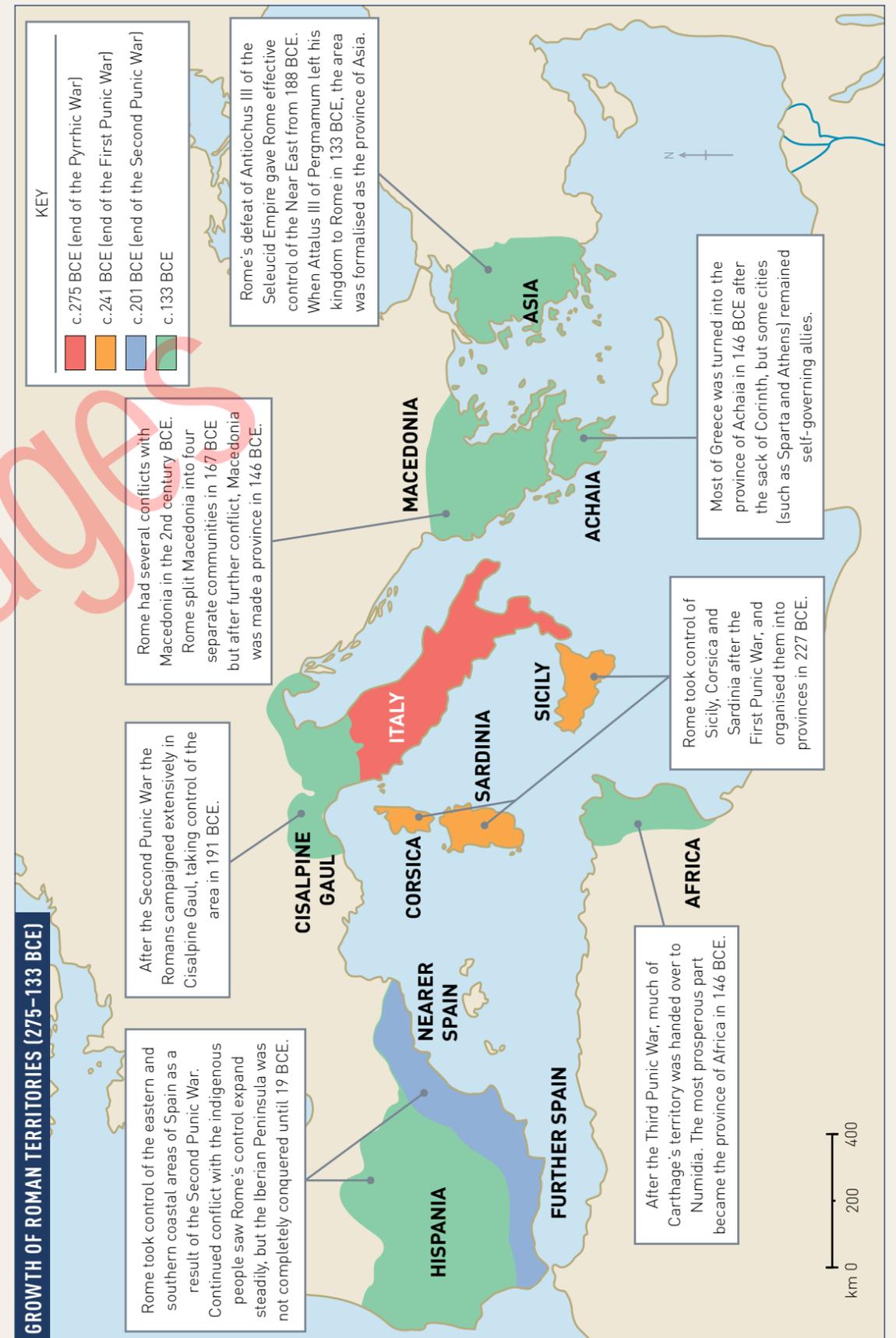
	CAUSES	COURSE	CONSEQUENCES
<b>FIRST PUNIC WAR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No pre-existing tension</li> <li>Roman and Carthaginian areas of influence bordered each other from about 265 BCE</li> <li>Immediate cause: Sons of Mars calling on both Rome and Carthage for help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fighting in and around Sicily (261–256 BCE)</li> <li>Romans attempted to invade North Africa in 256 BCE but failed</li> <li>Fighting resumed in Sicily (254–241 BCE)</li> <li>Romans won all but one of the naval battles</li> <li>Carthaginians forced to surrender due to Roman control of the sea and of Sicily</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rome acquired its first province in Sicily</li> <li>Rome developed a strong navy</li> <li>Rome lost many men and ships</li> <li>Carthage had to pay compensation to Rome</li> </ul>
<b>SECOND PUNIC WAR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing tension from the previous war</li> <li>Carthage reasserted its presence in Spain</li> <li>Immediate cause: the Saguntum Crisis revealed that both states would take action to protect their interests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carthaginians invaded Italy (under Hannibal's leadership 218–202 BCE)</li> <li>Romans invaded Spain (under the leadership of the Scipio family 218–207 BCE)</li> <li>Romans invaded North Africa in 204 BCE; Roman victory at the Battle of Zama in 202 BCE brought the war to an end</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rome's control of the sea was undisputed</li> <li>Rome's alliance system proved to be strong</li> <li>The Senate gained enormous prestige</li> <li>Carthage had to pay compensation to Rome and promise not to fight wars without Roman permission</li> <li>Rome no longer had a rival in the western Mediterranean</li> </ul>
<b>EASTERN WARS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Illyrian piracy and Hellenistic squabbling unsettled the eastern border of Rome's areas of influence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the first half of the 2nd century BCE, Rome interfered more often and more aggressively in the politics of Greece and the Hellenistic kingdoms</li> <li>Roman experiments in how to deal with the East started with 'friendship' but ended up with alliances and the creation of provinces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rome brought the Greek world under its control but began to import Greek culture and ideas</li> <li>Creation of the province of Macedonia</li> </ul>
<b>THIRD PUNIC WAR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing tension from the previous wars</li> <li>Roman fears that Carthage would become powerful again</li> <li>Immediate cause: Carthage attacked a Roman ally, Numidia, in 151 BCE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The war was basically a siege of Carthage starting in 149 BCE</li> <li>The Romans gained the upper hand with the arrival of Scipio Aemilianus in 147 BCE</li> <li>The war ended with total Carthaginian defeat in 146 BCE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carthage was destroyed</li> <li>Carthaginian territory was turned into the province of Africa</li> </ul>

THE GROWTH OF ROMAN TERRITORY: MAP TASK

SOURCE 4.36

GROWTH OF ROMAN TERRITORY IN THE THIRD AND SECOND CENTURIES BCE

GROWTH OF ROMAN TERRITORIES (275–133 BCE)



# CONCLUSION

The middle period of the Republic began with Rome in a commanding position in Italy; from the Alps in the north down to the Greek cities of the south, the peninsula was controlled by Rome. This control was only partly maintained by a strong military. The foundation of Roman dominance came from the Republic's ability to work with allies and keep those alliances strong. The Romans' control over Italy brought them into conflict with the other great power of the western Mediterranean: Carthage.

The Punic Wars between Rome and Carthage that were such a feature of the third century BCE helped to define Roman politics and economics for generations to come. The conflict also influenced developments in Roman identity, as Romans came to see themselves as a people who were dutiful

to the state and willing to continue the fight regardless of the odds. At the same time, political power became more entrenched in the senatorial aristocracy. While the old divisions between patricians and plebeians faded, the gulf between rich and poor grew ever wider.

In defeating Carthage, Rome eliminated its last rival in the western Mediterranean, allowing it to address rising tensions to the east. Within fifty years, the destiny of the Greek world was bound up with Rome. Although it might seem at this point as if Rome was riding high, it was poised to enter into the bitterest of calamities—a century of civil war that saw ambitious individuals fighting to be Rome's 'first man'.

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

Create a flowchart that shows how Rome's interactions with Carthage contributed to change in the Roman Republic. Colour-code these changes to differentiate between social, political and economic changes.

## ESSAY

Write an essay of 400–600 words on one of the following topics. Support your argument with evidence from primary sources and historical interpretations.

- 'The Second Punic War was fundamentally different to the First Punic War in its scope and impact.' Discuss, using evidence to support your response.
- 'Nothing really changed for the poorest members of Roman society between the founding of the Republic and the middle of the second century BCE.' Do you agree? Use evidence to support your answer.
- 'Rome used both hard and soft power to great effect during the period of the Punic Wars.' Discuss, using evidence to support your response.

## EXTENSION

Organise a debate to evaluate who had the greatest significance in the Second Punic War: Hannibal Barca or Scipio Africanus. In your debate, identify the military and political contributions of each, and use specific historical evidence and quotes from historians (both ancient and modern) to support your argument.

## EXAM PREPARATION

1. Explain how Rome adapted its political structures in order to administer the provinces it acquired in the third and second centuries BCE.
2. Explain how access to wealth and land affected political and social participation in the Roman Republic.

## TEST



QUIZ – CHAPTER 4

TEST YOUR  
LEARNING