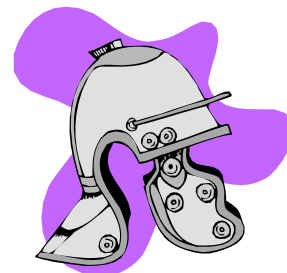


# Decline of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome

"The warlike states of antiquity, Greece, Macedonia, and Rome, educated a race of soldiers; exercised their bodies, disciplined their courage, multiplied their forces by regular evolutions, and converted the iron which they possessed into strong and serviceable weapons. But this superiority insensibly declined with their laws and manners; and the feeble policy of Constantine and his successors armed and instructed, for the ruin of the empire, the rude valour of the Barbarian mercenaries."

~ Gibbon, *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*

As a group, read and gather information about the reasons for the decline of Greece and Rome. After reading, consider the following lists and try to reach a consensus about the order of importance of these factors, starting with #1 for the most important. For each of the **three** most important factors, record your reasons.



Factors that influenced the decline of Greece	Factors that influenced the decline of Rome
Conflict and competition between city-states broke down a sense of community in Greece.	The Germanic tribes of Northern Europe (e.g., Visigoths and Ostrogoths) became strong military forces and attacked the Empire, conquering Rome in 456.
Constant war divided the Greek city-states into shifting alliances; it was also very costly to all the citizens.	Eventually the Empire became a dictatorship and the people were less involved in government.
There was increasing tension and conflict between the ruling aristocracy and the poorer classes.	Rome's army became too large; the hired soldiers (mercenaries) in Roman armies were not Romans and not loyal to Rome.
Greek colonies around the Mediterranean knew about Greek culture but were not necessarily loyal to Greece.	Inheritance of the title of Emperor was unstable; this led to power struggles, violence, and insecurity.
The neighbouring states were increasing in power and were more unified than the city-states of Greece.	The Empire became too large and the borders were too long to defend.
Philip of Macedonia, to the north of Greece, had a strong military and a unified monarchy which gave him the power to eventually conquer the Greek city-states (338 BCE).	Trade was constantly disrupted because of wars; the economy suffered because goods could not be freely bought and sold.

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Over time, Rome was increasing in size, power, and trade. By 146 BCE Romans had conquered the Greek city-states.	Heavy taxes were paid by the provinces to support the luxury of Rome; the conquered people began to resent this.
Greece didn't really decline as a culture because the Macedonians (Alexander the Great) and the Romans both adopted and spread Greek culture.	Conflict and social unrest was created by the wide gap between the rich and the poor.
Different city-states had completely different forms of government and ways of life (e.g., Sparta and Athens).	Slavery eroded the economy by taking work away from the plebeians.
The people became lazy because they were more interested in living the good life than in waging war against their enemies.	The spread of Christianity divided the Empire and caused many people under Roman rule to reject traditional Roman culture.
Other factors?	The society was weakened by its materialism and focus on luxury, especially in the ruling classes.
	People may have been suffering from lead poisoning because of the lead pipes for the Roman water supply.
	The division of the Empire into the eastern and western Empires weakened the power of Rome.
	Other factors?

**Conclusion:** Prepare a summary statement to share with the class. Consider whether you agree with what is said in the quotation at the top of the previous page.

- Does your group believe that a civilization first weakens from the inside, or that outside factors cause it to decline?
- What types of actions or events might have prevented the decline of these civilizations?