Name: _____

Date: _____

THE ROMAN EMPIRE AFTER AUGUSTUS

Caesar Augustus showed great respect for the Senate, but later emperors made no secret of their power. The Senate continued to exist after the reign of Augustus, but senators had little say over the affairs of the empire. Although Rome was still officially called a republic, the emperor commanded the army, appointed important officials, and made the final decisions on matters of government. Some of the emperors who followed Augustus ruled wisely. Others were foolish and cruel.

From Augustus to Nero

By the time Augustus died, he had ruled for more than forty years and had outlived many of the heirs he expected to succeed him. Shortly before his death, he adopted his stepson Tiberius as his heir. For the next several decades, the empire remained stable as one emperor succeeded another. When Emperor Claudius died in 54 CE, his seventeen-year-old adopted son, Nero, became emperor.

The Reign of Nero

Nero was perhaps the most notorious emperor in Roman history. He came to power at the age of seventeen after his mother was widely believed to have poisoned his stepfather. Once Nero became emperor, he ordered his mother's execution. He also killed two wives and a stepbrother. Not only did Nero rule the empire ruthlessly by day, but at night he prowled the streets of Rome, assaulting women. Many Romans lived in constant fear of the unpredictable young emperor.

In 64, a great fire destroyed much of Rome. Many Romans blamed Nero for the disaster, although historians are uncertain whether he was responsible. Nero was so despised that a popular rumor claimed he played music while the city burned, but most historians doubt the story. After the fire, Nero blamed Christians and ordered many of them executed.

After the Great Fire, Nero became increasingly unpopular. Governors and army commanders rebelled, and even his own soldiers abandoned him. In 68, Nero fled Rome and committed suicide. His guard claimed Nero's final words were, "What an artist the world is losing," before he stabbed himself in the neck.

The Five Good Emperors

Nero's death plunged Rome into civil war as rival generals fought for the throne. Order was finally restored by the emperor Vespasian. His reign marked the beginning of a more stable government after the chaos of Nero's rule. After these turbulent years, Rome entered one of the greatest periods in its history under a series of capable rulers historians call the Five Good Emperors. Rather than simply passing power to their sons, several chose experienced successors through adoption, helping ensure nearly a century of stable government.

Trajan's Empire

It was under the emperor Trajan that, by 117, the Roman Empire reached its greatest size. At its height, more than 60 million people lived under Roman rule. The empire extended from Britain and Spain to North Africa and surrounded the vast Mediterranean Sea, which later historians described as being a mere "Roman lake." Roman roads, laws, and trade connected people across three continents.

Hadrian Secures the Empire

Unlike Trajan, who expanded the empire, Hadrian believed Rome had grown large enough. Instead of conquering new lands, he strengthened the empire's frontiers. In 122, the emperor Hadrian built a wall across northern England to keep out invaders from Scotland. The Romans called the Scots "barbarians," possibly because their Celtic language reminded the Romans of the sounds made by sheep. In time, the Romans used this term for any civilization they considered uncultured. For more than two centuries, Rome remained the most powerful empire in the Western world, but eventually another group of barbarian warriors—from Germany—would lead to the end of the Roman Empire.

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Name: _____

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Fill in the Blanks

After Augustus, later e__p__r__rs continued to have more p__w__r than the S__n__te. Augustus a__o__t__d Tiberius as his heir, and stable *s__c__e__s__on continued for decades until Claudius's a__o__t__d son, Nero, became emperor at just s__v__n__e__n-years-old. Nero soon proved *r__thl__ss, executing his m__t__er, two w__v__s, and a s__e__b__o__h__r. His reputation only *w__r__e__ed after a great f_____ destroyed much of Rome in ____CE. Nero blamed C__r__s__i__ns for the fire and ordered many Christians e__e__u__ed. As r__b__l__i__n spread and even his own soldiers turned against him, Nero fled Rome and committed *s__ic__de. The civil war that followed his death ended only when V__s__a__i__n restored order, ushering in the era of the Five Good Emperors, rulers who secured decades of s__a__i__i__y by choosing successors through a__o__t__on rather than b__r__h. Their era peaked under T__aj__n, whose c__n__u__s__s pushed the empire to its greatest size by 117 CE. Later, H_d__i__n, decided Rome had grown large enough, so built a w_____ in B__i__a_n to defend Roam f__o__t__e__s instead of expanding further.

Answer in Complete Sentence

*1. In your opinion, what was Nero's most outrageous or shocking act?

_____

_____

_____

2. Why do many historians describe the Mediterranean Sea as a "Roman lake" during Trajan's reign?

_____

_____

_____

3. According to the article, how did the Five Good Emperors ensure stability after their deaths?

_____

_____

_____

*4. Xenophobia is the fear or contempt of foreign people and cultures. Describe an example of Roman xenophobia.

_____

_____

_____

_____

*This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.

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