Name: _____

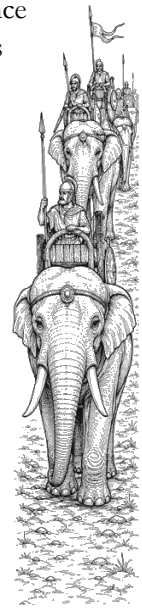
Date: _____

THE PUNIC WARS

Rome fought three wars with Carthage between 264 BCE and 146 BCE. The wars established Rome as a world power and left Carthage in ruins.

Rome's Greatest Rival

Carthage was a city in North Africa originally founded as a trading post by the Phoenicians. Since historians have tended to label the conflicts by its Roman name, we know them as the Punic Wars.



By the time of the First Punic War, Carthage had created an empire that stretched across North Africa and into the southern coast of modern-day Spain. Carthaginian merchants traded throughout the Mediterranean Sea. To protect its profitable sea trade, Carthage developed a powerful navy.

Meanwhile, the Romans had conquered most of the Italian peninsula by 265 BCE. Rome's leaders now looked beyond Italy for new land, wealth, and glory. Their attention turned to Carthage.

The First Punic War

Rome and Carthage fought the First Punic War over Sicily, a Mediterranean island off the coast of the Italian peninsula. Carthage controlled Sicily in 264 BCE, so the Romans found a reason to declare war.

Rome had a powerful army, but its new enemy was overseas, where the Romans had little experience. They lacked the naval skill to sink ships, so they found a way to fight a land war at sea. Roman sailors lowered a bridge onto an enemy ship, allowing soldiers to cross over and attack in hand-to-hand combat, where Rome was more experienced than Carthage.

To close the gap in naval power, the Romans captured a Carthaginian warship and used it as a model to build their fleet. They won a few early victories and captured most of Sicily, but the inexperienced Roman navy left them unprepared for a catastrophic storm that destroyed two-thirds of its fleet and killed thousands of Roman sailors. Rome raised a second and third fleet, but storms also destroyed most of the additional ships.

A Carthaginian general named Hamilcar Barca recaptured most of Sicily, but Carthage did not have the manpower to continue the conflict. In 241 BCE, Carthage surrendered Sicily to the Romans.

Hannibal Crosses the Alps

A generation after the First Punic War, a young Carthaginian general named Hannibal Barca, son of Hamilcar, sought revenge from his base in Spain. He led an army of 40,000 soldiers, 8,000 horses, and 37 war elephants on a daring journey over the Alps, Europe's highest mountain range.

Hannibal's army won three decisive victories against Rome in northern Italy while badly outnumbered. In the Battle of Cannae, Hannibal's army surrounded the Romans, killing 50,000 to 80,000 Roman soldiers.

As a result of their humiliation at Cannae, Rome changed its strategy. They sent a new army to northern Italy with instructions to avoid battle. Hannibal spent the next twelve years destroying the Roman countryside, but his army had no opponent to fight.

Scipio Invades Carthage

After years of bloody warfare in Italy, the Roman consul Scipio proposed a daring invasion of Carthage in 203 BCE. The Senate reluctantly agreed, and Scipio arrived in North Africa with an army of 7,000 men.

Carthage ordered Hannibal to return home to face the threat from Scipio, but Hannibal had to leave his loyal army behind in Italy. Without the Carthaginian general in charge, the war on the Italian peninsula turned in Rome's favor.

Back in Carthage, Hannibal was given a mercenary army instead of his devoted soldiers. Mercenaries are foreign soldiers hired to fight. Hannibal was used to his loyal troops, and his new mercenary command was no match for Scipio's army. Rome defeated Hannibal's mercenary army and won the Second Punic War.

The Third Punic War

Carthage could no longer hurt Rome after the Second Punic War, but Roman antipathy toward Carthage lasted for generations. A Roman senator

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named Cato ended every speech with the cry, "Carthage must be destroyed."

Rome attacked Carthage, and the two sides fought three years of bloody battles. After a siege in 146 BCE, the Romans broke through the city walls of Carthage. Once they subdued the Carthaginian army, Roman soldiers went from house to house, slaughtering people in their homes. After destroying Carthage, the Romans sold the remaining citizens into slavery, burned the city, and destroyed Carthage's harbor.

Rome annexed Carthage by making the city part of a Roman province they called Africa. The Punic Wars established Rome as a powerful nation and marked the beginning of one of history's greatest empires.

Fill in the Blanks

Rome and C__r__h__ge fought three P__n__c Wars that made Rome the greatest power in the Mediterranean. During the F__r__t Punic War, Rome fought Carthage for control of S__c__ly. Years later, H__n__ib__l crossed the A__ps with war e__e__h__n__s to win great v__c__o__i__s, including the Battle of Cannae. Rome later i__v__d__d Carthage under S__i__io. Hannibal returned home but was d__f__a__ed, ending the S__c__nd Punic War. Years afterward, Rome destroyed C__r__h__ge in the T__i__d Punic War, leaving the city in r__i__s and beginning Rome's rise as a mighty e__p__re.

Answer in Complete Sentence

1. Why did Carthage have such a powerful navy?

_____

_____

_____

*2. The article states that, "Though Carthage had been defeated, the antipathy caused by Hannibal's destruction would last for generations and lead to the Third Punic War and the downfall of Carthage." Without looking at a dictionary, what do you think antipathy means?

_____

_____

_____

*3. According to the article, why did the Romans treat Carthage with such brutality after the Third Punic War?

_____

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_____

_____

*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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