

◀ This painting touches on the myth of Romulus and Remus, said to be founders of Rome.

Geography and the Early Development of Rome

32.1 Introduction

In Unit 5, you learned about the civilization of ancient Greece. In this unit, you will explore the Roman civilization, which flourished from about 700 B.C.E. to about 476 C.E. It began in the ancient city of **Rome**.

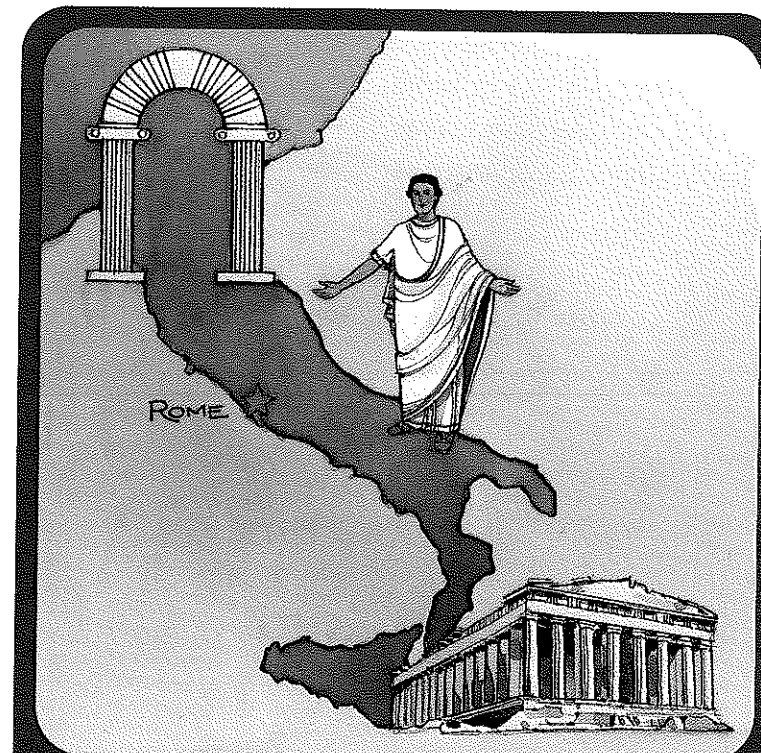
Rome is located in Italy, which includes islands and a peninsula in southern Europe. The Italian peninsula is shaped a lot like a boot. It reaches into the Mediterranean Sea—ready to kick the island of Sicily.

The Romans have a **myth** about the founding of their city. Long ago, the story goes, a princess gave birth to twin sons, Romulus and Remus.

The boys' father was Mars, the Roman god of war. The princess's uncle—the king—was afraid the boys would grow up to take his throne, so he ordered his men to drown them in the Tiber River. But before the twins drowned, a wolf rescued them.

When Romulus and Remus grew up, they decided to build a town on the banks of the Tiber River where the wolf had found them. But they quarreled over who would rule their settlement. Romulus killed his brother. He became king of the city, which he named Rome.

The tale of Romulus and Remus is a colorful myth. In this chapter, you will learn about the real founding of Rome. You will also learn how two important groups, the **Etruscans** and the **Greeks**, influenced the development of Roman culture.



Use this illustration as a graphic organizer to explore how the Etruscans and the Greeks influenced Roman culture.

Latins people from the ancient country of Latium, an area in what is now the country of Italy
Palatine one of the seven hills in ancient Rome

32.2 The Early Romans and Their Neighbors

Over the years, historians have tried to discover the truth about the founding of Rome. No one really knows who Rome's first king was. We do know that the first Romans were **Latins**. The Latins were one of several groups who had invaded Italy sometime before 1000 B.C.E.

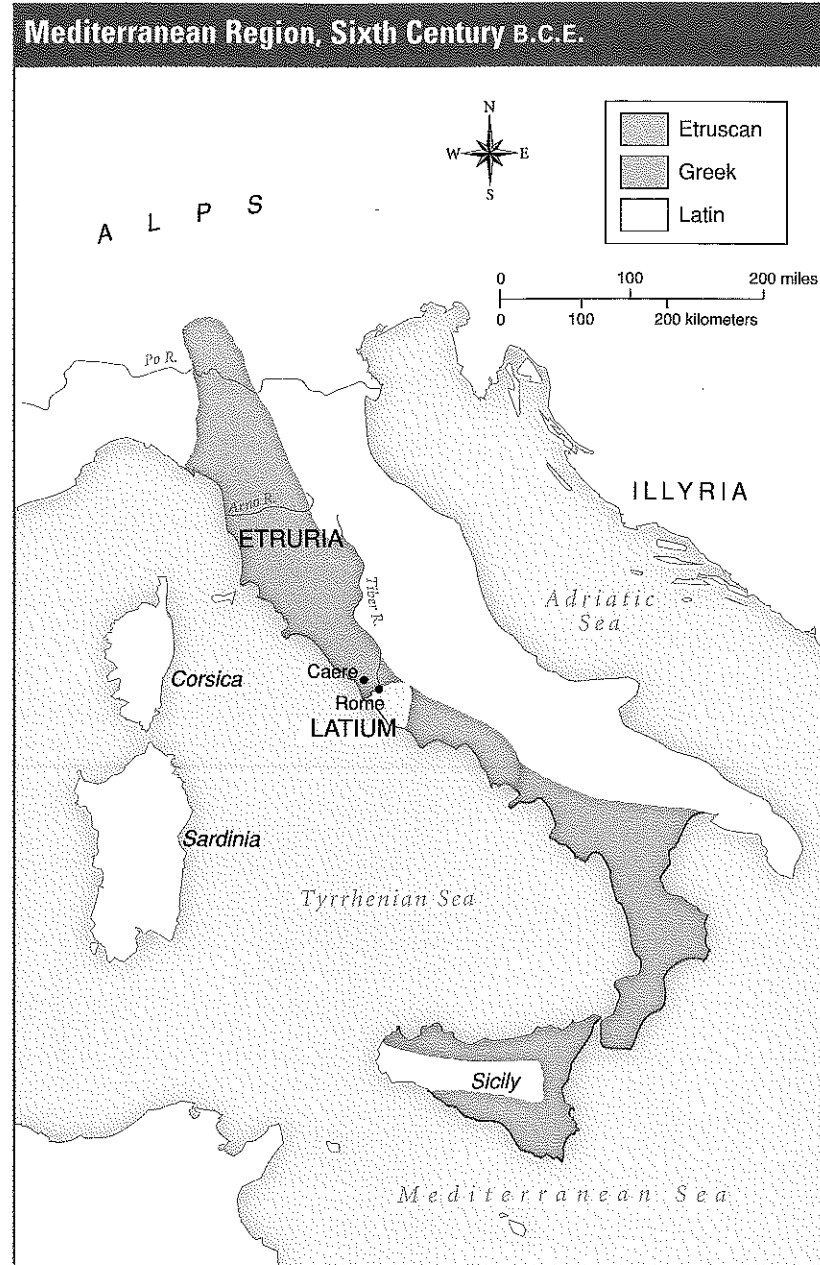
Perhaps around 700 B.C.E., a Latin tribe built the village that eventually became Rome. They built their village on the **Palatine**, a hill in central Italy. The Palatine overlooks the Tiber River, about 12 miles inland from the sea. In time, the village of thatched huts grew into a mighty city that spread over seven hills.

As Rome grew, Roman culture was greatly influenced by two of Rome's neighbors, the Etruscans and the Greeks. The Romans borrowed many ideas and skills from these two groups, beginning with the Etruscans.

The Etruscans had dominated Etruria, a land just north of the Palatine, about 800 B.C.E. No one knows exactly where they came from. They built some city-states and conquered others. By 600 B.C.E., they ruled much of northern and central Italy, including the town of Rome.

The Greeks also had a major influence on Roman culture. The Romans learned about Greek culture when Greek colonists established towns in southern Italy and on the island of Sicily. Romans also learned about Greek ways from traders and the many Greeks who came to Rome.

Let's look at some of the ideas and customs the Romans learned from these two groups.



32.3 The Influence of Etruscan Engineering

The Romans became great builders. They learned many techniques about engineering, or the science of building, from the Etruscans. Two important Etruscan structures the Romans borrowed were the arch and the cuniculus.

Etruscan arches rested on two pillars. The pillars supported a half-circle of wedge-shaped stones. A keystone in the center held the stones in place.

The **cuniculus** was a long underground trench. Vertical shafts connected it to the ground above. Etruscans used these trenches to irrigate land. They also used them to drain swamps and to carry water to their cities.

The Romans adopted both of these structures. In time, they became even better engineers than the Etruscans. They used arches to build huge public works, including bridges, stadiums, and aqueducts.

32.4 The Influence of Etruscan Sporting Events

Romans also adopted two bloody Etruscan sporting events. The first was slave fighting. The Etruscan custom was to stage slave fights during funerals. Two slaves of the dead master fought to the death with swords and small shields. After being congratulated, the winner was executed.

The Etruscans also enjoyed watching chariot races. The drivers, or charioteers, were strapped to their chariots. If a chariot overturned, a driver could be dragged under the chariot's wheels or trampled by the horses. These fierce competitions often resulted in injury or death.

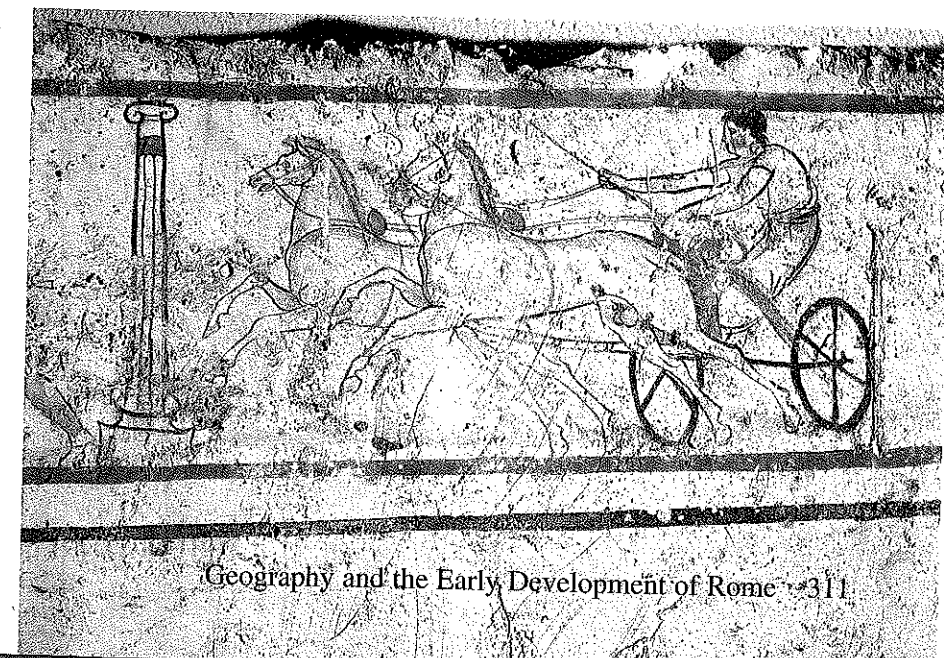
These Etruscan sports became popular amusements in Rome. In Roman stadiums, thousands of slaves died fighting as **gladiators**. The gladiators fought against each other or wild animals. And Romans flocked to see charioteers risk their lives racing four-horse teams.

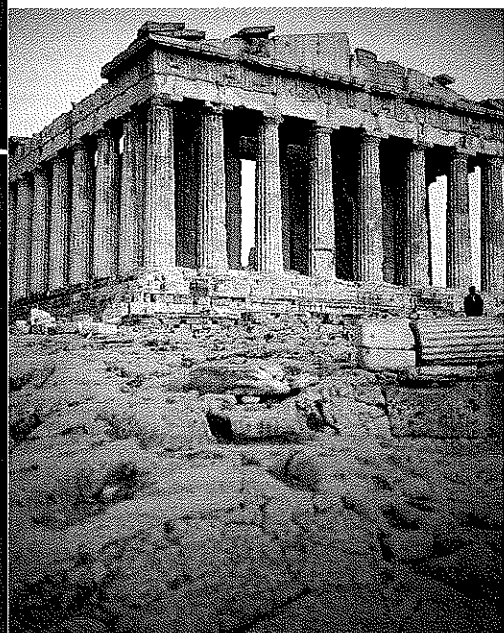


This arched city gate was built by the Etruscans. The arch is held in place by the pressure of the stones against each other.

cuniculus an irrigation system invented by the Etruscans
gladiator a person trained to fight another person to the death for public entertainment

Etruscan charioteers risked their lives racing around the turns in the track of a chariot race.





In the ruins of the Parthenon from ancient Greece, we can see the architectural details that have influenced future building designs.

32.5 The Influence of Greek Architecture

The Romans borrowed and adapted ideas from the Greeks as well as the Etruscans. Greek architecture was one important influence on the Romans. As you remember, the Greeks built marble temples as homes for their gods. Temples like the Parthenon had stately columns that added to their beauty.

The Romans used Greek designs in their own public buildings. In time, they learned to use concrete to make even larger structures, such as the Pantheon in Rome.

The Romans also used concrete to build huge stadiums like the Colosseum, where gladiators fought. The Circus Maximus, where people watched chariot racing, could seat more than 200,000 spectators.

32.6 The Influence of Greek Writing

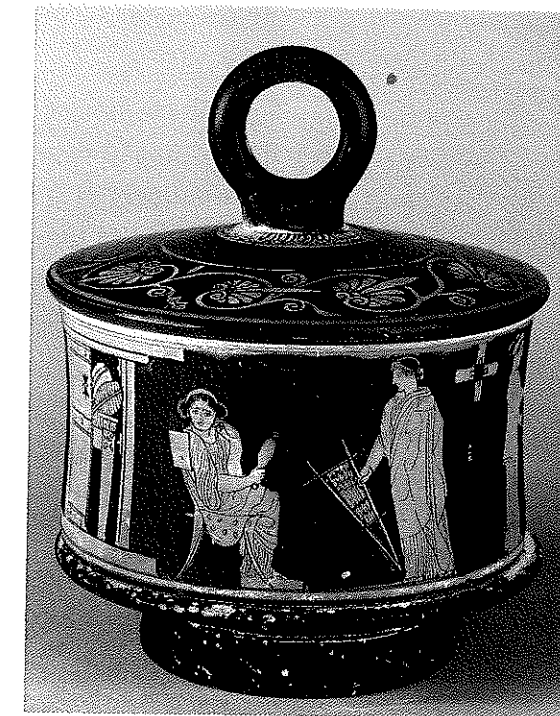
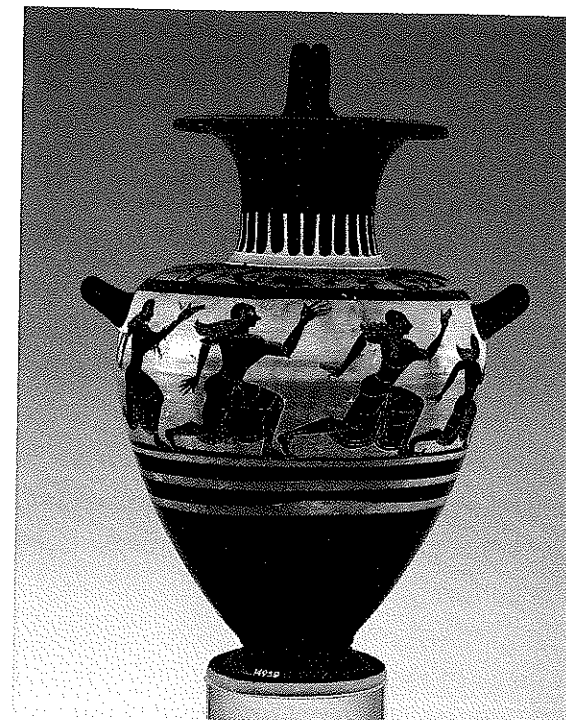
Sometimes the Greek influence on Roman culture was indirect. For example, the Greek alphabet was adopted and then changed by the Etruscans. The Romans then borrowed and altered the Etruscan alphabet.

The Greeks' use of their alphabet had a more direct influence on Roman life. Like the Greeks, the Romans wrote in all capital letters. The Greeks carved important documents, such as laws and treaties, into bronze or stone plaques. The plaques were posted in the public squares. The Romans also carved inscriptions in walls and columns for all to see.

Many Roman writers were inspired by Greek poetry and myths. The Roman poet Virgil built on Greek tales of a long-ago conflict, the Trojan War. His poem told how Aeneas, a Trojan prince, fled to Italy after the war. According to Virgil's story, Aeneas was the ancestor of the first Romans.



Greeks and Romans wrote in all capital letters. This example of Greek writing is on a voting token called an *ostrakon*.



32.7 The Influence of Greek Art

Both the Etruscans and the Romans admired Greek pottery, painting, and sculpture. The Romans got some Greek ideas from Etruscan art. They borrowed others directly from the Greeks.

Greek pottery was valued throughout the Mediterranean world for its usefulness and beauty. Greek potters created large clay vessels for storing food, water, and wine. They often painted black figures on the red clay. Some of their designs showed pictures of gods and heroes. Others showed people in their daily lives. The Romans eagerly took the work of Greek potters into their homes. Roman artists imitated the technique but had their own style.

The Greek influence on Roman painting and sculpture was so great that historians speak of "Greco-Roman art." Wealthy Romans often collected Greek art. They had monuments built in a Greek style. Roman sculptors and painters used Greek art as models for their own work.

Roman artists also created a lively and realistic style of their own. Greek artists often tried to show an ideal, or perfect, human being or god. As Rome's power grew, much of Roman art celebrated great leaders and events. Roman sculptors became especially skilled in creating lifelike portraits. They made realistic busts, or statues showing the subject's head and shoulders. They also carved life-size statues of famous generals. The statues often seemed just as powerful as the generals themselves.

These vases show the two most common painting styles that the Greeks and Romans used on their pottery. On the left, the figures are painted black on red clay. On the right, they are the red color of the clay.

32.8 The Influence of Greek Mythology

The religion of the Romans was a blend of many influences. For example, they followed Etruscan religious rituals in founding their cities. But it was Greek mythology that especially influenced Roman ideas about the gods.

As you learned in Chapter 29, the Greeks worshiped a number of gods and goddesses. The gods governed every part of Greek life. The Greeks performed rituals and sacrifices to gain the gods' favor for everything from a good harvest to curing the sick.

The early Romans had their own gods and rituals. But their ideas about the gods changed as they came in contact with other cultures. When the Romans encountered a similar god from another culture, they blended that god's characteristics with those of their god.

The Romans adopted many of the Greek gods as their own, but they gave them Roman names. The greatest Greek god, Zeus, became Jupiter. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, became Venus. And Aries, the god of war, became Mars.

The Romans were much less interested in telling stories about the gods than the Greeks were. They were more concerned with performing exactly the right ritual for a particular occasion.



The Greek gods and goddesses of Mount Olympus, shown in this painting, were adopted into Roman mythology as well.

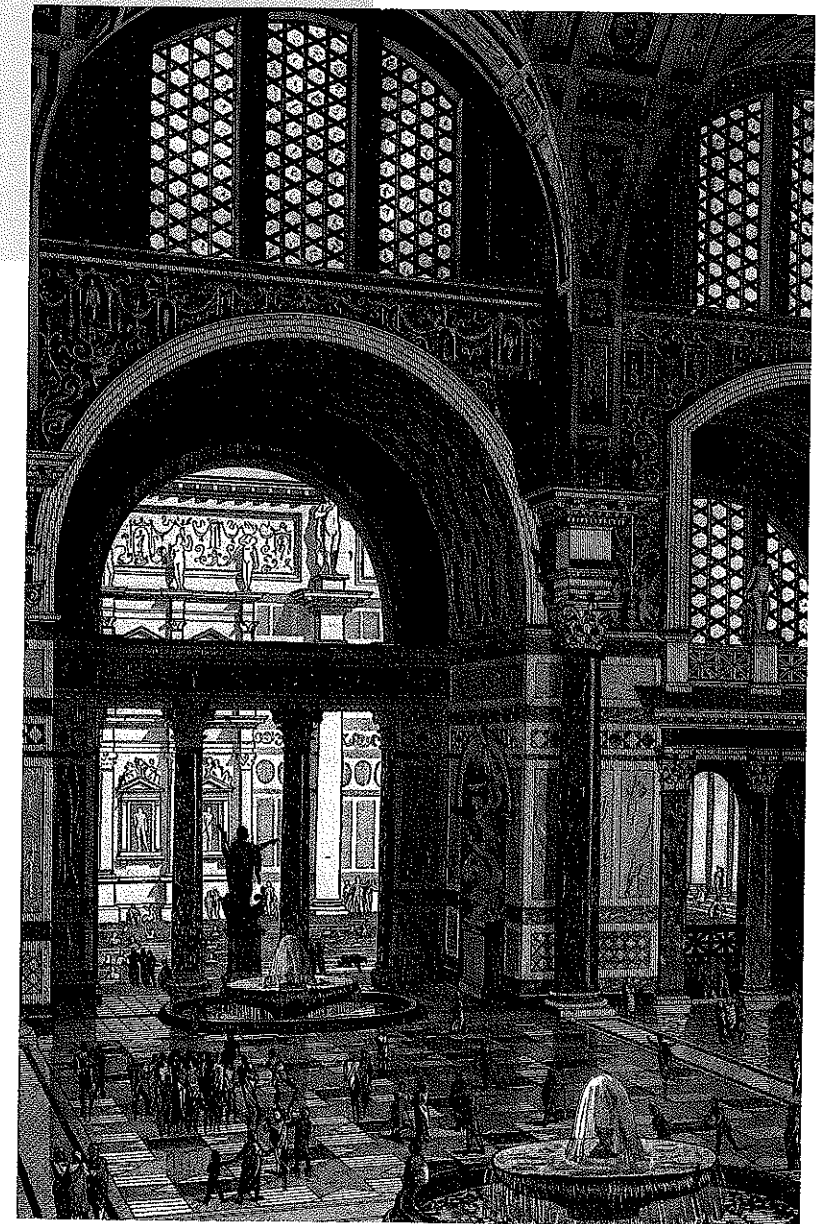
32.9 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, you learned about the beginnings of Rome. The city of Rome was founded by Latins who settled near the Tiber River. Over time, the Romans borrowed many ideas and skills from their neighbors.

Two groups who greatly influenced Roman culture were the Etruscans and the Greeks. Romans learned a great deal about engineering from the Etruscans. They also adopted some Etruscan sporting events.

Greek civilization had a huge influence on Roman culture. You can see the influence of Greek ideas in Roman architecture, writing, art, and mythology.

The birth of Rome is only the start of the story. In the next chapter, you will learn about the struggles that created a new form of government in Rome.



Examples of both Etruscan and Greek influence are seen in the magnificent Baths of Caracalla in Rome.