Beginning in the eighth century B.C., Ancient Rome grew from a small town on central Italy's Tiber River into an empire that at its peak encompassed most of continental Europe, Britain, much of western Asia, northern Africa and the Mediterranean islands. Among the many legacies of Roman dominance are the widespread use of the Romance languages (Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian) derived from Latin, the modern Western alphabet and calendar and the emergence of Christianity as a major world religion. After 450 years as a republic, Rome became an empire in the wake of Julius Caesar's rise and fall in the first century B.C. The long and triumphant reign of its first emperor, Augustus, began a golden age of peace and prosperity; by contrast, the empire’s decline and fall by the fifth century A.D. was one of the most dramatic implosions in the history of human civilization.

As legend has it, Rome was founded by Romulus and Remus, twin sons of Mars, the god of war. Left to drown in a basket on the Tiber by a king of nearby Alba Longa and rescued by a she-wolf, the twins lived to defeat that king and found their own city on the river's banks in 753 B.C. After killing his brother, Romulus became the first king of Rome, which is named for him. A line of Sabine, Latin and Etruscan (earlier Italian civilizations) kings followed in a non-hereditary succession.

The city of Rome originates as a village of the Latini in the 8th century BC. At first ruled by kings, the Roman Republic is established in 509 BC. During the 5th century BC, Rome gained regional dominance in Latium, and eventually the entire Italian peninsula by the 3rd century BC. The population of the city at this point is estimated at about 300,000 people.

With the Punic Wars, Rome gained dominance over the Mediterranean, displacing Hellenistic Greece as the dominant regional power for the next five centuries. After Julius Caesar's conquest of Gaul, followed by a period of civil war, the Roman Empire was established under Octavian in 27 BC. The city of Rome now surpassed a population of one million, likely the first city in history to reach this size (compared to world population of about 200–300 million at the time).

Rome was founded on April 21st 753 BC, and it has been a powerful city ever since. It is thought to have been founded by Romulus, great-nephew of Amulius and most notably known for the myth of Remus and Romulus, in which the two brothers overtake their great-uncle’s city and Romulus kills his brother, naming the city after himself (Rome).

**Etruscan heritage:**
- Rome is located on the edge of what was the Etruscan homeland.
- Certain institutions and customs came directly from the Etruscans to Rome.
- In fact, the name of Rome itself has of Etruscan origin, as are the names of its legendary founders, Romulus and Remus.
- There were strong Latin and Italic elements to Roman culture, and later Romans proudly celebrated these multiple origins.

- Before Rome developed, the etruscans inhabited the area near the Tiber River which would become Rome.

The Etruscans dominated the central part of the Italic peninsula during the late 8th through the 6th centuries BC. Their economy depended largely on trade, and their commercial contacts favored the Greek colonies in Southern Italy and Sicily. They imported Greek pottery in great quantity, and, in fact, much of the Greek pottery preserved to us from antiquity was found in Etruscan tombs. Etruscans were influential in transforming Rome into an urban center in the 6th century BC and Roman tradition identifies a family of Etruscans, the Tarquins, as the last dynastic rulers of Rome. Although their civilization was eventually eclipsed by Roman rule, their legacy lived on in Roman customs and culture; they built the foundation for which Rome would soon overtake and revolutionize.

The Romans traced their mythical beginnings to the Trojan War and to Romulus, who supposedly founded the city of Rome in 753 BC. It was the genius of the Romans to transform Greek ideals and the ways of their Etruscan forerunners into their own civilized and highly organized way of life. During the 4th and 3rd centuries BC they absorbed many parts of Italy, including the Etruscan homeland for which they built their civilization off of. The end.