

Rome Conquers the Eastern
Mediterranean (by the 1st century
B.C.)

After the Second Punic War, Rome conquered

- 1) **Macedonia**, including **Greece**, and
- 2) **Syria**, including most of **southwestern Asia**.
- 3) **Egypt**, recognizing Rome's might, submitted to Roman domination of the eastern Mediterranean; in 30 B.C. Rome annexed Egypt.

Rome was now master of the entire Mediterranean world.

The Mediterranean Conquests Affect Rome

1. Conquests Introduce Greek Culture.

The Romans enthusiastically accepted the advanced Hellenistic culture of the eastern Mediterranean. They

- a. shipped Greek treasures – books, statues and vases – to Rome,
- b. enslaved educated Greeks to serve as tutors, actors, writers and scientists, and
- c. imitated Greek culture extensively.

Roman arms conquered Greece, but Greek culture conquered Rome.

2. **Conquests bring wealth to some Romans.**

- a. **Nobles** cheaply acquired huge estates in the provinces and in Italy. They often seized public lands illegally.
- b. **Merchants and business** people prospered by filling army contracts, buying booty, supplying slaves and trading with the provinces.
- c. **Government officials** in the provinces amassed huge fortunes at the expense of their subject peoples.

These wealthy classes enjoyed lives of ease and luxury. Hard work, discipline and patriotism – early Roman virtues – disappeared.

3. Conquests Ruin Small Farmers and Workers.

Small farmers and city workers could not compete with **slave labor** employed by huge estates and in industry.

Unable to pay their debts, farmers abandoned their lands and migrated to the cities; city workers suffered serious unemployment.

To gain the support of landless farmers and unemployed workers, Roman politicians sponsored free government programs of **bread and circuses (food and entertainment)**.

4. Conquests Change the Character of the Army.

The small farmers had been the backbone of the Roman army. As he disappeared, the nature of the army changed.

Citizen-soldiers, loyal to the state, were replaced by **professional soldiers, fighting for pay and booty, loyal to their own commanders.**