This informational text discusses Rome's transition from a republic to an empire, and the 200 years of widespread peace that followed. This time of peace and success in the Roman Empire was known as the Pax Romana. As you read, take note of what was accomplished during the Pax Romana.

The term “Pax Romana,” which literally means “Roman peace,” refers to the time period from 27 B.C.E. to 180 C.E. in the Roman Empire.

This 200-year period saw unprecedented peace and economic prosperity throughout the Empire, which spanned from England in the north to Morocco in the south and Iraq in the east. During the Pax Romana, the Roman Empire reached its peak in terms of land area, and its population swelled to an estimated 70 million people.

Nevertheless, Rome's citizens were relatively secure, and the government generally maintained law, order, and stability. The Pax Romana began when Octavian became the leader of the Roman Empire.

Civil War and More

After the murder of Julius Caesar, a period of civil war erupted in Rome. Out of this turmoil emerged the Second Triumvirate, consisting of Lepidus, Antony, and Octavian, who was Julius Caesar's nephew. This new triumvirate ruled Rome for a decade, but as happened with the First Triumverate, differences among the leaders eventually emerged.

Octavian defeated Lepidus in battle, and then turned his armies against the more powerful Mark Antony. Antony had fallen in love with and married the spellbinding queen of Egypt, Cleopatra. At the Battle of Actium off the coast of Greece in 31 B.C., Octavian's navy defeated the navy of Antony and Cleopatra, who later both committed suicide.

1. **Prosperity** *(noun)*: the state of being successful, usually by making a lot of money
2. Gaius Octavius, also known as Augustus, was the founder of the Roman Empire and its first emperor.
3. Julius Caesar was a Roman politician and general who played a critical role in the demise of the Roman Republic and the rise of the Roman Empire.
4. the official political alliance that was adopted in 43 B.C., marking the end of the Roman Republic
5. the informal political alliance of the late Roman Republic between Julius Caesar, Pompey the Great, and Marcus Licinius Crassus
6. **Spellbinding** *(adjective)*: holding one's attention completely as though by magic
7. an important naval battle in the Final War of the Roman Republic
Octavian returned to Rome triumphant and gave himself the title of princeps or “first citizen.” Octavian was careful not to upset the Senate by declaring himself dictator as his uncle Julius Caesar had done. Even though Octavian ruled as a de facto\(^8\) dictator, he maintained the Senate and other institutions of the republican government.

In 27 B.C., the Senate bestowed\(^9\) the holy title of Augustus upon Octavian. Augustus, as he became known, ruled for 41 years, and the policies he enacted lay the groundwork for the peace and stability of the Pax Romana.

**All Roads Lead to Rome**

The 200 years of the Pax Romana saw many advances and accomplishments, particularly in engineering and the arts. To help maintain their sprawling empire, the Romans built an extensive system of roads. These durable roads facilitated the movement of troops and communication. The Romans built aqueducts\(^10\) to carry water overland to cities and farms.

Many of the advances in architecture and building relied upon the Romans’ discovery of concrete. Concrete made possible the creation of huge rounded arches and domes.

One of the most famous structures built during the Pax Romana, the Pantheon in Rome, has one of the largest freestanding domes in the world to this day.

During the Pax Romana, many of Rome’s finest writers (such as Horace, Virgil, Ovid, and Livy) produced literary and poetic masterpieces. Rome became the economic, political, and cultural capital of the entire Western world.

**Leading by Example**

After Augustus’s death in 14 A.D., other Roman emperors ruled with varying effectiveness. One emperor, Caligula, was mentally ill and regularly abused his power. He was so sensitive about his baldness that he prohibited anyone from looking down upon his head and shaved some people who had a full head of hair.

Caligula was a vicious sadist\(^11\) who took great pleasure in watching people being put to death. In fact, he often requested that killings be prolonged as much as possible. He was sexually depraved.\(^12\) He even invited his favorite horse to eat at formal state dinners.

Eventually, his bizarre and tyrannical\(^13\) behavior turned the Romans against him, and in 41 A.D., Caligula was assassinated by members of his own Praetorian guard.\(^14\)

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8. “De facto” means “from the fact,” and can be applied to anything that has the substance of something without its formal name.
9. **Bestow (verb):** to give something as a gift or honor
10. An “aqueduct” is a pipe or channel designed to transport water from a remote source.
11. **Sadist (noun):** someone who enjoys inflicting pain on others
12. **Depraved (adjective):** very evil
13. **Tyrannical (adjective):** exercising power in a cruel or arbitrary way
14. They were a force of bodyguards used by Roman Emperors. They also served as secret police and participated in wars.
Not all emperors were unfit to rule. In fact, a series of leaders known as the Five Good Emperors\(^\text{15}\) ruled in succession and presided over a prolonged period of peace and prosperity.

The last of these emperors, Marcus Aurelius, was the final emperor of the Pax Romana. His reign was followed by the disastrous reign of his brutal son Commodus (160-192 A.D.). By this time, the Empire was struggling to hold off attacking tribes on the frontiers.

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15. The Five Good Emperors included Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius.
Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement identifies the central idea of the text? [RI.2]
   A. The Pax Romana was a period of peace and success because power was given to the people.
   B. While the Roman Empire had several emperors who varied in success during the Pax Romana, it was ultimately a time of accomplishment.
   C. The Pax Romana was a time of peace in the Roman Empire that consisted of one successful emperor after another.
   D. Augustus was a successful Emperor because he adopted a similar leadership style to Julius Caesar.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
   A. “Nevertheless, Rome’s citizens were relatively secure, and the government generally maintained law, order, and stability. The Pax Romana began when Octavian became the leader of the Roman Empire.” (Paragraph 3)
   B. “After the murder of Julius Caesar, a period of civil war erupted in Rome. Out of this turmoil emerged the Second Triumvirate, consisting of Lepidus, Antony, and Octavian, who was Julius Caesar’s nephew.” (Paragraph 4)
   C. “Eventually, his bizarre and tyrannical behavior turned the Romans against him, and in 41 A.D., Caligula was assassinated by members of his own Praetorian guard.” (Paragraph 14)
   D. “Not all emperors were unfit to rule. In fact, a series of leaders known as the Five Good Emperors ruled in succession and presided over a prolonged period of peace and prosperity.” (Paragraph 15)

3. PART A: What is the meaning of “unprecedented” in paragraph 2? [RI.4]
   A. successful
   B. ordinary
   C. never done before
   D. unexpected

4. PART B: Which quote from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
   A. “prosperity throughout the Empire,” (Paragraph 2)
   B. “Roman Empire reached its peak in terms of land area, and its population swelled to an estimated 70 million people.” (Paragraph 2)
   C. “Rome’s citizens were relatively secure” (Paragraph 3)
   D. “the government generally maintained law, order, and stability.” (Paragraph 3)
5. How does the section “All Roads Lead to Rome” contribute to the development of ideas in the text (Paragraphs 8-11)?
Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. In your opinion, why was the political system in place during the Pax Romana successful, particularly at achieving peace? Were there any disadvantages to the system in place during this time?

2. In the context of the text, how do people create change? How was Augustus able to create the foundation of 200 years of peace during his reign? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.

3. In the context of the text, how does power corrupt? Which rulers discussed in this text were corrupted by their power? In what ways did they abuse their power? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.