THE Roman Empire covered a vast stretch of territory that included most of Europe as we know it today and a large part of the Fertile Crescent and North Africa.

**Notes:**

**Sources:** There is a rich collection of sources to study Roman history, like – texts, documents and material remains.

1. **Archaeological :**
   - a) Amphitheater,
   - b) Amphorae,
   - c) Colosseum,
   - d) Statues,
   - e) Aqueducts

2. **(Literary) Written :**
   - (A) Texts – Histories written by Contemporary Historians
   - (B) Documents

3. **Aerial Photographs**

Documentary sources include mainly inscriptions and *papyri*. Inscriptions were usually cut on stone, so a large number survive, in both Greek and Latin.

The ‘papyrus’ was a reed-like plant that grew along the banks of the Nile in Egypt and was processed to produce a writing material that was very widely used in everyday life.

Thousands of contracts, accounts, letters and official documents survive ‘on papyrus’ and have been published by scholars who are called ‘papyrologists’.

**Boundaries of Roman Empire**

- The ancient Roman Empire which was spread across the three continents namely – Europe, Asia and Africa.

- To the North, the boundaries of the empire were formed by two great rivers – the Rhine and the Danube.

- To the South, by the huge expanse of desert called the Sahara.

- To the East river Euphrates and to the West Atlantic Ocean.

- This vast stretch of territory was the Roman Empire. That is why Roman Empire is called an Empire across Three Continents.

- The Mediterranean Sea is called the heart of Rome’s empire.

**Division of Roman Empire:**

- The Roman Empire can broadly be divided into two phases, ‘early’ and ‘late’, divided by the third century as a sort of historical watershed between them.

- In other words, the whole period from the beginning of Roman Empire to the main part of the third century can be called the ‘early empire’, and the period from the third century to the end called the ‘late empire’ or ‘late antiquity’.

**THE EARLY EMPIRE**

**Administration:**

‘Content Developed/Prepared Absolutely From Home’
Many languages were spoken in the empire, but for the officially Latin and Greek were the most widely used.

The regime established by Augustus, the first emperor, in 27 BCE was called the ‘Principate’ (which means he was ‘leading citizen’, ‘Princeps’ in Latin, not the absolute ruler). He ruled till 14 BCE and brought to an end the chaotic condition prevailing in Roman Empire.

The Principate was advised by the Senate, which had existed in Rome for centuries. This body which had controlled Rome earlier, in the days when it was a Republic, and remained a body representing the aristocracy, that is, the wealthiest families of Roman and, later, Italian descent, mainly landowners.

Next to the emperor and the Senate, the other key institution of imperial rule was the army. Rome had professional conscripted army, which was forcibly recruited. Military service was compulsory for certain groups or categories of the population for a minimum of 25 years.

The emperor, the aristocracy and the army were the three main ‘players’ in the political history of the empire. The success of individual emperors depended on their control of the army, and when the armies were divided, the result usually was civil war. Except for one notorious year (69 CE), when four emperors mounted the throne in quick succession.

Emperors: a) Nero, b) Julius Caesar, c) Octavian Augustus, d) Tiberius, e) Trajan

Roman Empire made unprecedented growth in the field of literature during Augustan age. Augustus played a significant role in expansion of Roman Empire.

The ‘Augustan age’ is remembered for the peace it ushered in after decades of internal strife and centuries of military conquest.

Augustus appointed Tiberius, his adopted son, as his successor who ruled from 14-37 CE. The empire he was already so vast that further expansion was felt to be unnecessary.

Trajan was a famous Roman emperor who ruled from 98-117 CE. He made an immense contribution in expanding Roman Empire. The only major campaign of expansion in the early empire was Trajan’s fruitless occupation of territory across the Euphrates, in the years 113-17 CE abandoned by his successors.

Territories: The Roman Empire had two types of territories – dependent kingdoms and provincial territory. The Near East was full of dependent kingdoms but they disappeared and were swallowed up by Rome. These kingdoms were exceedingly wealthy, for example Herod’s kingdom yielded 5.4million denarii per year, equal to over 125,000 kg of gold per year.

A city in the Roman Empire was an urban centre with its own magistrates, city council and a ‘territory’ containing villages which were under its jurisdiction. Thus, one city could not be in the
territory of another city, but villages almost always were included.

**THE THIRD CENTURY CRISIS:**
The first two centuries were free from civil war, therefore, it was known as period of peace, prosperity and economic expansion. External warfare was also much less common in the first two centuries. But the third century brought in the first sign of internal conflict.

- From the 230s, the Roman Empire found itself fighting on several fronts simultaneously. An aggressive dynasty called the ‘Sasanians’, emerged in 225 which expanded rapidly just within 15 years in the direction of the Euphrates. Shapur I, the Iranian ruler, claimed he had crushed Roman army of 60,000 and even captured the eastern capital of Antioch.

- Simultaneously, a whole series of Germanic tribes or rather tribal confederacies began to move against the Rhine and Danube frontiers, and the entire period from 233 to 280 saw repeated invasions of a whole lone of provinces that stretched from the Black Sea to the Alps and Southern Germany. The Romans were forced to abandon much of the territory beyond the Danube.

- There was a rapid succession of emperors in this century (25 emperors in 47 years!) is an obvious symptom of the strains faced by the empire in this period.

**Very Short Answer Type Questions:**

1. Which were the two powerful empires that ruled over most of Europe?
   Ans: The two powerful empires that ruled over most of Europe were Rome and Iran.

2. Which sea separates the continents of Europe and Africa?
   Ans: Mediterranean Sea separates the continents of Europe and Africa.

3. Which rivers made boundaries of the Roman empire from the north side?
   Ans: The boundaries of the Roman empire were surrounded by two great rivers, the Rhine and the Danube.

4. What is another name of the third century in the Roman empire?
   Ans: The third century of the Roman empire was also called the ‘Early empire’.

5. Which languages were used for administrative purposes in the early empire of Roman civilization?
   Ans: For the purpose of administration, Latin and Greek were the most widely used languages.

6. Which languages were spoken in upper classes in east and west of the early empire of Rome?
   Ans: The upper classes of the east spoke and wrote in Greek, those of the west in Latin.

7. Who had established the regime in 27 BCE?
   Ans: The regime was established by Augustus in 27 BCE. He was the first emperor in 27 BCE.

8. In which languages was Roman history written?
   Ans: Most of the Roman history was written in Greek and Latin languages by people from a senatorial background.
9. What was the system to judge the behavior of Emperor in the Roman Empire?
Ans: The Emperors were judged by how they behaved towards the Senate.

10. How the Romans had formed their army structure?
Ans: The Romans had a paid professional army where soldiers had to put in a minimum of 25 years of service.

11. What do you mean by the ‘Augustan age’?
Ans: The ‘Augustan age’ meant the reign by Augustus from 27 BCE to 14 CE. His reign is remembered for peace.

12. What were the great urban centers that lined the shores of the Mediterranean?
Ans: The great urban centers that lined the shores of the Mediterranean were Carthage, Alexandria and Antioch.

13. How was the jurisdiction system structured in Italy in the Roman Empire?
Ans: In the Roman empire there was an urban center with its own magistrates, city council and a ‘territory’ containing villages which were under its jurisdiction.

14. Who were the main players in the political history of the empire?
Ans: The emperor, the aristocracy and the army were the three main players in the political history of the empire.

Short Answer Type Questions:
15. What does the term ‘Republic’ refer to in the history of the Roman empire?
Ans:
- The Republic was the name for a regime in which the power plays with the Senate, a body dominated by a small group of wealthy families who formed the ‘nobility’.
- The Republic represented the government of the nobility, exercised through the body called the Senate.
- The Republic lasted from 509 BCE to 27 BCE, when it was overthrown by Octavian, the adopted son and heir of Julius Caesar.

16. What was the typical form of marriage in the third century of Rome?
Ans:
- Males married in their late twenties or early thirties; while women were married in the late teens or early twenties.
- There was an age gap between husband and wife. As a result, there was inequality.
- Marriages were generally arranged, and there is no doubt that women were often subject to domination by their husbands.
- Divorce was relatively easy and needed no more than a notice of intent to dissolve the marriage by either husband or wife.

Gender, Literacy, Culture
- The system of nuclear family in the Roman society was one of its modern features.
- The family used to be patriarchal in nature. Slaves were included in the family.
- Marriages were generally arranged, and there is no doubt that women were often subject to
domination by their husbands.
- The literacy rate was casual and varied greatly between different parts of the empire.
- The cultural diversity of the empire was reflected in many ways.
- Numerous languages that were spoken in Roman Empire were – Aramaic, Coptic, Punic, Berber and Celtic. But many of these linguistic cultures were purely oral, at least until a script was invented for them.
- Among the above mentioned languages Armenian began to be written as late as the fifth century.

A. Sources of Entertainment
- Colosseum – Huge place where gladiators fought with beast. It could accommodate 60,000 people.
- Amphitheatre – It was used for military drill and for staging entertainments for the soldiers.
- Urban populations also enjoyed a much higher level of entertainment, for example, one calendar tells us that *spectacula* (shows) filled no less than 176 days of the year!