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The Influences of Ancient Rome On Modern Civilization

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. Many aspects of today's society have been affected by ancient Rome. Creation of law, development of democratic government practices, influences in language, literature, art, infrastructure, and city-planning are all areas where the influences of Roman ideas can be seen. Additionally, Roman influences have had considerable importance in the spread of Christianity.

One important area of influence was Roman law. The first law code in Roman history was the Law of the Twelve Tables, the precursor to the development of Roman law. Roman law developed the division between public law, in which the state is directly involved, such as with issues of treason and taxation, and private law, concerned with disputes between people, such as over contracts. This system was the basis for what is now known in the modern court system as Civil law. Romans had indictments and jury trials, similar to today's practices. Many defense techniques currently employed can also be traced back to Roman procedures. The idea of "innocent until proven guilty," which underlies the United States' criminal justice system, also came from ancient Roman ideas. Also, the purpose of written law as a way to protect individuals

from one another and from the power of the state is a Roman idea. The Roman process of making laws has also had a deep influence on modern democratic political systems. During the era of the Roman Republic, lawmaking was a bicameral activity. Legislation was first passed by the committee. It was then approved by the representatives of the upper class, or the senate, and issued in the name of the senate and the people of Rome. Many countries, including the United States, have since then used the republican Rome as a model for their own governments, requiring that all laws go through two legislative bodies. It is a pattern continued in almost every democratic constitution.

Rome was responsible for the spread of the Latin Language, which has formed the basis for Western languages, such as English. In fact, educators in our society teach Latin as a way of helping students better understand the English language. Latin roots form the foundation of a good majority of common words. Literature is another area where Roman influence is notable. Roman authors followed the famous Greek authors, often developing and building upon Greek writing. Many writers have been influenced by the Romans including Shakespeare, Robert Graves, Milton, Dante, and James Joyce. Roman Art has also influenced today's society. In particular, use of pictures of Emperors on coins and sculptures was an inherently Roman idea. Elements of modern city planning can be traced to Roman concepts. The Romans engaged in extensive city-building activities as they maintained their empire. Roman military and colonial towns were laid out in a variation of highly planned grid. Developments in the architecture of fortification, relating to compact space and fast maneuverability, and the discovery of perspective, focusing the description on the eye of the viewer, led to radial focus in city plans and the development of town plans. Many European cities, like London and Paris , sprang from

these Roman origins. Similarly, in Washington DC , building designs were derived from Roman styles. Roman theaters have also had a considerable influence on the development of theaters in modern society.

Another significant area of Roman influence is in religion. The Roman Empire contributed to the spread of Christianity. In particular, it played a role in what would become Eastern and Western Christians, known today as Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholics. When the Bishop of Rome took power after Constantinople became the capital of the empire, ideological differences became manifest between the East and West. Eastern Christians looked more readily to Constantinople , its Emperor and its bishop. Meanwhile, Western Europeans tended to look to the missionaries sent by Rome and to the Holy Father of Rome for faith and guidance. Ultimately, a split occurred between the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. Life in both these churches were influenced by the Roman Empire, though in different ways. In the East, court rituals were conducted lavishly, whereas in the West, services tended to be more simple and sober.

Rome was one of the greatest empires to ever be in existence and it is no wonder that a lot of things today were influenced by Ancient Rome. The legacy of Rome has clearly left lasting impacts on numerous aspects of modern society. Many things in everyday life can be traced to Roman origins, such as components of language, architecture, art, and Western government. In addition to this, the spread of religion, specifically Christianity, was also something that they influenced in modern society. Rome has roots in almost everything we see or touch on a daily basis.

Works Cited

"Roman Influence on Our Life Today." *Mr. Masser's Wiki*. Masser-English, n.d. Web. 12 May 2015.