**Sulla**

**Sulla’s First March on Rome in 88BC**

Sulla became Consul in 88BC. This was as a result of his having been a very successful general in the Social War (91-89 BC).

Sulla was also given a Command against Mithridates in the east as part of his reward. He began to raise an army in 88BC ready to head off to defeat Mithridates in 87BC. Mithridates was the King of Pontus (we call this place Turkey today) and he had been busy extending his territory while Rome was busy fighting the Italian Allies in the Social War. Mithridates had executed Roman tax collectors and threatened Roman territory in the area. He was dangerous, and needed to be stopped. Sulla had proven himself in the Social War and deserved this Command.

Marius was in his 70’s by now and had not been involved in any military activities for over a decade. He had semi-retired. However, he decided that he needed to return to action in 88BC and tried to take the Command against Mithridates from Sulla with the help of the Tribune Sulpicius. Marius was apparently quite bitter and angry because he had not been asked to fight for Rome during the Social War, so he was very aggressive in his approach to the whole situation.

**SUMMARISE BELOW:**

Sulpicius and Marius worked together to get what they wanted:

* **Sulpicius wanted** to

1. help all the Italian Allies who had needed to be registered as Roman citizens after the Social War
2. ban anyone with serious debt from the Senate.

Both things made him very unpopular with the people (who were not happy about the new citizens) and with the many Senators who were in debt after the war. In response, Sulpicius surrounded himself with a group of 300 bodyguards he called his ‘Anti-Senate’. They were expert swordsmen and their presence on the streets of Rome increased tension and led to quite a lot of violence in the streets.

* **Marius wanted** the Command against Mithridates. However, he was too old and had not had any recent military experience. He was not entitled to lead this campaign against Mithridates. That did not stop him, and he was very determined to take over the army that Sulla was recruiting and training to go to the East. Sulpicius took a bill to the assembly changing over the command against Mithridates to Marius.

The way Sulpicius took his laws to the Roman people in the assembly was unusual – he asked them to vote on ‘en bloc’ (this means he put all the laws together in a group and get all the laws passed at the same time – this is illegal).

Sulla and his co-Consul Rufus tried to stop Sulpicius. To do this they suspended all public business – they shut down the government completely, thinking that this would stop the laws going through.

However, violence and rioting broke out in the streets. Marius and Sulpicius and their supporters created havoc in an attempt to get their laws (bills) passed. The violence threatened Sulla and Rufus (so much in fact that Sulla was forced to hide in Marius’ house). Sulla fled and joined up with his army outside the city. He asked them to help him restore order in the city. The army marched on Rome, and treated Rome like an enemy city. They burned, raided, raped and pillaged. By the time they had finished Marius had left the country – he escaped to North Africa where his army veterans were settled. Sulpicius was not so lucky – Sulla’s men caught him and executed him. Marius was declared a Public Enemy. He had a price on his head and was a wanted man.

Sulla made some immediate changes:

1. He changed the way Tribunes could function, he prevented them from being able to present any bills to the people in the Assembly, which meant they could no longer pass laws. Sulla wanted to stop anyone else behaving like Sulpicius.
2. He repealed (cancelled) all of Sulpicius’ laws.
3. He looked for a good candidate for the consulship of 87BC, someone he could trust. Cinna was elected. Unfortunately for Sulla (and Rome), Cinna was not trustworthy at all.

**ACTIVITY**: Create a flow chart for the events that led up to Sulla’s March on Rome in 88BC and the march on Rome in 88BC. HIGHLIGHT all the changes that have occurred in 2 different colours - ONE colour for military change, ONE colour for political change.