

Chapter 10: Rome: From City-State to Empire: 10-3c Peace and Prosperity

Book Title: World Civilizations

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10-3c Peace and Prosperity

The **Pax Romana** ((POX roh-MAH-nah) *The Roman peace*; the era of Roman control over the Mediterranean basin and much of Europe between c. 31 B.C.E. and 180 C.E. or later.) (POX roh-MAH-nah), the Roman peace from 31 B.C.E. to 180 C.E., was the greatest of Augustus's achievements. For nearly two and a half centuries the Western world—from Syria to Spain and from Bristol to Belgrade—was unified and generally peaceful under a single central authority enjoined by common law. This record has not been approached since. With Augustus's reign Rome entered six generations of peace and prosperity. Literature and the arts flourished, supported by generous subsidies from the state treasury and commissions from a new class of wealthy men who wished to celebrate their achievements. Augustus set the tone by encouraging the arts in public spaces and buildings of all sorts and by providing personal financial support for many of the outstanding literary figures of his time.

How did the Pax Romana benefit people throughout the far-flung Roman Empire? It allowed, for example, Syrian merchants to move their textile goods safely from Damascus to Alexandria. From there, Egyptians would transport the goods through a peaceable sea to Gibraltar, and from there the goods would go on to Cornwall in Britain, where they would be exchanged for tin ore, which would then be brought back to a bronze foundry in Damascus. Under the Pax Romana, people throughout the empire lived under a common concept of peaceful order, expressed and upheld through laws that were as valid in London as in Vienna or Barcelona (all cities founded by the Romans). Governors (proconsuls) appointed in Rome supervised the provinces, but they were allowed considerable freedom of action in local affairs, while being protected by Roman garrisons.

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