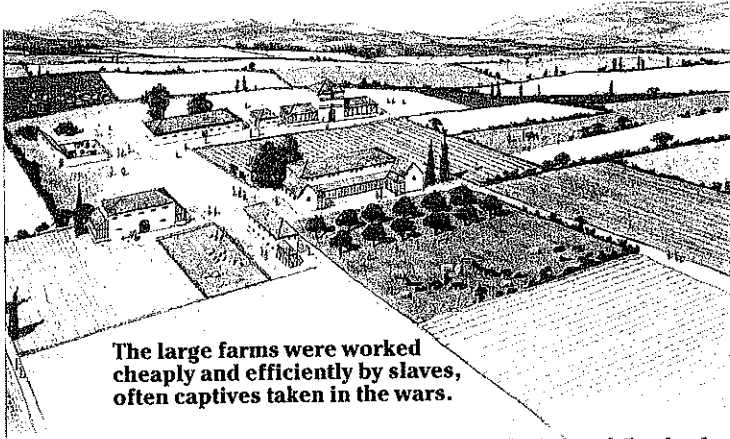


The end of the Roman republic

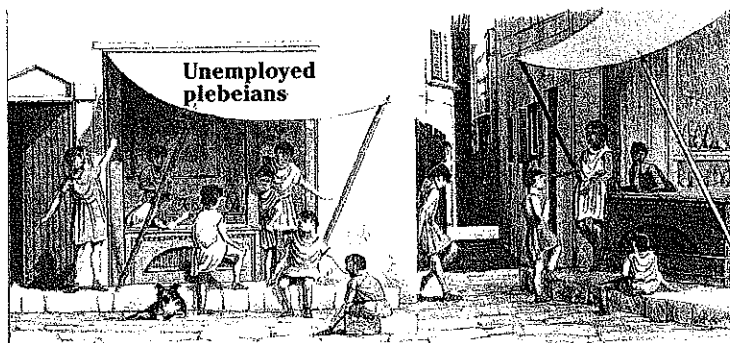
The expansion of Roman territories abroad led to problems in Rome itself, and placed a strain on the government. There were constant struggles for power between the Senate, the *equites*,† and the plebeians†. A period of dictatorships and civil wars finally caused the downfall of the republic†.

During the wars with Carthage, many small farms were ruined by neglect or military devastation. After the wars few farmers could afford to repair the damage. Gradually their land, and much public land as well, was taken over by rich landowners who created new, large farms.



The large farms were worked cheaply and efficiently by slaves, often captives taken in the wars.

Most of the people who had lost their land flocked to the cities, where they remained unemployed. Many others lived in poverty in rural areas. As a result, Rome was left short of soldiers, as only property owners could serve in the army.



In 133BC a tribune†, Tiberius Gracchus, proposed that public land that had been illegally seized by rich landowners should be given to the landless poor. The Popular Assembly† passed a law, and a committee was set up to redistribute the land. But the Senate disagreed, because many senators were landowners who wanted to keep their farms. Tiberius was killed in a riot that was provoked by the Senate. In 123BC his brother Gaius was elected tribune. Before he too was murdered, he passed radical laws that challenged the Senate's power.

The rise of dictators

For the next 60 or 70 years there was constant political unrest. Some senators, called *optimates*, wanted to maintain the Senate's firm control. Others, called *populares*, were keen to spread the control more widely. They asked the tribunes, *equites* and plebeians for support, but often only because they wanted more personal power.

In 107BC Marius, a military commander, was elected consul†. He was given command of an army fighting in Africa and soon won the war. He was made consul each year from 105BC to 100BC, breaking the rule that consuls had to be replaced annually. The reason given was that he was needed to prevent tribes invading Italy from Gaul.



This coin, showing Marius in a chariot, was issued to celebrate a military victory.

Marius succeeded in his task, but to do so he had to reorganize the army (see page 15). He improved weapons and training, and allowed all citizens† to become soldiers whether or not they owned land. Thousands of unemployed men volunteered. However, the state made no provision for soldiers without property. This meant that when they retired they depended on their generals to obtain money or land for them from the Senate. They were therefore more loyal to the individual generals than to the state.



Marius and his troops

In 88BC Sulla, Marius's former lieutenant, became consul and took command of the army against Mithridates, the king of Asia Minor. When a tribune passed a resolution giving command to Marius, Sulla led his army on Rome. He took control of the city and drove Marius into exile.



Coin showing head of Sulla

As soon as Sulla had been called away from Rome once more, Marius raised an army and took control of the city. After executing hundreds of his political rivals he died in 86BC. Sulla returned in 84BC, destroyed his enemies, and ruled as dictator from 82 to 80BC. He gave supreme power back to the Senate, depriving *equites* and tribunes of most of their influence. He then retired, and died in 78BC.

However, Sulla's arrangements were quickly undermined by a general called Pompey. He won victories in Spain in 71BC, and helped the senator Crassus to crush a slave rebellion led by a slave called Spartacus. In 70BC, Pompey and Crassus demanded to be made consuls, threatening to use military force if they were refused. Once in office they swept away Sulla's legislation, and gave power back to the tribunes.



Bust of Pompey

Pompey and Caesar

In 60BC Pompey, Crassus and a rising politician, Julius Caesar, formed an alliance. Caesar became consul in 59BC. After his year in office he served as a proconsul† in Gaul for ten years. He extended Roman territory throughout Spain and Gaul, and invaded Britain in 55BC.

A brilliant general, he became very popular with the army and the people.

Bust of Caesar



In 53BC Crassus died in battle, and a year later the Senate House

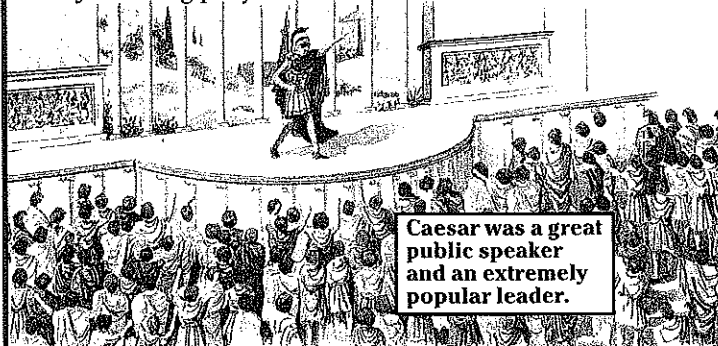
was burned down in a riot. To restore order, the Senate persuaded Pompey to become consul by himself. Fearing that Caesar would return to Rome and take their power away, the *optimates* turned Caesar and Pompey against each other. They forced Caesar into civil war, relying on Pompey to win. Caesar led his army on Rome in 49BC, and seized power. He defeated the armies of Pompey and the Senate in Spain (49BC and 45BC), Greece (48BC) and Africa (46BC).

Caesar arriving in Rome

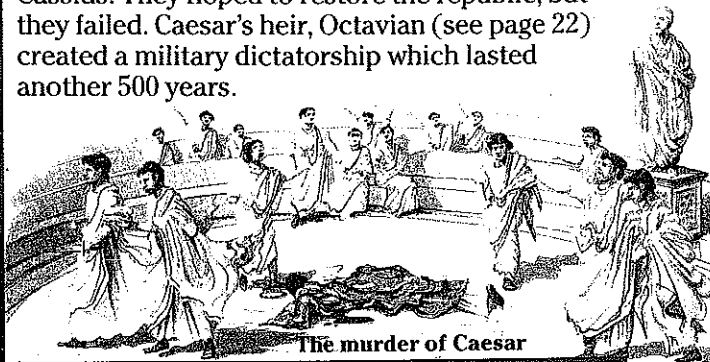


Caesar's rule

Once in power, Caesar passed laws to relieve hardship, reduce debts and improve the administration. His rule brought a brief period of political stability, during which he also began many building projects in Rome and elsewhere.



Caesar was made dictator for life, and became the most powerful ruler Rome had ever known. Although his reforms were popular, he acted as if he were king, taking decisions without consulting the Senate. This worried many people, who believed his power threatened the republic. On 15th March 44BC Caesar was murdered by a group of conspirators led by the senators Brutus and Cassius. They hoped to restore the republic, but they failed. Caesar's heir, Octavian (see page 22) created a military dictatorship which lasted another 500 years.



The murder of Caesar

Key dates

- 133BC Land reforms of Tiberius Gracchus.
- 123BC Gaius Gracchus elected tribune.
- 107BC Marius first elected consul.
- 88BC Sulla becomes consul, then marches on Rome.
- 86BC Marius dies.
- 82-80BC Sulla rules Rome as dictator.
- 78BC Sulla dies.
- 70BC Pompey and Crassus elected consuls.
- 60BC Pompey, Crassus and Caesar form an alliance.
- 59BC Caesar becomes consul.
- 53BC Crassus dies.
- 52BC Pompey becomes consul.
- 48BC Pompey defeated by Caesar in Greece.
- 44BC Caesar murdered by Brutus and Cassius.

From republic to Empire

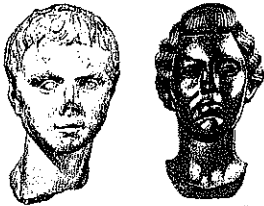
After Caesar's death (see page 13) Brutus† and Cassius fled from Rome, realizing they could not restore the republic†. Instead, one of the consuls†, Mark Antony, tried to take Caesar's place.

However many senators disliked him. One of them, Cicero†, made speeches opposing Antony and persuaded the Senate to declare him an outlaw. Antony was dismissed and replaced by another consul.



Coin with head of Antony

In the meantime, Caesar's adopted son, Octavian, formed an army made up of men who had formerly fought for Caesar. He gave control of



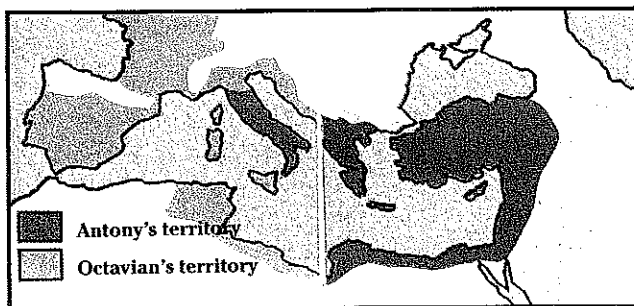
Busts of Octavian and his wife Livia†

these troops to the Senate, and they defeated Antony at Mutina in northern Italy. Antony fled to Gaul. The consuls were killed in battle, leaving Octavian as the most likely person to take command.

Octavian wanted revenge for Caesar's death. The Senate refused to support him, so he made a pact with Antony and his ally, Lepidus. The three men led an army on Rome, forcing the Senate to give them official powers for five years. Thousands of people, including Cicero, were killed by Octavian's troops. In 42BC Octavian and Antony defeated Brutus and Cassius at Philippi in Macedonia.



Lepidus soon retired, leaving Octavian and Antony in command. They split Rome's territory into two. Antony took the eastern part and Octavian the west, as shown on this map.



Antony lived in Egypt for ten years with his lover Cleopatra, the Egyptian queen. He seemed to be building a private empire for himself. Meanwhile Octavian defeated his enemies in western Europe, and became accepted by the Senate and the Roman people. But relations between him and Antony deteriorated. War broke out, and in 31BC he defeated Antony in a sea battle at Actium.

This gem depicts Octavian as Neptune, the god of the sea. It was carved to celebrate his victory over Mark Antony at the Battle of Actium.



Octavian takes power

Octavian claimed Egypt for himself, and became the sole leader of the Roman world. In 27BC he offered to return control of the state to the Senate and the people. However he knew that the Senate could not accept his offer because it depended on him to maintain order. The Senate gave Octavian command of three provinces: Syria, Spain and Gaul. These areas contained most of the army, so he retained military power while appearing to want to give it up for the sake of the republic†.

As a result Octavian became the most powerful Roman of all. He was given a new name, Augustus ('revered one'), and has been known by this title ever since. He was the first Roman emperor, though he himself did not use this title. The period of Roman history from his rule onwards is known as the Empire, to distinguish it from the republic before it.



This cameo† shows the head of Augustus.

Key dates

44BC Death of Caesar.

43BC Octavian, Antony and Lepidus form an alliance and seize power in Rome.

c.33BC Growing hostility between Octavian and Antony.

31BC Octavian defeats Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium.

30BC Antony and Cleopatra commit suicide. Octavian seizes Egypt and becomes sole leader of the Roman world.

27BC Octavian becomes emperor and takes the name Augustus.

The rule of Augustus, 27BC-AD14

With his new power, Augustus began looking for solutions to his various political problems. He realized that further civil wars would only weaken the empire more and leave it open to threat from outside. So he tried to make his own position safe in order to maintain a firm leadership.

Knowing that too many organized troops could be turned against him, Augustus cut the number of legions† from 60 to 28. He used the vast wealth of Egypt to pay off retired soldiers, who were settled in colonies all over Italy.



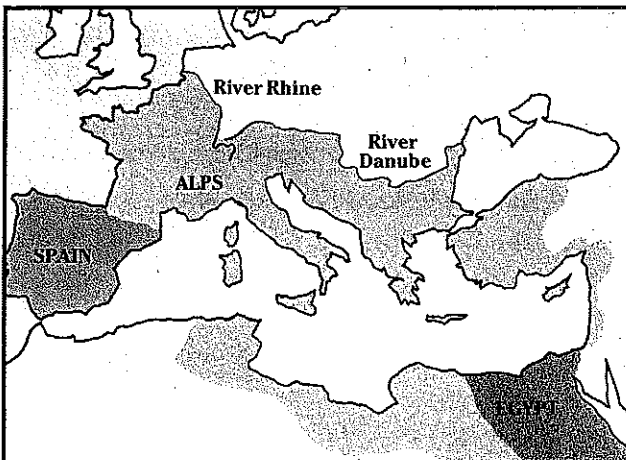
Retired soldier

To protect himself, Augustus formed a division of soldiers called the Praetorian Guard. These highly paid troops were intended to guard the Emperor, and were stationed in Rome and throughout Italy.

Under Augustus, rebellious parts of Spain and the Alps were brought under control. The empire was expanded along the Rhine and Danube rivers. The map below shows the extent of the empire at the end of Augustus's rule.



Praetorian guardsmen



Augustus ruled cleverly and successfully. He formed a system of government in which the Senate and the emperor worked together. This brought peace after years of civil war, and turned a troubled republic into a stable and prosperous empire. When he died in AD14, few people could remember a republican government that had been worth preserving, so the idea of restoring a republic slowly died out.

Tiberius AD14-37

Augustus had no son of his own, and wanted one of his grandsons or his nephew to take his place, but they all died young. Eventually he had to name his step-son Tiberius as his successor. The two men ruled together for the last ten years of Augustus's reign. Augustus disliked him, but Tiberius was a fine soldier and an experienced administrator.



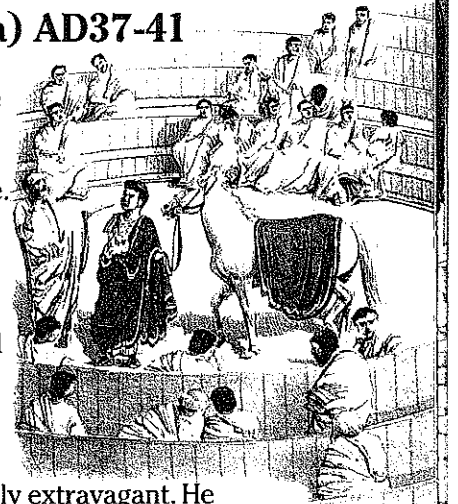
Statue of Tiberius

At first Tiberius ruled well. He took Augustus's advice and did not try to expand the empire. But he was terrified of being assassinated. At first there was no evidence of a plot against him, but Sejanus, the commander of the Praetorian Guard, took advantage of his fears.

In AD26 Sejanus persuaded Tiberius to move to the island of Capri for his own safety. For the rest of his rule, the Senate had to consult him by letter before it could make decisions. In AD31 Tiberius found out that Sejanus was planning to depose him. He revealed this to the Senate and Sejanus and his family were executed. This left Tiberius mentally disturbed. He passed a treason law and prosecuted over 100 leading figures. 65 of these were executed or committed suicide.

Gaius (Caligula) AD37-41

Gaius is often known as Caligula, a nickname he was given as a child because of the soldier's boots (*caligae*) he wore. After a few months in power he had an illness which appears to have left him deranged. He claimed to be a god and tried to have his horse elected consul. He married his sister and later murdered her.



Caligula was extremely extravagant. He financed his spending by forcing rich men to bequeath him their wealth. This, and his cruelty, made him unpopular and he was murdered by a group of officers from the Praetorian Guard.



The early Empire

Claudius AD41-54

Claudius was Tiberius's nephew. A childhood disease had left him crippled, frail and nervous. His family and the Senate regarded him as stupid. Because of this everyone thought that he was not suitable to be emperor. After Gaius's murder, however, the Praetorian Guard† found Claudius hiding in the imperial palace. They dragged him off, hailing him as the new emperor, while the Senate was discussing restoring the republic. The senators always resented Claudius because he had been appointed against their will.



Coin with head of Claudius

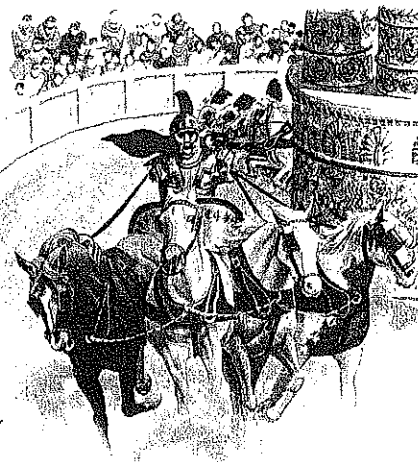


Claudius was in fact highly intelligent and wise. He devoted his rule to improving the civil service and extending the empire. He annexed Mauretania and Thrace, and ordered the invasion of Britain. He married four times. His last wife was his niece, Agrippina†. It is thought that she poisoned him so that Nero, her son by a previous marriage, could become emperor.

Nero AD54-68

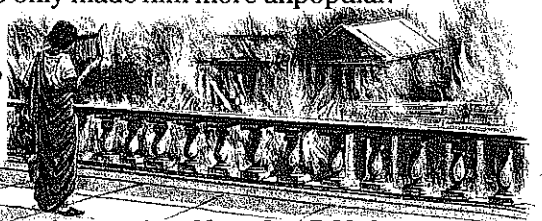
Nero was only 16 when he became emperor. For the first years of his rule he was guided by tutors (including the writer Seneca†) and ruled sensibly. However, he soon became tyrannical. In AD59 he had his mother, his wife and Claudius's son Britannicus murdered, as well as several advisors. Soon, anyone who opposed him was killed.

Nero liked taking part in theatrical shows, races and games. Many Romans thought his behaviour was very undignified.



In AD64 a fire devastated Rome. It was rumoured that Nero had started it so that he could build a new, more beautiful city in its place. To avert unpopularity, Nero blamed the Christians† for the fire, and had many of them burned or thrown to the beasts. This only made him more unpopular.

According to the Roman historian Suetonius†, Nero sang and played the lyre while Rome burned.



There were many plots against Nero. In AD68 the army rebelled against him and various commanders tried to seize power. Nero was eventually forced to leave Rome, and he committed suicide. He was the last emperor of Augustus's dynasty.

AD69: the year of the four emperors

After Nero's death, an army commander called Galba took power, helped by the Praetorian Guard. But he did not pay the guardsmen enough to win their loyalty. They soon turned against him, had him murdered, and replaced him with Otho, the governor of a province in Spain. Hearing this, the legions on the Rhine declared their own general, Vitellius, emperor. They marched on Rome and defeated Otho at Cremona. Then legions on the Danube decided their own general, Vespasian, should become emperor. He marched on Rome and killed Vitellius and his followers.

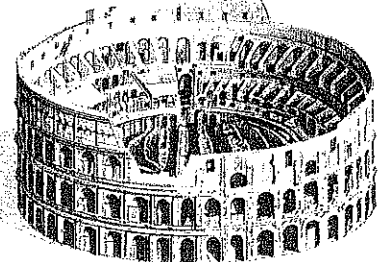


Coin with head of Vespasian

Vespasian (AD69-79) and the Flavian Dynasty

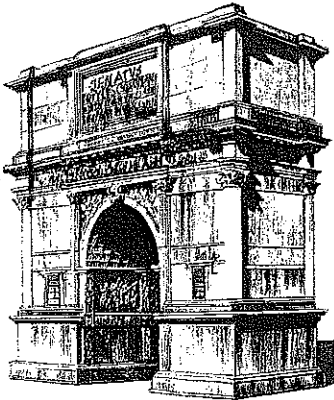
Vespasian knew there would be civil war if he did not establish good relations with the Senate. He achieved this, and the Senate granted him imperial power. In addition, he had two adult sons to take over after his death, so he had a strong line of succession. Vespasian ruled well and gave citizenship† to many people in the provinces†. His full name was Titus Flavius Vespasianus, and he and his descendants are known as the Flavian Dynasty.

Vespasian ordered the building of the Colosseum in Rome. This is how it looks today.



Titus AD79-81

Titus was Vespasian's son. He is remembered for his capture of Jerusalem (see page 65) in AD70. This was commemorated by an arch in the *forum* at Rome. Titus became emperor in AD79.



The arch of Titus

Domitian AD81-96



Bust of Domitian

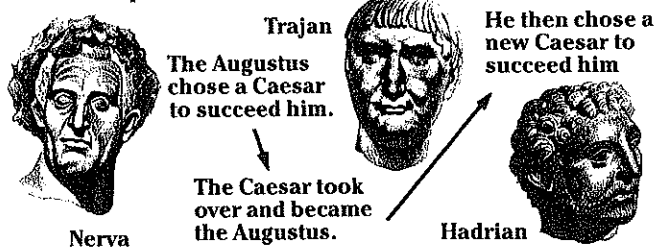
Domitian, Titus's younger brother, was an efficient but arrogant emperor. He despised the Senate and never consulted it. He became unpopular and there were frequent plots against him. His rule became tyrannical, with frequent treason trials and executions. He was assassinated in AD96.

This was probably the last point at which the Romans could have restored a republican government. But the Senate, knowing that Rome needed a strong leader, chose a lawyer called Nerva to replace Domitian. Nerva was the first of a group of rulers known as the Five Good Emperors.

Nerva AD96-98

Nerva ruled successfully and diplomatically. When the Praetorian Guard was indignant at having no say in choosing the emperor, Nerva eased the situation by adopting a famous soldier called Trajan as his son, partner and successor. This started a new method of imperial succession. After Nerva each emperor, who took the title Augustus, carefully chose a younger colleague called the Caesar as his heir. When the Augustus died, the Caesar took his position and title, and then chose his own Caesar.

The imperial succession:



Nerva treated the Senate with great respect, and this trend was followed by the next four emperors. Gradually senators were chosen from all over the empire, and many non-Italians became senior officials. Nerva also arranged low-interest loans for farmers. The interest from these was used to support orphans and poor children.

Trajan AD98-117

Under Trajan the empire reached its largest extent (see pages 26-27) after his conquest of large areas of the Middle East. His campaigns in Dacia (modern Romania) are recorded in a series of sculptures on the pillar in Rome known as Trajan's Column.

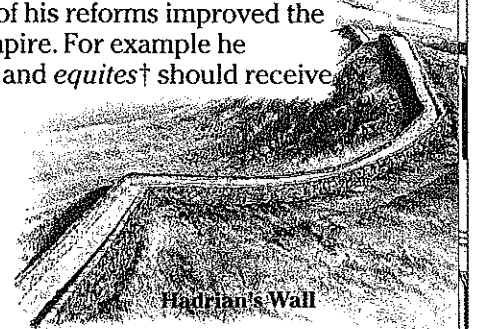
Trajan's column



Hadrian AD117-138

Hadrian spent more than half his rule touring the provinces. After deciding that the empire was too large he gave up the new territories in the East (except Dacia). Many of his reforms improved the organization of the empire. For example he decreed that senators and *equites*† should receive special training in state administration.

Hadrian ordered the building of fortified barriers to protect the empire. These were put up in Britain (see pages 28-29) and in Germany.



Hadrian's Wall

Antoninus Pius AD138-161

While Antoninus Pius was in power, Rome was seen to be at the height of its wealth and power. But this prosperity aroused the envy of the barbarians†, and of the poor, who were neglected.

Marcus Aurelius AD161-180

Marcus Aurelius spent most of his rule at the frontiers, trying to keep barbarians out. To do this he had to enlarge the army and raise taxes to cover the cost. During his rule a plague killed thousands of people. For the first time people began to doubt that Rome was all-powerful.



This statue of Marcus Aurelius once stood on the Capitoline Hill.

Key dates: the first emperors

27BC-AD14 Augustus	AD69-79 Vespasian
AD14-37 Tiberius	AD79-81 Titus
AD37-41 Gaius (Caligula)	AD81-96 Domitian
AD41-54 Claudius	AD96-98 Nerva
AD54-68 Nero	AD98-117 Trajan
AD64 Great fire of Rome	AD117-138 Hadrian
AD69 Year of the four emperors	AD138-161 Antoninus Pius
	AD161-180 Marcus Aurelius