

PUNIC WARS

274 TO 146 B.C.

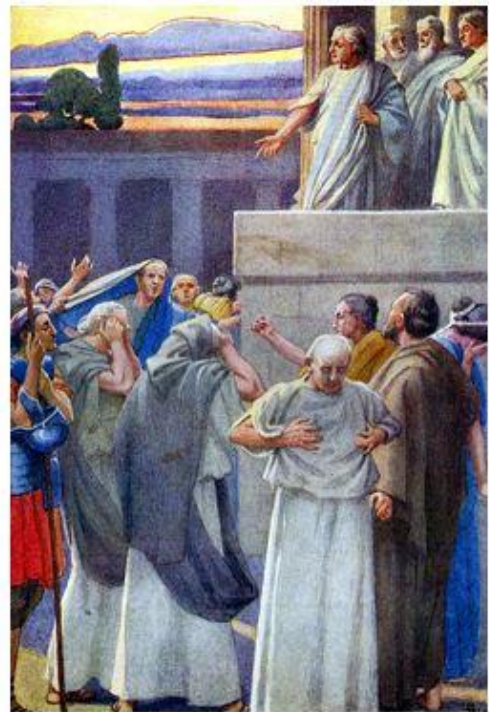
FIRST PUNIC WAR TO DESTRUCTION OF CARTHAGE

ERA SUMMARY – PUNIC WARS

The period of the Punic and Macedonian Wars was a critical one in Rome's history. At the dawn of the [Punic Wars](#), in 264 B.C., Rome was master of Italy, but controlled no colonies or provinces outside of the Peninsula. She had neither a navy nor a merchant based economy. One hundred and twenty years later, she had entirely subdued both the Carthaginian empire in the west and the Macedonian empire in the east. She had provinces and allies throughout the Mediterranean and was the undisputed master of the seas. Although it took another century to expand and consolidate her power, by the end of the Punic Wars Rome had laid the foundation of an empire.

The Punic Wars, which raged between the city of Carthage and Rome for over a century, were so named because the Carthaginians were of the Phoenician (or Punic) race. There were three Punic Wars, but the second was by far the most critical. The first Punic War lasted 24 years, involved many skirmishes, and was won primarily by perseverance. Rome gained a small amount of Carthaginian territory but never achieved a decisive victory. Carthage capitulated as much because of internal troubles as due to pressure from Rome. However, this war did much to establish Rome as a naval power. The best known Roman hero of the first Punic War was [Regulus](#), and the best known Carthaginian heroes were [Xanthippus](#) and [Hamilcar](#).

The second Punic War was a great catastrophe for Rome and all of Italy. The early part of the war was fought entirely on Italian soil at great cost to Rome and its allies. The *Battle of Cannae* was the worst loss in Roman history, yet it was only one of several disastrous defeats inflicted on Rome by its implacable Carthaginian foes. Eventually the tide of war turned when Rome attacked Carthaginian strongholds in Spain and Africa. Again, perseverance through great difficulties changed the fortunes of Rome from great peril to ultimate victory. This time Rome continued the fight until it won a decisive victory against Carthage and eliminated its threat as a military power. The outstanding character of the Second Punic War was undoubtedly the



"WE ARE BEATEN, O ROMANS, IN A GREAT BATTLE, OUR ARMY IS DESTROYED."

Carthaginian [Hannibal](#), who is universally acknowledged as one of history's greatest generals. Some of the Roman generals who opposed him over the years included [Cornelius Scipio](#), [Fabius Cunctator](#), [Aemilius Paulus](#), [Varro](#), and [Marcellus](#), but it was [Scipio Africanus](#), who drove Hannibal out of Italy, defeated him on Carthaginian soil, and brought the bloody war to a final close.

The third Punic War was fought without serious provocation, for the purpose of destroying Carthage altogether. Having eliminated Carthage as a military threat, Rome desired to exterminate it, partly out of vengeance, partly out of envy from its continuing commercial success, and partly out of contempt for its culture (which did involve some heinous elements, such as human sacrifice.)

The [Roman Macedonian Wars](#) in the east were not as protracted or ruinous as the Punic Wars, but resulted in territory and plunder for the Romans. The Romans valued many elements of Greek civilization, unlike the Carthaginian civilization, which they hated. Therefore, they preserved or imitated much of Greek culture rather than destroying it. Captured Greeks were the most valuable of all slaves and were frequently employed as teachers, tutors, or household servants rather than laborers.

The first Roman campaign against Macedonia was fought during the second Punic War, after king Philip V of Macedonia took advantage of the disruptions in Italy to seize some contested territory on the North Adriatic. Two subsequent campaigns were fought over the next thirty years and resulted in much plunder, which helped re-invigorate Rome after its losses in the second Punic War. The *Battle of Pydna* in 168 B.C. destroyed the power of the Macedonian kingdom in Greece and the subsequent destruction of Corinth, following a rebellion of some Greek city states, ushered in the Greco-Roman era.

The famous characters of these ages were almost invariably military leaders. [Polybius](#), a Greek writer who wrote the histories of the Punic Wars, and [Cato \(the censor\)](#), who ardently resisted the extravagance and luxury that went along with the increasing influence of Greek culture in Rome, are two of the only characters of this age who are famous mainly for their cultural contributions, rather than their martial feats.

CHARACTERS – PUNIC WARS

FIRST PUNIC WAR

- Regulus** 300–250 BC Captured by Carthage in first Punic war; urged Rome keep fighting at cost of his life.
- Xanthippus** ~ 255 BC Spartan mercenary general in first Punic War; captured Regulus, led Carthage to victories.
- Hamilcar** d. 229 BC Carthage's most able general in first Punic War; father of Hannibal.

SECOND PUNIC WAR

- Hannibal** 247–182 BC Carthaginian general who invaded and laid waste to Italy for sixteen years.
- Fabius Cunctator** 250–203 BC Elected dictator to resist Hannibal; counseled delay, not direct assault.
- Cornelius Scipio** d. 211 BC Tried to intercept Hannibal in Gaul, but was defeated at Ticino River and Trebbia.
- Aemilius Paulus** d. 216 BC Consul at the *Battle of Cannae*; opposed the confrontation, but died on battlefield.
- Varro** ~ 216 BC Led Rome to disastrous defeat at Cannae. Survived and tried to rally the troops.
- Marcellus** 268–208 BC Besieged Syracuse during the second Punic War, but the ingenious war weapons of Archimedes frustrated the Romans.
- Hasdrubal Barca** d. 207 BC Fought against Scipio in Spain; killed after he crossed the Alps to aid Hannibal.
- Masinissa** 238–148 BC King of Numidia, allied with Rome against Carthage; fought at Zama.
- Scipio Africanus** 234–149 BC Roman hero of second Punic War. Led armies in Spain and Africa. Defeated Hannibal at Zama.

THIRD PUNIC WAR

- Cato (the censor)** 234–149 BC Roman censor, urged destruction of Carthage before third Punic War.
- Scipio the Younger** 185–129 BC Led the siege of Carthage during the third Punic War.
- Polybius** 203–120 BC Taken as Greek hostage during Macedonian wars; historian of Punic Wars.

MACEDONIA WARS

- Flamininus** 230–175 BC Led Rome against Philip V in second Macedonian War.
- Aemilius Paulus** 229–160 BC Led Rome against Macedonia at the *Battle of Pydna* and was victorious.

TIMELINE – PUNIC WARS

- 264-242** [First Punic War](#)
- 264** Rome intervenes in a land war against Carthage in Sicily..
 - 260** Roman naval victory at *Battle of Mylae*.
 - 256** Roman victory at ***Battle of Ecnomus***—the largest naval battle of the age.
 - 253** Defeat and capture of [Regulus](#) at *Battle of Bagradas*.
 - 250** Regulus defies Carthage and is murdered
- 219-202** [Second Punic War](#)
- 219** Hannibal lays siege to Saguntum, a Roman ally, on the coast of Spain.
 - 218** Hannibal crosses the Alps and meets a Roman army at the *Battle of Trebia River*.
 - 217** **An Roman legion is ambushed and Consul is killed the *Battle of Lake Trasimene*.**
 - 216** **Low point: Roman disaster at *Battle of Cannae*.**
 - 212** Death of [Archimedes](#) at the *Siege of Syracuse*.
 - 207** [Hasdrubal Barca](#) killed at the *Battle of Metaurus River*.
 - 202** **Carthage decisively defeated by [Scipio Africanus](#) at the *Battle of Zama*.**
- 214-205** [First Macedonian War](#)—Inconclusive
- 200-196** [Second Macedonian War](#)—Roman victory at *Battle of Cynoscephalae*.
- 190** [Wars of Antiochus the Great](#)—Antiochus III of Syria defeated at *Magnesia*.
 - 168** [Third Macedonian War](#)—Roman victory at ***Battle of Pydna***.
- 149-146** [Third Punic War](#)—Carthage destroyed
- 146** Rome destroys Corinth after putting down a rebellion of the [Achaean League](#)

RECOMMENDED READING – PUNIC WARS

CORE READING ASSIGNMENTS *

Haaren - <i>Famous Men of Rome</i>	Regulus to Cato the Censor (3)
Guerber - Story of the Romans	Ancient Ships to Destruction of Carthage (7)
Macgregor - The Story of Rome	Romans Build a Fleet to Emperor Augustus (28)

SUPPLEMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Dalkeith - Stories from Roman History	Of Hannibal to Of Scipio Aemilianus Africanus (5)
Church - Stories from Ancient Rome	The Beginnings of Empire to The Critical Struggle (cont.) (3)
Winlow - Our Little Carthaginian Cousin	<i>entire book</i>
Harding - City of the Seven Hills	Rome and the Carthaginians to Rome Conquers the World (3)
Tappan - Story of the Roman People	Romans Conquer Carthage to Rome Becomes the Capital (2)
Morris - Historical Tales - Roman	The Fate of Regulus to The Fate of Carthage (5)
Abbott - Hannibal	<i>entire book</i>
Church - Lords of the World	<i>entire book</i>

ALSO RECOMMENDED

Gould - Children's Plutarch - Romans	The Man Who Waited to Cato the Stern (5)
Tappan - Old World Hero Stories	Hannibal (1)
Gilman - The Story of Rome	An African Sirocco to Wars and Conquests (2)
Kaufman - Young Folks Plutarch	Fabius to Aemilius Paulus (6)
Church - The Story of Carthage	<i>entire book</i>

* *Level I and II Study Questions are based on Core Reading Assignments.*