

THE ROMAN EMPIRE

IN THE FIRST CENTURY

Rome Lesson Plan 2: Getting to Know the Emperors of Rome

Introduction:

In this lesson, students will discuss the merits of hereditary rule. After using various games, features, and video clips from the Web site, students should have learned basic information about each of nine featured emperors. Students will use what they have learned to discuss the qualifications of each emperor, whether or not each was a successful leader, and who, if any of these men, could be elected to lead a country in today's world. For their final project, students will create campaign posters for a selected emperor. The posters will reflect the emperor's achievements, leadership style, personality and other qualifications in a positive manner.

Subject Areas:

World History, Social Studies, and Communication Arts

Grade Level: 6-12

Lesson Objectives:

Students will:

1. Participate in a class discussion focused on key aspects of hereditary rule and various ideas related to the absolute power that an emperor has.
2. Complete the "Who Are You?" quiz from the companion Web site to compare which historical leader they most closely resemble.
3. Work as a group to describe the historical leader they most resemble using a single sentence and share these descriptions with the other groups in the class.
4. Critically view video clips and read Web site content about nine featured emperors to learn more about their individual achievements, personality, leadership style and other key elements of their reign over ancient Rome.
5. Participate in class discussion activities where they share what they have learned from their research and their personal opinions about each emperor.
6. Create a campaign poster for the emperor of their choice and focus on presenting this emperor's strengths and achievements in a positive manner the way we do for modern-day political elections.
7. Present their individual posters and choose the one that best captures the leadership's style, personality, achievements, and other qualifications of a selected emperor.

Relevant National Standards:

McRel Compendium of K-12 Standards Addressed:

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World History

Standard 9: Understands how major religious and large-scale empires arose in the Mediterranean Basin, China, and Indian from 500 BCE to 300 CE.

Standard 11: Understands major global trends from 1000 BCE to 300 CE.

Historical Understanding

Standard 2: Understands the historical perspective.

Language Arts

Writing

Standard 4: Gathers and uses information for research purposes.

Reading

Standard 5: Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process.

Standard 7: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts.

Listening and Speaking

Standard 8: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.

Thinking and Reasoning

Standard 1: Understands the basic principles of presenting an argument.

Standard 3: Effectively uses mental processes that are based on identifying similarities and differences.

Working with Others

Standard 4: Displays effective interpersonal communication skills.

Estimated Time:

This should take two to three 90-minute class periods or four to five 50-minute class periods plus additional time for extension activities.

Materials Needed:

- Video clips necessary to complete the lesson plan are available on The Roman Empire in the First Century Web site [<http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/index.html>]. If you wish to purchase a copy of the program, visit the PBS Shop for Teachers [[Purchase DVD or Video](#)].
- Anticipation Guide [[Download PDF here \(104k\)](#)], part of this lesson plan.
- Internet access for completing the Who Are You? quiz [<http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/special/quiz.html>] and using various features available on the companion Web site and sites included in the list of Related Resources [<http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/educator/lesson2.html#resources>].

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- Emperors of Rome History Hunt [[Download PDF here \(128k\)](#)], part of this lesson plan.
- Putting a Positive Spin on the Emperors [[Download PDF here \(112k\)](#)], part of this lesson plan.

Procedures:

1. To generate student interest and help them access their prior knowledge, distribute the Anticipation Guide [[Download PDF here \(104k\)](#)] and review the directions. Remind students that completing the guide quietly on their own will be of key importance. Provide students with approximately five minutes to complete the activity.
2. Using the statements from the Anticipation Guide, conduct a class discussion that addresses topics such as:
 - What is heredity rule and what are its positive and negative aspects?
 - Can you give examples of times when leaders have been forcibly removed from power because of discontent by the people?
 - What do you think was the most common method the ancient Romans used to remove emperors from power?
 - Can murdering a political leader be justified if it is for the good of a large group of people or a whole country? Explain and give examples to support your ideas.
 - What are the negative aspects of having a leader who rules until the death with absolute power?
 - If you had been an emperor in ancient Rome, who would have considered trustworthy and why?
3. Introduce students to four of the Roman Empire's most famous historical figures – Augustus, Nero, Claudius, and Cleopatra – by having them take the Who Are You? quiz [<http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/special/quiz.html>]. As each student completes the quiz, have him/her record at least three interesting facts presented on the page that reveals who the student most resembles. They should be prepared to discuss the person they were most like with their classmates.
4. After all students have taken the quiz and written their facts, divide the class into groups based upon who they most resembled in the quiz. Have each group discuss what they learned about the person they represent using questions such as:
 - What kind of person was _____?
 - What role did this person play in Roman history?
 - Do you think this person was a good leader? Why?
 - How would you describe this person in a single sentence?
 - How are you most like this person? Least like this person?

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5. After groups have had several minutes to discuss the person they represent, have each group elect a spokesperson to describe the person they represent using a single sentence. One by one, call on groups to share their one-sentence descriptions of each person.
6. When all groups have shared information about their historical figure, explain to the class that they will be learning more about many of Rome's emperors using the Emperors of Rome History Hunt [[Download PDF here \(128k\)](#)]. Distribute the hunt, and view the following video clips as a large group, stopping to discuss the significance of each one and record information on the History Hunt. Episode 1: The Peace of Rome [<http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/resources/video.html>], Episode 2: The Emperor Claudius [insert pbs video link <http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/resources/video.html>], Episode 3: Claudius Expands the Empire, and Rome Burns [<http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/resources/video.html>].
7. To complete the History Hunt, direct students to The Roman Empire in the First Century Web site [<http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/index.html>]. Point out various sections including the Emperors [<http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/empire/emperors.html>] and Timeline [<http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/special/timeline01.html>]. Have students use these to record information about each of the emperors in the hunt.
8. Facilitate a class discussion about what students learned about each emperor. Students should refer back to their History Hunt notes when participating in the discussion. Use questions such as:
 - What type of leadership style and skills did each emperor have?
 - In your opinion, who was the best emperor? The worst? Why?
 - What was each emperor's claim to fame? Downfall?
 - If the nine emperors you studied were running for public office today, do you think any of them would be elected? Why or why not?
 - If you could choose one emperor to be, which would you choose, and why?
9. After completing the class discussion, students should have a basic understanding of each emperor. Have students return to The Roman Empire in the First Century Web site [<http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/index.html>] and complete the Emperor of Rome Game [http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/special/emperor_game.html]. Encourage students to use what they learned from the History Hunt and the class discussion to assist them as they play the game. When each student completes the game, have him/her report his ranking to you.
10. As a final activity, have students choose one emperor to represent. Their job is to be this emperor's campaign manager for an upcoming election. Students should create a campaign poster for their emperor based upon what they have learned

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about him through the various classroom activities. Specifics for the project should be discussed after you distribute the Putting a Positive Spin on the Emperors handout [[Download PDF here \(112k\)](#)].

11. Have each student present his/her campaign poster to the class. Have students compare the posters and choose the one they believe captures the best qualities of the emperor and presents him in a positive way. Keep the posters on display in the classroom or a public area for others to view.

Assessment Suggestions:

1. Students could earn completion grades for the Anticipation Guide, Who Are You? quiz and The Emperor of Rome Game.
2. Participation grades could be assigned for class discussion activities.
3. Accuracy or completion grades could be given for the Emperors of Rome History Hunt.
4. A percentage or letter grade or a scoring guide could be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Putting a Positive Spin on the Emperors campaign poster project.

Extension Activities:

1. Compare and contrast the nine emperors you learned about in the lesson by creating Venn Diagrams, T-charts, or some other graphic organizer that illustrates the similarities and differences between the various leaders. Students could focus on two or three individual emperors or place the emperors into groups such as “good” emperors and “bad” emperors for making their comparisons.
2. Teach other students and audiences about the Roman emperors of the first century by working in groups to research individual emperors in more detail. Students could then write scripts about the most important events in each emperor’s life and work as a group to act out the scenes. These performances could be videotaped and shared with students from other classes or as part of an open house for parents and community members to see and learn from.

Related Resources:

The Online Encyclopedia of Roman Emperors [<http://www.roman-emperors.org/claudius.htm>] features factual information about each emperor’s life.

The Early Emperors [<http://www.roman-empire.net/emperors/emp-index.html>] section of the online encyclopedia offers a detailed look at the lives of the early Roman emperors and their struggles and achievements.