THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

- Overexpansion of the empire, high taxes, and foreign invasions all weakened the empire.
- Roman emperor Diocletian divided the empire into two parts – East and West – in a failed attempt to restore order.
- In AD 330 Constantine moved the capital from Rome to Byzantium, which later became Constantinople.
- The Huns from the North were led by Attila. They invaded the empire in AD 444 and continued to fight until Attila’s death in AD 453. Rome was weakened by Attila and attacks from the Huns continued.
- Although the decline of Rome was a long, slow process, the year AD 476, when Germanic leader Odoacer ousted the emperor in Rome, is the date used to mark the fall.
- The Eastern Roman Empire survived and became known as the Byzantine Empire.

Military Causes

- Visigoths and other Germanic peoples invaded the empire.
- Roman army lacked training and discipline.
- Romans were forced to hire foreign soldiers to defend borders.

Economic Causes

- Heavy taxes were necessary to support the government.
- Farmers left the land.
- Middle class disappeared.
- Romans used too much slave labor.
Political Causes

- Government became too strict.
- People stopped supporting government.
- Many officials were corrupt.
- Divided empire became weak.

Social Causes

- Population declined because of disease and war.
- People became selfish and lazy.

LEGACY OF ROME

- The Romans borrowed and adapted cultural elements freely, especially from the Greek and Hellenistic cultures. This mixing of cultures produced a Greco-Roman culture.
- Roman artists, writers, and philosophers adapted Greek models.
- **Latin**, the language of the Romans, remained the language of learning in the West long after the fall of Rome. It was adopted by different peoples and developed into French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, and Romanian.
- Roman architects and engineers used domes, arches, and concrete to create spectacular buildings, bridges, and aqueducts, which brought water into cities. Many still exist.
- The most impressive achievement of the Romans was law. In 450 BC the Laws of the Twelve Tables were inscribed on tablets and displayed in public. Roman law applied to all. Many of its basic principles including equality under the law, the right of the accused to face their accuser and defend themselves, and the idea you are innocent until proven guilty survive to this day.