

UNIT 7

ANCIENT HISTORY

LESSON 1

Summary

- In this lesson, students will read "Julius Caesar" (pp. 72-75) to learn about Julius Caesar and how he set Rome on the path of transformation from republic to empire.

Social Studies Background

Julius Caesar was born into a powerful and prestigious Roman family on July 12 or 13 in the year 100 B.C. His family, the Julian clan, had a history of high-level political involvement.

Caesar, a military hero, was a politician, too. And when he was around age 40, he formed a pact with two powerful men, Pompey the Great, a noted general and statesman, and Marcus Licinius Crassus, one of the richest men in Rome. Together, they formed the First Triumvirate, an uneasy alliance through which they dominated the government of Rome.

With his partners' backing, Caesar was elected Roman consul in 59 B.C. Then, eager to gain a lasting glory beyond politics, he set out to conquer the Celtic territories of Gaul. It took seven years, but Caesar prevailed.

Caesar then went on to overtake what would become the rest of the Roman Empire. This included lands ruled by his former ally, but now enemy, Pompey. Caesar's pursuit of Pompey took him to Egypt. There, he met and had a son with the Egyptian queen Cleopatra.

Caesar then returned, triumphant, to rule Rome. Although he instituted several beneficial changes, his success and ambition alienated many politicians (called senators). And when Caesar declared himself dictator for life in 45 B.C., his political rivals had had enough. On March 15, 44 B.C., Caesar was assassinated.

ENGAGE

Encourage students to flip through the article and turn and talk with a partner to discuss what they see. Invite students to ask questions or share what they already know about ancient Rome.

EXPLORE

Instruct students to examine the photo and read the caption on page 72 of their Readers. **Ask:** *Who was Julius Caesar?* (a politician and general in ancient Rome) Invite students to share what they know about Julius Caesar.

EXPLAIN

Point out to students that Julius Caesar set Rome on a path from republic to empire. **Ask:** *How did he do this?* (In defiance of the Roman Senate, Caesar led his troops across the Rubicon River and drove Pompey and his troops out of Italy, through Greece, and into Egypt.) Have students turn and talk as they discuss the impact this had on Caesar and Rome. (When Caesar crossed the river, he started a civil war. Pompey led the republican military forces. By defeating Pompey, Caesar had defeated the republic, thrusting himself into a position of power. He returned to Rome and made himself consul and dictator.) Have students discuss how Caesar's time in command helped Rome become even greater. Then have them discuss how Caesar's ambition led to his ultimate downfall. (Rivals, threatened by Caesar's tyranny, assassinated him.)

ELABORATE

Invite students to read the National Geographic article "How Julius Caesar Started a Big War by Crossing a Small Stream" (www.nationalgeographic.com/archaeology-and-history-magazine/2017/03-04/julius-caesar-crossing-rubicon-rome/) to learn more about how Julius Caesar's defeated Pompey and went on to become dictator of Rome.

EVALUATE

Have students complete the **Content Assessment** for this lesson. Encourage them to share and compare their results in small groups.

Name _____

Date _____

CONTENT ASSESSMENT: Julius Caesar

Create a timeline that depicts Julius Caesar's rise to power in Rome.

