Imperial Expansion:

As Rome became more powerful, they began to practice a policy of imperialism. Imperialism is when one country takes over the economic, political, or cultural life of another country. Rome’s legions of soldiers soon began to take-over other areas and peoples.

Examine the following map to understand Rome’s transition from republic to empire. An empire is a political unit made up of territories under a single authority.

Questions:

1. Looking at this map, how did Roman power change from 500 B.C.E to 44 B.C.E?
2. What areas came under Roman control during this time?
3. How do you think Rome was able to take over these other areas? What does this reveal about their government and military?

Punic Wars:

By 264 B.C., Rome was an international force to be reckoned with. They had conquered all of the Italian Peninsula, and had built the most powerful army in the world. The only power in the region that could match that of the Romans was Carthage.

The city-state of Carthage had colonies around the Mediterranean, and had built the strongest navy in the world. The Romans worried that the Carthaginians would seize the Strait of Messina, a passageway between Italy, and Sicily. In order to protect this region, Roman generals marched their armies South, and destroyed most of the Carthaginian colonies in the area. This battle began a war with Carthage that would last for the next 25 years. By 241 B.C. the Romans forced Carthage to surrender. As part of this surrender, Carthage paid Rome a large tribute of land and treasure.

In 221 B.C. a young Carthaginian general by the name of Hannibal again tried to attack Rome. Hannibal marched 40,000 troops and 40 elephants over the alps into the Roman homeland. Caught unexpectedly, the Romans suffered many loses. By 216 B.C. Hannibal had almost completely defeated the entire Roman army. However, the Romans continued to fight. Citizens were called up from all parts of the empire to defend their homeland. By 202 B.C. Rome was able to defeat Hannibal, under the direction of a Roman general named Scipio.

In 146 B.C. Carthage again began to grow in strength and power. Rome worried that they might again try to attack. In order to insure that this did not happen, Rome decided to attack Carthage, and to wipe it off the face of the Earth. Roman armies took the war to the Carthage homeland, where they sold all the Carthaginians into slavery, and even went so far as to sow salt into their fields, so that the area could never again be used for farming. This ended the Punic Wars, and the threat that Carthage posed to Rome.

4. What was the cause of the Punic Wars? Who succeeded in winning these wars? What did they do to the people living there?

5. Looking at the map, how do you think these wars benefited the Romans?
Rise of Julius Caesar:

Caesar was a politician and general of the late Roman republic, who greatly extended the Roman empire before seizing power and making himself dictator of Rome, paving the way for the imperial system.

Julius Caesar was born in Rome on 12 or 13 July 100 BC into the prestigious Julian clan. In 61-60 BC he served as governor of the Roman province of Spain. Back in Rome in 60, Caesar made a pact with Pompey and Crassus, who helped him to get elected as consul for 59 BC. The following year he was appointed governor of Roman Gaul where he stayed for eight years, adding the whole of modern France and Belgium to the Roman Empire, and making Rome safe from the possibility of Gallic invasions. He made two expeditions to Britain, in 55 BC and 54 BC.

As soon as Caesar reached Hispania he set to work immediately. He then marched against the Gallaeci and the Lusitani and, after conquering them, went on as far as the outer sea, subduing the tribes which before then had been independent of Rome. These military successes of his were followed up by equally good work in civilian administration. He established good relations between the various cities. One of his most notable achievements was to solve the problem of the existing ill-feeling between debtors and creditors.

Plutarch

Caesar then returned to Italy, disregarding the authority of the senate and famously crossing the Rubicon River without disbanding his army. In the ensuing civil war Caesar defeated the republican forces. Pompey, their leader, fled to Egypt where he was assassinated. Caesar followed him and became romantically involved with the Egyptian queen, Cleopatra.

Caesar was now master of Rome and made himself consul and dictator. He used his power to carry out much-needed reform, relieving debt, enlarging the senate, building the Forum Iulium and revising the calendar. Dictatorship was always regarded a temporary position but in 44 BC, Caesar took it for life. His success and ambition alienated strongly republican senators. A group of these, led by Cassius and Brutus, assassinated Caesar on the Ides (15) of March 44 BC. This sparked the final round of civil wars that ended the Republic and brought about the elevation of Caesar’s great nephew and designated heir, Octavian, as Augustus, the first emperor.

Caesar, sitting on a golden throne above the rostra and wearing a triumphal robe, was watching this ceremony; and Antony, who was consul at the time, was one of those taking part in the sacred running. When he came running into the forum, the crowd made way for him. He was carrying a diadem [symbol of royalty like a crown] with a wreath of laurel tied round it, and he held this out to Caesar. His action was followed by some applause, but it was not much and it was not spontaneous. But when Caesar pushed the diadem away from him, there was a general shout of applause. Antony then offered him the diadem for the second time, and again only a few applauded, though, when Caesar again rejected it, there was applause from everyone.

It was then discovered that his statues had been decorated with royal diadems, and two of the tribunes, Flavius and Marullus, went round the statues and tore down the decorations. This made Caesar angry. He deprived Marullus and Flavius of their tribuneship and in speaking against them he insulted the people at the same time.

Plutarch

6. Who was Julius Caesar?

7. Was he a successful governor and military leader according to the first primary source?

8. How did he rise to power in Rome? What did he make himself?

9. According to the second primary source, did the people like Julius Caesar? What led to his death?

10. Who took control after Caesar?