



The Fall of Rome

UNIT 1: THE ROMANS

If the Roman Empire was so great, why did it fall?

- ▶ This comes down to 3 main issues:
 - ▶ Government Issues,
 - ▶ Money Problems,
 - ▶ And Outside Attacks.



Government Issues- Weak Leadership

- ▶ From 96 CE to 180 CE saw the “5 Good Emperors” lead Rome through a golden era.
- ▶ The following emperors all had varying ideas with no central vision.
- ▶ Many emperors didn’t rule long enough to make meaningful changes before dying, being replaced, or being assassinated.



Government Issues- Overexpansion

- ▶ The Roman Empire had become too large to effectively rule from one place.
- ▶ Constantine's reign (312–337) saw the capital move from Rome to Constantinople (previously Byzantium).
- ▶ Rome was weak and full of peasants fleeing from barbarians.
- ▶ Constantinople was economically prosperous from trade.
- ▶ This eventually split into the Eastern (Byzantine) Roman Empire and the failing Western Roman Empire in 395 CE.



Money Problems- Inflation

- ▶ Roman Currency (denarii) starts to become worthless.
- ▶ The Roman Empire kept melting down their coins and adding more common metals to the silver coins.
- ▶ Every time they did this, the coins were worth less and less.
- ▶ Eventually this led to people preferring bartering than spending money.
- ▶ This made it difficult to pay its army.



Money Problems- Slavery

- ▶ When Rome was adding new territory to its empire, it would enslave many to work for them.
- ▶ With no new territorial gains, there was no one to become new slaves.
- ▶ This loss of labour made the economy of Rome slow a lot.
- ▶ It was hard to pay new labourers with the denarii losing value.



Money Problems- Weakened Army

- ▶ The Roman army was battle-hardened, disciplined, and organized.
- ▶ Their tactics only worked because they worked together so well.
- ▶ Shield walls and javelins made them impossible to attack safely.
- ▶ This made their enemies very easy to beat.
- ▶ However...



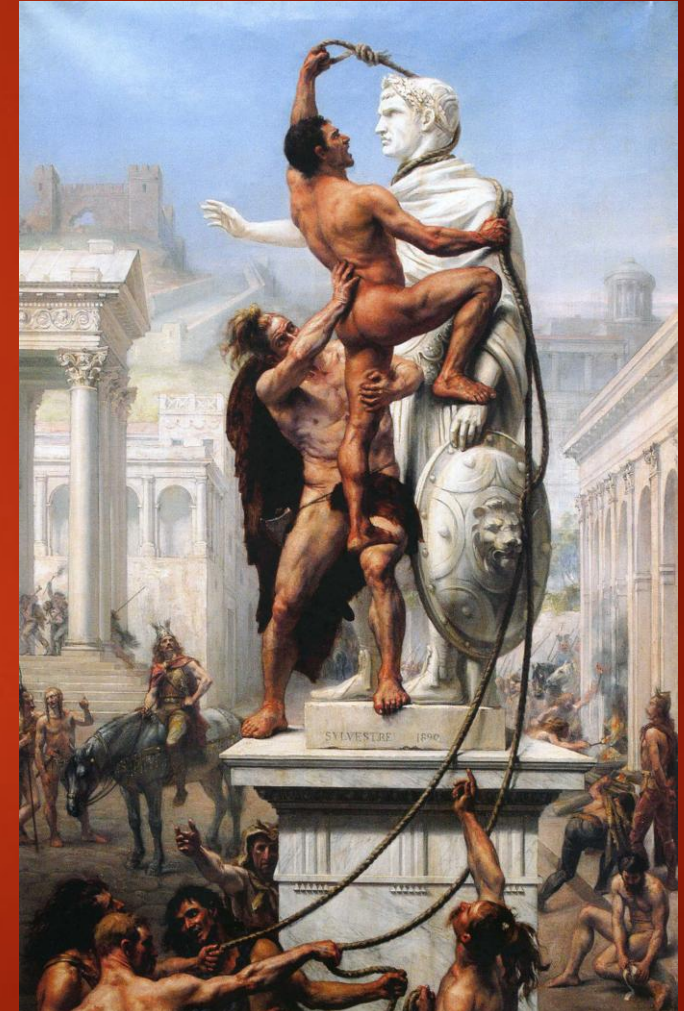
Money Problems- Weakened Army

- ▶ The Roman Army had to start paying “barbarians” to guard the borders.
- ▶ These Germanic soldiers did not have the same loyalty to Rome.
- ▶ They also used cheaper gear.
- ▶ Rome could not afford the same military spending on large armies.
- ▶ Instead had smaller border guard groups with an army that could be sent out to reinforce.



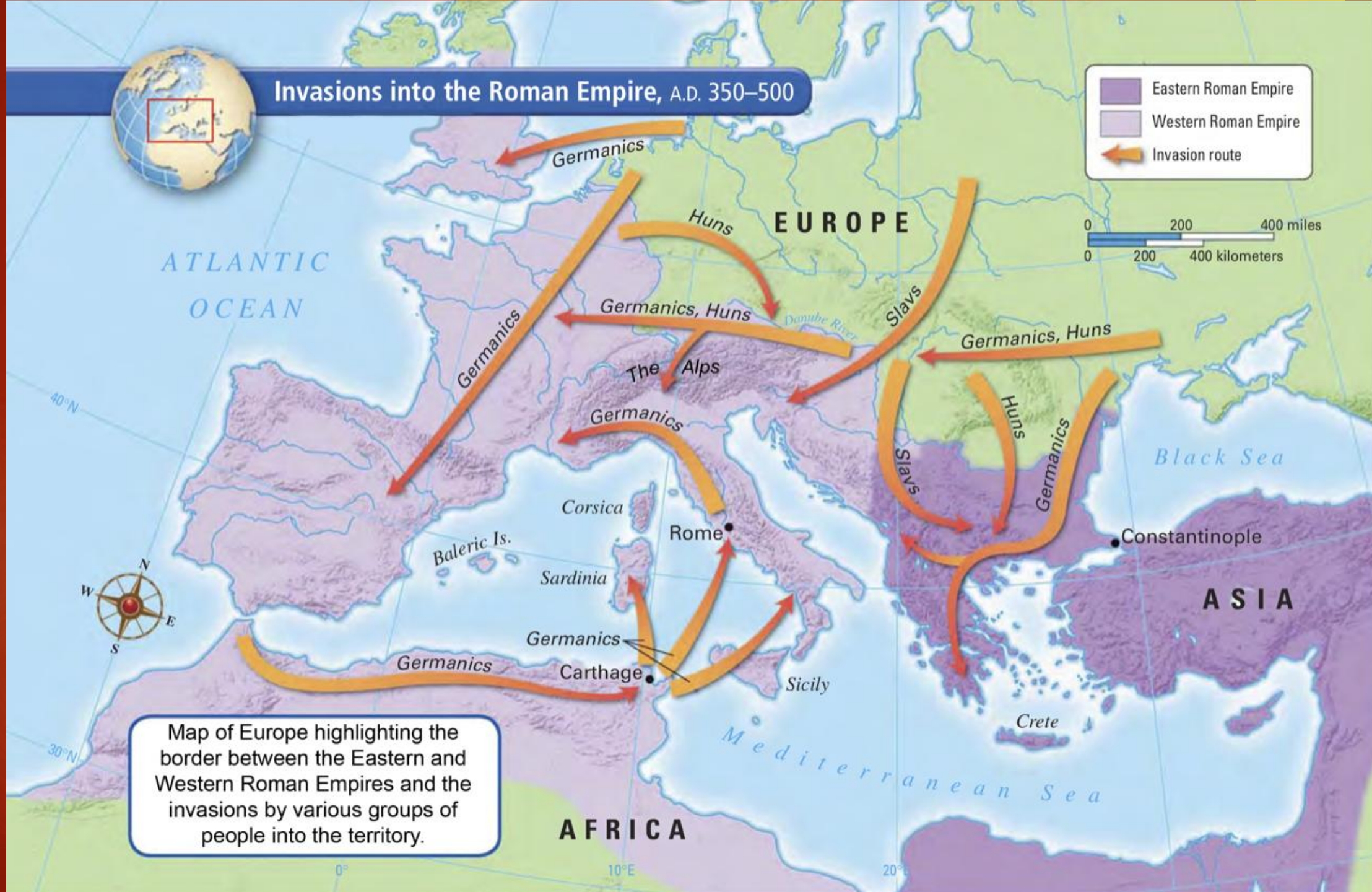
Outside Attacks- Germanic Tribes

- ▶ When the Huns were expanding their territory, they pushed the Germanic barbarian tribes into the weakened Roman Empire.
- ▶ Some Germanic tribes worked as mercenaries for the Romans for a time, but eventually turned on them and attacked.
- ▶ In 410, the Visigoth King Alaric successfully sacked the city of Rome.
- ▶ Finally, in 476, the Germanic leader Odoacer staged a revolt and deposed Emperor Romulus Augustulus.
- ▶ The Western Roman Empire had finally fallen.





Invasions into the Roman Empire, A.D. 350–500



Map of Europe highlighting the border between the Eastern and Western Roman Empires and the invasions by various groups of people into the territory.