

## **The Punic wars**

The Punic Wars are a collective name of the wars fought between Rome and Carthage. The wars established Rome as a world power and left the once powerful empire of Carthage in ruins.

The first war began in 264 BCE, and the last ended in 146 BCE. The wars were fought between the two strongest contenders for control over the central Mediterranean Sea of the time.

### **1st Punic War (264-241 BCE)**

Carthage was a city in North Africa originally founded as a trading post by the Phoenicians. Carthage held many territories that made it easy for them to control and dominate the western Mediterranean Sea, but when they conquered Messina on the north eastern tip of Sicily in 264, they faced the Romans for war for the first time.

This war was fought mainly at sea around Sicily. Carthage was by far the stronger of the two in this field. This supremacy, however, was met by a large scale Roman construction of a naval fleet.

Rome had a powerful army, but they had little experience with the sea. The Romans developed an innovative technique to win several naval battles. They lacked the naval skill to sink ships, so the Romans outfitted their vessels with a hinged bridge. Roman sailors used pulleys to lower the bridge to face an enemy ship. The Roman ship would ram into an enemy vessel. An iron spike at the edge of the bridge attached the two ships, allowing soldiers to cross over and attack in hand-to-hand combat—where Rome was more experienced than Carthage.

A Carthaginian general named Hamilcar Barca recaptured most of Sicily, but Carthage did not have the money or manpower to continue to engage in the conflict. In 241BCE, Carthage surrendered Sicily to the Romans.

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### **2nd Punic War (218-201 BCE)**

In 218BCE, a generation after the first Punic War, Hannibal Barca—the son of Hamilcar—commanded an army from Spain in an attempt to weaken Rome.

Hannibal led an army of 40,000 soldiers, 8,000 horses and 37 war elephants in a daring and difficult journey over the Alps. The Alps are a treacherous mountain range that stood between Spain and the Italian peninsula.

Hannibal's army won three decisive victories against Rome in northern Italy despite being outnumbered more than two to one. In the Battle of Canae, Hannibal's army surrounded the Romans, killing between 50,000 to 80,000 Roman soldiers.

After their humiliation at Canae, Rome changed their strategy. The Romans sent a new army to north Italy with instructions to withdraw. Hannibal spent the next twelve years destroying the Roman countryside, but his army had no opponent to fight. The antipathy, or bad feelings caused by Hannibal's destruction would last for generations and would lead to the third Punic War and the downfall of Carthage.

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### **3rd Punic War (149-146 BCE)**

The third war was entirely provoked by the Romans. After the second defeat, Carthage managed once again to return to much of its former glory, the economy prospered, and their fleets increased. But the memory of the former Punic wars was strong in Rome; many hated the Carthaginians especially because there seemed to be nothing that could force them on their knees. Many Romans wanted to gain glory, and no enemy was more attractive than Carthage.

Rome attacked Carthage and the two sides fought bloody battles in a war that lasted almost three years. The difference in military force was now to Rome's advantage, and few battles were fought to decide who was the strongest.

At first a peace was agreed upon, but then Rome increased their demands, decreeing a total abandonment of the city. Facing these claims, the Carthaginians returned to fighting, and soon Carthage fell under what would become a 3 year long siege.

After a siege in 146BCE, the Romans broke through the city walls of Carthage. Once they subdued the Carthaginian army, Roman soldiers went from house to house slaughtering the people in their homes. After destroying Carthage, the Romans sold the remaining citizens into slavery, burned the city and destroyed Carthage's harbor.

Rome annexed Carthage by making the city a part of a Roman province they called Africa. The Punic Wars established Rome as a powerful nation and the wars were an indication that Rome would develop into one of the most powerful empires in history.

Name\_\_\_\_\_

**1st Punic War (264-241 BCE):**

**On the map identify label the following:**

- 1. City of Rome**
- 2. Extent of Roman territory at the time**
- 3. Trading City of Carthage**
- 4. Extent of Carthage territory at the time**
- 5. Messina**
- 6. Sicily**
- 7. Mediterranean Sea**

**Answer the following questions:**

- 1. What land territory was fought over during the first Punic War?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. Why was this territory so valuable to both Rome and Carthage?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3. How did the Romans combat the proficient Carthaginian Navy?**

**Create 3 bold statements that best summarize the 1<sup>st</sup> Punic War:**

**2nd Punic War (218-201 BCE):**

**On the map identify and label the following:**

- 1. City of Rome**
- 2. Extent of Roman territory at the time**
- 3. Trading City of Carthage**
- 4. Extent of Carthage territory at the time**
- 5. Sicily**
- 6. Mediterranean Sea**
- 7. Spain**
- 8. The Alps**
- 9. Journey of Hannibal from Spain to Roman Territory**

**Answer the following questions:**

- 1. How was Hannibal's attack on Rome daring and different?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. How did Rome change its strategy following the defeat at Cannae?**

**Create 3 bold statements that best summarize the 2<sup>nd</sup> Punic War:**

### **3rd Punic War (149-146 BCE)**

**On the map identify and label the following:**

- 1. City of Rome**
- 2. Extent of Roman territory at the time**
- 3. Trading City of Carthage**
- 4. Extent of Carthage territory at the time**
- 5. Sicily**
- 6. Mediterranean Sea**
- 7. Spain**

**Answer the following question:**

- 1. Why did the Romans want to continue the war against Carthage?**

- 2. What was the result of the final Punic War? Why was the result to extreme?**

**Create 3 bold statements that best summarize the 3rd Punic War:**