

NOTES ON QUIZ 9

1 How was the Second Triumvirate different from the First? How were they similar (apart from consisting of three men)?

The First Triumvirate was a private deal between the three most powerful men in Rome — Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar — to manage the running of Rome from behind the scenes. It was unsanctioned and illegal, but the state could do little about it because of the social, political, military, and economic power held by these three men.

The Second Triumvirate involved the Republic formally granting executive powers to Octavian, Antony, and Lepidus for a specific term of five years, charging them with maintaining the state on behalf of the Roman people. During these two five-year terms, Octavian and Antony (and Lepidus while he lasted) were the official heads of state of the Roman Republic.

In both cases, the triumvirates came about because the three men involved were, at the time, more powerful than the government of Rome itself.

2 What actions did both Sulla and Caesar have in common in seizing power? How were the two men different?

Both Sulla and Caesar marched on Rome with their armies, took Rome by force of arms, and had themselves declared dictator in order to restore order to the city.

Sulla was a pro-senate conservative; his reforms as dictator restored the power of the senate and weakened the voice of the masses. Caesar, by contrast, was a populist who championed the masses and the army and humiliated the senate and nobility. — Also, Sulla gave up his dictatorship, restoring Rome to ordinary government. Caesar held onto his dictatorship until he was assassinated.

3 What were some of the factors that gave Octavian an advantage over Antony in taking control of Rome and the empire?

By 36 BCE the empire was divided between Antony in the east and Octavian in the west, but both knew the power-sharing was temporary. While Octavian trained his armies and waged a propaganda war against Antony and Cleopatra, Antony concentrated on securing his borders in the east and snubbed his wife, Octavian's sister Octavia, celebrating instead his relationship with Cleopatra, staging a false triumph in Alexandria as if it were Rome, and waging war with her in the Aegean. After Antony's divorce from Octavia, Octavian implied he felt he was in danger from Antony's friends in the senate, who decamped to Antony's court, breached and publicized Antony's will, and required a loyalty oath to himself among civilians in the west in a war against Cleopatra.

Octavian was able to use Antony's marriage to Cleopatra and betrayal of his Roman wife, Octavian's respected sister Octavia, as propaganda against Antony, telling the appalled Romans it reflected Antony's betrayal of Rome. This gave Octavian the edge in Rome, and the support gained helped Octavian win at the Battle of Actium. Seeing the future of Rome belonged to Octavian, both Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide.

E1 Caesar formally became an enemy of the Roman state by:

(d) Crossing the Rubicon River with his army [a governor crossing a province border with his army was illegal]

E2 Why did the revolt of Spartacus have such an impact?

The massive and swelling Roman economy was dependent on slaves. Rome, Italy, and the provinces had them in great numbers, so a slave rebellion could upend everything, right in the heart of Rome rather than on the frontiers where wars were these days, and would be very hard to fight. Many slaves also knew how to fight, as some were ex-soldiers, and others were gladiators like Spartacus.

Spartacus amasses a huge army of slaves from many regions of Italy and could not be defeated by the consuls that were sent to defeat him; Crassus used superior tactics and utter ruthlessness to destroy the rebellion. All of the thousands of captured slaves were crucified as a warning.