Notes on Quiz #9: The Acquisition of Empire

1. After the Sack of Rome in 390 BCE, the Romans
   a. obsessed with having the strongest armies and ensuring the safety of their frontiers through expansion
   b. were relieved nothing important was destroyed
   c. turned against the gods who allowed it to happen
   d. realized defense of the city was futile and built a wide gate to welcome future invaders

Rome was sacked by invading Gauls in 390. During the sack, there were many deaths and rapes, and buildings and possessions were damaged and destroyed. According to some stories, the Gauls were made to depart only after paying a large tribute in gold. — The most important effect was psychological, creating a permanent dread of violation of the city by barbarians. It came at the climax of a century of defensive war with the Oscans and came at a time when Rome's allies, the Latins, were increasingly unreliable. The sack demonstrated a vulnerability of the city of Roman that the Romans now found intolerable. From this point onward the Romans are obsessed with having the strongest armies and ensuring the safety of their frontiers through expansion and Romanization. — This event instilled in the Romans an obsession with ensuring that their territory and people would never again be vulnerable to such an attack. As a result, their policy became to control the territory surrounding Roman lands, leading to a natural need to continue to expand. The Roman fear of the Gauls also drove them to make sure that conquered barbarians were made to be civilized (i.e., Romanized) to ensure they are no longer the kind of threatening "other" the Gauls were at the time of the sack.

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2. The Pyrrhic War (275-270 BCE), in which Italian Greek city-states fought the Romans under the leadership of Pyrrhus, resulted in the Romans
   a. winning the battles and winning the war
   b. losing the battles and winning the war
   c. winning the battles and losing the war
   d. losing the battles and losing the war

Pyrrhus won two victories over the Romans, but both sides suffered great casualties. The Romans could replenish their troops because they had large numbers of both citizens and allies to draw from, but Pyrrhus's army was far from home; large losses of manpower permanently weakened him, and he was not much closer to taking Rome than he had been before his victories. It's from this that we get the phrase "Pyrrhic victory", meaning a victory that is more costly to the winner than the loser.

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3. All of the following are true of the Second Punic War against Carthage (218-201 BCE) EXCEPT:
   a. It started with conflicting claims over Spain
   b. Hannibal gathered an army and invaded Italy by crossing the Alps
   c. At the start of the war Hannibal's army annihilated the Roman legions in three successive devastating defeats
   d. After his wins, Hannibal attacked the city of Rome itself and nearly destroyed it

Hannibal was in command in Spain when the Romans breached the Treaty of the Ebro and intruded into Carthaginian territory in southern Spain. He led an army over the Alps and brutally defeated Rome at Trebia, Lake Trasimene, and Cannae in successive years (218-216 BCE). He did not lay siege to Rome, instead occupying southern Italy until the Romans went on the offensive and attacked Carthage.

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4. All of the following were disastrous defeats for Rome EXCEPT:
    a. The Battle of Caudine Forks (321 BCE)
    b. The Battle of Lake Trasimene (217 BCE)
    c. The Battle of Cannae (216 BCE)
    d. The Battle of Zama (202 BCE)

The Romans were victorious in the Battle of Zama, which ended the Second Punic War with the defeat of Carthage.

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5. In 168 BCE, the Roman senator Popillius Laenas drew the famous "line in the sand" around
    a. the Seleucid (Syrian) emperor, Antiochus IV
    b. the Roman pontifex maximus, M. Aemilius Lepidus
    c. a sacred statue of Osiris
    d. the Egyptian pharaoh, Ptolemy VIII Physcon

Rome was concerned about Antiochus IV of Syria becoming too powerful, which would be very likely if he conquered the wealthy and fertile lands of Egypt. They dispatched a small delegation of senators to Egypt; the senators told Antiochus to leave Egypt and Cyprus immediately and return to his own lands, or be at war with the Roman Republic. When he asked for time to consider and discuss with his counselors, the leader of the senate delegation, C. Popillius Laenas, drew a circle around Antiochus and told him that when he stepped out of that circle, he must give his reply to Rome. Antiochus IV agreed, and stepped out of the circle to Popillius's warm greeting. — Antiochus, a great king with troops massed behind him to attack Egypt, submitted to an old man in a toga who barred his way. This represents the potency Rome had in the east without needing to bring troops to bear on every occasion, and Rome's increasing dominion of the east had much to do with nations choosing to be friends with Rome rather than risk their hostility, just as Antiochus IV did. Only symbolic examples of Rome's destructive power at war were necessary—Magnesia, Pydna, and Corinth were enough. Popillius stood for the majesty of Rome, and Rome's military prowess was only a part of the clout and influence that was at stake in friendship with Rome.

Optional Extra Credit

EC. Rome was almost defeated in the Second Punic War. What do you think were some of the reasons Rome won?

Hannibal had considerable advantages at the outset. In his march toward Italy through Spain and Gaul, and later in Italy itself, Hannibal collected allies from among the local peoples who marched with him to end the looming threat of Rome. This gave him great numbers as well as making parts of Italy itself hostile territory. Two successive annihilations of Roman forces, at Lake Trasimene and at Cannae, demoralized the leadership and terrified the populace. — While the Romans were so stricken and divided over the best response to Hannibal, however, Hannibal did not capitalize on this advantage by attacking Rome directly. Instead, he allowed Rome to gain time to rebuild its nerve and its strength. The dictator Fabius pursued a strategy of avoiding battle and harassing Hannibal's marching army, earning him the nickname Delayer, while attacking, taking, and punishing Italian, Sicilian, and Spanish cities allied with Hannibal one by one. Slowly Hannibal was hemmed in to the south, where his army was depleted and softened. Finally, Scipio won support for a bold stroke against Carthage itself while its armies were holed up in Italy. — The militarization of Roman society and their deep reserve of manpower (which the invader Hannibal did not have) meant that even after the destruction of its forces, it was able to equip, assemble, and field new armies for the next year's campaign. Perhaps just as importantly, Roman military leadership was not pegged to a single mastermind like Hannibal; every year a new pair of trained and experienced generals was elected consul, allowing continued leadership even if consuls were killed in battle (as at Trasimene and Cannae); and dictators like Fabius could be appointed at need from the most seasoned and admired of Rome's nobility. The senate was the repository of all Rome's experience, including all the ex-magistrates. Thus, as it had against Pyrrhus and against the Samnites, Rome's capacity for perseverance, recovery, and adaptation meant that even costly defeat in battle was only the latest crisis to be overcome.