

## Caesar Augustus

After the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra, Octavian became the sole ruler of Rome. Four years later, a grateful Senate awarded him the honorary title of Augustus, meaning sacred. While Octavian, now Augustus Caesar, was careful to retain the structures of the republican government, he was actually given much

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more power than office-holders in the old republic would have had, and his tenure is considered the beginning of the Roman Empire and of 200 years of peace known as the Pax Romana.

Under Augustus, the Senate was continued, but much of its power was assumed by the emperor. It no longer chose who would rule; it only confirmed the reigning emperor's choice of successor (or the military's candidate in the years when the army held power).

Among the reforms that Augustus Caesar instituted were creation of a civil service, establishment of a postal system, introduction of new coins for money transactions, and reform of the census in order to make the tax system more equitable. He set up what may have been the world's first fire department. He also had roads constructed throughout the empire to allow for communication between Rome and the provinces. You may have heard the expression "all roads lead to Rome." This was literally true of the road system Augustus worked to create.

Augustus also worked to revitalize Roman religion. He promoted religious festivals and encouraged worship of the Roman gods as a way of building loyalty to the state. Augustus funded the renovation and construction of ornate religious temples, as well as civic buildings. Augustus is said to have boasted that he "found Rome brick and left it marble."

Last but not least, Augustus was a great patron of the arts. It was during his reign that Virgil wrote the *Aeneid*, mentioned on p. 125. This epic poem was meant to glorify Augustus and Rome. Other writers also flourished during the reign of Augustus, including Horace, Livy, and Ovid.

### Teaching Idea

**Divide the class into groups and allow them to conduct more in-depth research about one of the famous historical figures discussed. Give them the opportunity to draw a detailed portrait of the figure and present an oral report to the class on this famous person.**