**The Punic Wars Change Rome**

The wars against Carthage changed Rome. The Senate had gained in power and prestige relative to the people's assemblies, the Comitias Plebis. The Romans emerged from the Punic wars with the widespread understanding that ultimate authority over the military lay with the Senate, that it was the Senate's job to know, advise and guide, and the Senate's job to decide the question of war or peace and other foreign policy matters.

1. During the Punic Wars, what governing body had obviously gained more power over the military?

Rome's second war against Carthage reduced the number of people in the Italian countryside. Men had gone off to war. People had died and people had moved to the cities to escape war. Some people had left the countryside to work in the arms industry, and some had left for Rome looking for subsistence. The new arrivals in Rome enjoyed the festivals and other public entertainment that were created to maintain public morale during the dark days of the war. Newcomers developed a preference for the city over the life of drudgery they had known working on farms. And after the war ended, many veterans from farming families preferred settling in cities, especially Rome, rather than return to the countryside. Cities in Italy became overcrowded, and Rome became the most populous city in Europe and West Asia.

1. How did the Punic Wars affect the population distribution of Rome?

As a result of the war, much farmland in Italy could be bought cheaply. Those with wealth began buying this farmland, some landowners expanding their holdings and some businessmen from the cities looking for a secure investment and a source of social respectability. With the accelerated trend toward larger farms came a greater use of slaves. More lands in the countryside were transformed into pasture, vineyard, and olive orchards – more suited to Italian soil and climate than was the growing of grain. The richest lands were converted to vineyards and the poorer tracts to olive groves, while ranching was the most profitable for capitalist landowners. Holdings that were a mix of ranching and farming grew to more than 300 acres, found mostly in southern and central Italy, the area most heavily devastated by the Second Punic War.

1. How did agriculture change as a result of the Punic Wars?

Many small farmers found themselves unable to compete with the larger farms and their more numerous slaves. Moreover, a greater importation of grain from Sicily and North Africa brought a drop in grain prices, and many small farmers gave up, sold their farms and joined the migration to the cities. The wars that began with the minor incident at Messana in the early 260s BCE had brought unintended consequences – as wars often do. Many of Rome's small farmers, who had been the backbone of the Roman Republic, had become city-dwellers living off of free bread and enjoying circuses.

1. How did the Punic Wars impact poverty in Rome?

Also, empire had grown. Rome now considered Spain as its possession, and it began what would become a long struggle to conquer Spain's various inhabitants.

Romans had begun investing their money abroad, in mines in Spain, vast tracts of land in Sicily and elsewhere, and they turned these lands into slave plantations. Some of them lent money abroad, at high interest rates, and Roman financial operations became greater than that of the Greeks and Near Easterners. There would be an increase in fraud, against which the Senate would not always be willing to press charges. And those with wealth would import more spices, carpets, perfumes and other luxury goods from the East.

1. The Punic Wars affected wealth and investment in Rome…how?