

# Collapse of Rome

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## Overview

*Collapse of Rome* is a PC based educational strategy game designed to complement an academic unit on the Roman Empire, either as a classroom station or enrichment activity. Game play begins at the start of Rome's "Crisis of the Third Century", and ends at its conclusion upon the ascension of the emperor Diocletian in 385. Players have the option of continuing to play until the year 476 AD, when the Western Roman Empire finally collapsed.

## Download Link

<http://mrwrightteacher.net/rome/download.html>

## Video Tutorial

<http://mrwrightteacher.net/rome/tutorial.html>



Figure 1: Screenshot

## Gameplay

The game play is similar to that of the board game "Risk", so it is very easy to learn. The interface is simple click and drag: Left click and drag moves a legion, right click ends the current turn. The goal of the game is to maintain control over as many provinces as possible. Each turn, provinces controlled by the player pay taxes and raise legions. The player uses these legions to attack enemy held provinces or defended against attacks from Rome's enemies. The enemies in this game are the various "barbarian" tribes along the Rhine and Danube, as well as the Sassanid Persian Empire in the east. Occasionally, legions will rebel and the player will lose control of them and the provinces where they are located. The empire can also be hit by plagues which halt tax collection and the creation of new legions. The player wins by controlling at least one province in the year 285 AD (fifty turns). The play cycle is designed to be short, so that a game can easily be completed within one class period, although it does support saving and loading games.

## Educational Goals

Gameplay is designed to convey the learning objectives a teacher would build into a unit on the end of the Roman Empire. The best way for a teacher to gauge whether the game is achieving the educational goals is to ask the students about the gameplay, either directly or through a short reflection piece. They will usually complain that it is frustrating because they are constantly faced with rebellions and invasions, but never have quite enough resources to deal with them. If a student can articulate this, that student has identified the situation facing the Empire. After playing the game, a student will...

- be able to locate provinces in the Roman Empire.
- be able to name the Empire's most and least valuable provinces.
- be able to name Rome's primary adversaries during the 3rd century.
- be able to list ways in which plagues effected Rome's ability to defend itself.
- be able to identify regions of the empire where rebellions typically occurred.
- be able to experience the difficulty of meeting multiple threats simultaneously.

## Game Mechanics

*Collapse of Rome* was designed to let the player experience the broad range of difficulties which the Roman Empire faced from the third century until its final fall. Toward this end, the game simulates the following historically accurate behaviors.

- Provinces will automatically pay tax and raise legions.
- Legions will demand donatives (cash bonuses), draining the treasury.
- Plagues will periodically halt tax collection and the recruiting of legions.
- Legions which win battles will occasionally rebel.
- Legions will disband if there are insufficient funds to pay them.
- Barbarians and Sassanids will invade from the north and east respectively.
- Peace along the Rhine/Danube frontier can be secured by paying tribute to the Germanic tribes.
- Losing control of North Africa will result in food riots in Rome.
- Losing control of Italy will result in the treasury being looted.

This game was designed based on my own experience working with middle school students as well as several research articles on educational gaming. It is designed to be easy for non-gamers to learn, yet challenging for students who may already be accomplished gamers. Integral to the game are concise history lessons which activate when the game turn corresponds to an important year in Roman history. These history lessons have audio narration so that below grade level readers can still learn the material. Gifted and talented students can use the map editor to create historical or counterfactual scenarios and then play them, or simply play the built in historical scenarios. The game is coupled with an online study guide and a quiz which can be used as a pre-test and post-test. A set of debriefing questions is provided in the download area of the game's website (<http://mrwrightteacher.net/rome/download.html>) to help the teacher facilitate a discussion tying the experience of game play to the text-book material.