This text presents a detailed coverage of three crucial centuries in the history of the Roman people: the second and first centuries BC and the first century AD. It examines major issues including the development of the Roman republican form of government, Roman expansion in the Mediterranean, the decline of the republic, the founding of the principate and the Julio-Claudian period.

The introductory chapters will familiarise students with the source material and give them an understanding of those events and influences which played a large part in moulding the character of the Romans and the nature of their institutions. These chapters are essential reading for any student who wishes to understand clearly the complicated political history of the second and first centuries BC.

The ancient sources and archaeological material serve both to describe events and to allow students to evaluate and interpret historical documents and pictorial evidence. Throughout the text exercises enable students to recognise differing interpretations, distinguish between fact and opinion and discern bias.

The book contains many guided assignments, revision exercises, map summaries, diagrams and time lines, which will extend the students knowledge and appreciation of Ancient Rome.

Also available: Ancient Greece: Using Evidence
Ancient Egypt: Reconstructing the Past
ANCIENT ROME

deprieve him of an important provincial post, it would never satisfy anyone as ambitious as Caesar.

Caesar now saw the possibilities for exploiting the difficulties that Pompey and Crassus were having with the optimates. He needed powerful supporters in order to be elected, particularly since Cato and his associates put all their resources behind one of his competitors, Bibulus (Cato’s son-in-law). Caesar had supported Pompey in the past (concerning lex Gabinia and lex Manilia) and had worked with Crassus before; he therefore hoped that they would support him now.

Since Pompey’s use of ineffective consuls (Piso and Afranius) and a tribune (Flavius) had failed to get him what he wanted, he had no alternative but to back Caesar, regardless of the possible consequences,

if he was not to recede into insignificance, have his credit with the veterans and the common people destroyed, his godlike stature in the provinces and the Kingdoms of the East undermined and his self-respect in shreds. 49

Crassus had short-term objectives which Caesar could satisfy as consul, but he also needed to safeguard himself in the long term against Pompey, and a political coalition with Caesar would achieve this.

This period is marked by the political alliance between Pompey, Caesar and Crassus which was formed to further their own ends in the face of opposition from the optimates. Almost from the beginning the so-called First Triumvirate was put under pressure from those—for instance, Cicero—who wished to see its destruction and from ambitious men such as Clodius, who fought for their share of political power. Intrigue, gang warfare, street violence, massive bribery, and murder were commonplace.

The rivalry between Pompey and Caesar for supremacy within the state eventually led to a civil war (49–44) which involved the whole Roman empire, since these men had established enormous provincial clientelae
during their years of extraordinary commands. Caesar’s pre-eminence as a result of his victory over the Pompey-led senatorial forces was cut short by his assassination, but his death did not result in a return to the old republican form of government as his assassins and Cicero had hoped would happen. A second civil war between Antony (Caesar’s lieutenant) and Octavian (Caesar’s heir) eventually led to the establishment of one-man rule.

The ‘First Triumvirate’—the coalition of Pompey, Crassus and Caesar, 60–53

The agreement of Pompey, Crassus and Caesar to work together for their own ends has been misleadingly called the ‘First Triumvirate’ by modern historians. A triumvirate was a legally established body, whereas the alliance between Pompey, Crassus and Caesar was not official and for some time remained secret. The exact date of its formation is not known, but it is believed that there were still some negotiations going on well after Caesar’s election to the consulship.

To increase the political effectiveness of the coalition, Caesar had to reconcile Pompey and Crassus. They had never really been on good terms, and even during their first consulship in 70 there had only been an uneasy co-operation. Caesar’s appeal for the three of them to work together was accepted, although it is doubtful if the other two thought beyond the short-term satisfaction of their own needs.

A coalition of this kind was not unusual in Rome. Political friendships or partnerships (amicitia) were normal in Roman politics. There were two aspects of this one, however, which made it different: the combined power of the three men—who between them had prestige, wealth, popularity with the people, the support of the equites and armed force if necessary (vetereasa)—and the dramatic repercussions of their failure to sustain the alliance.

Many historians, both ancient and modern, trace the civil war in 49 between Pompey and Caesar back to the formation of the triumvirate. Scullard maintains that

its formation was a turning point in the history of the Free State, and it was, as both Cicero and Cato recognised, the ultimate origin of the Civil War of 49 BC.1

Plutarch comments that

the first disaster and the worst had been, not the quarrel and split between Caesar and Pompey, but the friendship and harmony that had existed between them.1

1 ANCIENT ROME

FROM THE FIRST TRIUMVIRATE TO THE DEATH OF CAESAR, 60 – 44

Pompey’s needs
Land for his veterans
The eastern settlement ratified ‘en bloc’

Crassus’ needs
A rebate for the equestrian tax-farmers
Continued frustration by Cato and the optimates

Caesar’s needs
The consulship for 59
A province for 58 to give scope for his military ability

Gains for Pompey
An agrarian bill plus a supplementary lex Campania for his veterans and the urban poor
Ratification of eastern arrangements

Gains for Crassus
A rebate of one-third of the contract price to the equestrian tax-farmers

Gains for Caesar
The provinces of Cisalpine Gaul, Illyricum and Transalpine Gaul for five years

Triumvirate under pressure
58 – 56
The conference at Luca 56
Renewal at the ‘Triumvirate’

Second joint consulship of Pompey and Crassus 55

Pompey’s gains
The provinces at Spain — permission to govern through legates.

Crassus’ gains
The province of Syria — military campaign in 55/53

Caesar’s gains
Extension of command in Gaul for a further five years.

Death of Julia, Pompey’s wife, Caesar’s daughter in 54
Death of Crassus at Carrhae in 53
Breakdown of the triumvirate

An overview of the triumvirate of Pompey, Caesar and Crassus
Cicero was reported as having said

Oh Pompey, I wish you had either never formed an alliance with Caesar or never broken it.\(^3\)

Velleius Paterculus believed

its results were to bring ruin to the city, the world, and even, at different times, to each of the three men.\(^4\)

If the formation of the coalition in 60 was the cause of the civil war in 49, then Cato must bear much of the blame, for he and the optimates ‘drove Pompeius into Caesar’s arms’.\(^5\)

Caesar’s first consulship, 59

Caesar, the popularis, was elected with the individual backing of Pompey and Crassus. His colleague in the consulship was the conservative Calpurnius Bibulus, Cato’s son-in-law.

Caesar wasted no time in preparing his program of legislation, but he realised the difficulties ahead. The Senate was hostile towards him, his colleague’s purpose was to check his actions, it was obvious that Cato would continue to oppose him, and many of the tribunes were ready to fight for the nobles.

He adopted a conciliatory attitude at first by treating Bibulus with courtesy and consulting the Senate. A moderate bill to provide for Pompey’s veterans was presented to the Senate, and Caesar indicated that he was willing to accept amendments if the objections were reasonable.

The Senate spurned his offer of compromise; he was met with prolonged and systematic obstruction, so he presented his land bill to the Assembly. Bibulus vetoed the bill and when Caesar asked him publicly to withdraw the veto, he refused. Caesar then realized that he would only be able to carry the bill in open defiance of the law, and would have to resort to the threat of force. He called on Pompey and Crassus, who had remained in the background, to express their approval. According to Plutarch, Caesar ‘brought Pompey out openly in front of the people on the speaker’s platform and asked him whether he approved of the new laws. Pompey said that he did’.\(^6\) When Caesar went further and asked him if he would defend the people’s rights if their opponents used force, Pompey is supposed to have replied, ‘if it is a question of swords, [he] could produce a sword and a shield as well’.\(^7\) It is unlikely that Plutarch is strictly correct when he says that Pompey ‘filled the city with his soldiers and held everyone down by force’;\(^8\) it is more likely that some of his veterans (who were private citizens at this point) were brought into the Forum. Some

Caesar is said to have been tall, fair and well-built, with a rather broad face and keen, dark-brown eyes. His health was sound apart from sudden comas and a tendency to nightmares, which troubled him towards the end of his life; but he twice had epileptic fits while on campaign. He was something of a dandy, always keeping his head carefully trimmed and shaved, and has been accused of having certain other hairy parts of his body depilated with tweezers. His baldness was a diatogy which his enemies harped upon, much to his exasperation, but he used to comb the thin strands of hair forward from his poll, and of all the honours voted him by the Senate and the People, none pleased him so much as the privilege of wearing a laurel wreath on all occasions — he constantly took advantage of it. (Suetonius, Julius Caesar, 45)