

CHAPTER  
**5**  
SECTION 5

**Note Taking Study Guide**

**THE LONG DECLINE**

**Focus Question:** How did military, political, social, and economic factors combine to cause the fall of the western Roman empire?

*As you read this section in your textbook, complete the chart below to list the causes of the fall of the western Roman empire.*

<b>Causes of the Fall of the Western Roman Empire</b>	<b>Economic</b>	•	•	•	•
	<b>Political</b>	•	•	•	•
	<b>Social</b>	•	•	•	
	<b>Military</b>	•	•	•	•

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**Section Summary**

**THE LONG DECLINE**

In about the A.D. 200s, the Roman empire began to weaken. The golden age of the *Pax Romana* had ended. Rome suffered political and economic turmoil and a decline in the traditional values that had been the empire's foundation.

The oppressive government and corrupt upper class generated hostility among the lower classes. High taxes to support the army and government burdened business people and local farmers. Over and over, emperors were assassinated or overthrown by ambitious generals eager for power. Political violence and instability dominated Rome.

In 284, the emperor **Diocletian** set out to restore order. He divided the empire into two parts. He appointed a co-emperor, Maximian, to rule the western provinces, and he controlled the eastern part. To help strengthen the weak economy, Diocletian slowed **inflation**, or a rapid rise of prices, by establishing fixed prices for many goods and services.

When the emperor Constantine came into power, he continued Diocletian's reforms. In addition, he granted toleration to Christians and moved the empire's capital to **Constantinople**, making the eastern empire the center of power.

While these reforms helped improve the situation in the empire, they failed to stop the long-term decline. Nomadic people from Asia, called **Huns**, were forcing Germanic peoples into Roman territory. Fierce battles ensued. By 410, Rome itself was under attack. By then, the empire had surrendered much of its territories to invaders. Roman power was fading.

There were several reasons for Rome's decline, but the primary reason was the many invasions. Rome's legions were not as strong nor as loyal as they had been. To get more soldiers, Rome hired **mercenaries**, or foreign soldiers serving for pay, to defend its borders. Many were Germanic warriors who did not feel loyalty toward Rome. As Roman citizens were suffering the consequences of a declining empire, patriotism diminished. The upper class, which had once provided leaders, now devoted itself only to luxury and the pursuit of prestige. The Roman empire finally "fell" in 476, when Germanic invaders captured Rome and ousted the emperor. The power of Rome had ended.

**Review Questions**

1. How did Diocletian help slow inflation?

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2. How did the Huns contribute to the fall of Rome?

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**READING CHECK**

How did Diocletian attempt to restore order in the Roman empire?

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**VOCABULARY STRATEGY**

What does the word *prestige* mean in the underlined sentence? Apply your prior knowledge of the word *prestige* and a related word, *prestigious*, to figure out what *prestige* means.

**READING SKILL**

**Recognize Multiple Causes**

What are three main reasons for Rome's decline?

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