

## Foundations of Rome

**Hellenism:** Love of Greek things, wanting to spread Greek culture throughout the world (this is what Alexander the Great believed)

Because of *Hellenism*, Roman culture would be greatly dependent on the Greek Empire for its political, cultural, and military structures. Just think about the Roman Senate, the Roman gods, and the phalanx. However, the founding of Rome is still wrapped in mystery (although probably the Sabine Myth is the closest). Part of the reason that there are questions about the founding of Rome is that as time went on, the Romans rewrote their origin story to meet the needs of those in power (think about the The New 52 from DC Comics).

### Romulus & Remus

Twin boys were abandoned on the side of the road, remember that this is called *exposure*, and left to die. A “she-wolf” (yes, she’s called a “she-wolf” in Latin, not just a female wolf) came and loved them, raising them as their own. When they grew up, they would build a wall dividing the land, and pick fights with each other. (Think about how in tv shows, anytime a pair of siblings shares a room, they end up getting into a fight and dividing it with a tape line.) One day, Remus jumped over the wall, making Romulus super-mad, and then they really fought. Romulus killed Remus and became the sole leader of the area, and named it after himself: Rome.



Aeneas carries Anchises from Troy.  
The image of Creusa follows behind.  
Red-figure vase of c. 460 B.C.

### The Aeneid by Virgil

Aeneas was one of the “Sons of Troy” that survived the Trojan War. He escaped Troy, holding his small son’s hand and carrying his elderly father on his back. After an *arduous* (long and difficult) journey, he finally made it to the Seven Hills that would become Rome. There he founded the city of Rome, and later his descendents would be Julius Caesar and Augustus. The story was written to give these men Hellenistic legitimacy, and to show that the history of Rome was epic. The Aeneid was an epic poem written by Virgil, paid for by Augustus. The book also *espoused* (promoted) the ideals of a “Moral Rome” which was Augustus’ plan for the empire. Virgil died before completing the poem (it’s really long, like The Iliad and

Odyssey), and it was finished by someone else. This is not a reliable foundation story, but was really popular during the reign of Augustus.

## The Sabine Women

This is probably the most likely scenario for what happened during the last stages of the founding of Rome. There was a group of people, that lived where the Seven Hills of Rome were, called the Sabines. This was a monarchical group of people, where men were in charge and that lived a relatively calm life. There was another group of men that wanted the land, and requested to intermarry with the Sabine women. This was denied. So one night, the men snuck into the Sabine camps and stole away all the women that they wanted. Since the greatest shame a woman could bring upon her family was to have sex outside of marriage (whether it was consensual or not), it was assumed that the women had shamed their family after the men had stolen them for a whole night. The women were then forced to marry the men that stole them. (The exception was Lucretia, who refused to be a shameful blot on her family's honor, and committed suicide. Throughout Victorian England, Lucretia was seen as a virtue of womanly values, and how women should act to protect their families.) The intermarriage of these two groups created the first "Romans."

