

Name _____

Romulus and Remus

By Vickie Chao

Every ancient culture had a story about its origin. Rome was no exception. The thing about those stories is that most of them, if not all, were just legends. As legends, their reality is in question. The lack of supporting evidence makes us unsure if the events actually took place or not. Though the truth may be lost forever, we should not discount those stories. They give us a theory of how everything began.

Here is the legend about Rome.

A long time ago, there was a small country called Alba Longa. Numitor was the king of this small country. One day, Amulius, Numitor's evil brother, decided to become king himself. He staged a coup and sent Numitor to exile. After claiming the throne successfully, Amulius turned his focus on Rhea Silvia, Numitor's daughter.



Amulius was not afraid of Rhea Silvia. But he was afraid of the children she could have when she married. He thought the children would be a big threat. They could seek revenge and overthrow him. How horrible that would be!

As Amulius pondered a solution, a great idea came to mind. He could make his niece a priestess to the goddess of Vestal. As a priestess, she could never get married and have children. Without the children, he would have nothing to worry about. Pleased with the idea, he saw to it right away. He forced Rhea Silvia to take a vow and become a priestess to the goddess of Vestal. He had her living in a temple.

For a while, the plan seemed to be working as Amulius had hoped. Then, an unexpected thing happened.

Mars, the god of war, visited Rhea Silvia in the temple. The two fell in love. Several months later, Rhea Silvia gave birth to twin boys. When Amulius heard the news, he was very mad! He did not like surprises! To control the damage, he gave out two orders. The first was to put his niece in a prison. The second was to put the babies in a basket and throw the whole thing into the River Tiber. Amulius thought he had everything taken care of this time. He was happy again.

Unknown to him, the babies did not die. The current washed the basket ashore. Once it reached dry land, a she-wolf (female wolf) came and nurtured the two boys with her milk. She stayed and looked after them for quite some time. Then, a shepherd named Faustulus found the two boys. He brought them home. He and his wife adopted them. They named the twins Romulus (pronounced "RAHM-yuh-lus") and Remus (pronounced "REE-mus").

Years went by. The twins grew up healthy and strong. They became shepherds like Faustulus. One day Remus had a fight with another group of shepherds. He lost and was sent to face those shepherds' boss, Numitor. When Numitor saw Remus, he noticed how unusual the young man was. He asked him a lot of questions. Before long, Numitor realized that this young man was not an ordinary shepherd. He was his grandson! After a tearful reunion, he told Romulus and Remus what had happened all those years ago.

Upon hearing of Amulius's devious acts, Romulus and Remus were very mad. They vowed to seek revenge and overthrow their great uncle. True to their words, they did exactly that. They killed Amulius. And they restored Numitor as the rightful king of Alba Longa.

Romulus and Remus stayed with their grandfather in Alba Longa for a while. But they got bored. They decided to go back to the place where Faustulus had found them and build a city there. As the construction was underway, Romulus and Remus argued over the height of the city walls. Romulus thought the walls were fine. Remus disagreed. He insisted that they were too low. The two bickered and fought. In the midst of argument,

Remus jumped over the walls to prove his point. Romulus was furious. He did not like to be mocked or teased. He charged toward his twin brother and killed him on the spot! With Remus gone, Romulus became the sole ruler of this new city that stood over seven hills. He named it after himself. He called it Rome. The year, according to the legend, was 753 B.C.

In the early days of Rome, its citizens were an undesirable bunch. As outlaws and fugitives, they were the residents that no other city would take. Romulus, however, did not care. He invited them to stay. Soon after they settled in, they noticed that the city had more men than women. To solve the problem, Romulus decided to steal women from the Sabines, a tribe living nearby. He organized a festival and asked the Sabines to come and celebrate with his people. When the Sabines arrived, the Romans abducted their women. This daring act made the Sabine men very angry. They went back and prepared for war. As the two sides collided, the abducted women stepped in. They pleaded with men on both sides to make peace. Their words worked. The war stopped. The Romans and the Sabines united. Romulus and Titus Tatius, the Sabine king, ruled the new nation together. Several years later, Titus Tatius died. After that, Romulus governed alone for about three decades.

The rumor had it that Romulus did not die of old age. He merely disappeared in a violent storm on February 17, 717 B.C. The Romans believed that he had been taken up to heaven on that day and made a god. They began to worship him under the name of Quirinus. To show their respect, they had a festival in his honor once a year on February 17. They called the festival Quirinalia.

Now you know the legend of Romulus and Remus. Do you think the story is true?

Romulus and Remus

Questions

- _____ 1. For how many years did Romulus rule Rome?
- A. 62 years
 - B. 71 years
 - C. 36 years
 - D. 47 years
- _____ 2. Whom was Rome named after?
- A. Romulus
 - B. Remus
- _____ 3. Who discovered Romulus and Remus first when they were abandoned to die in the River Tiber?
- A. a donkey
 - B. a she-wolf
 - C. a cat
 - D. a dog
- _____ 4. According to the legend, what year was Rome built?
- A. 717 B.C.
 - B. 753 B.C.
 - C. 726 B.C.
 - D. 792 B.C.

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Date _____

- _____ 5. Who was the first ruler of Rome?
- A. Romulus
 - B. Titus Tatius
 - C. Remus
 - D. Amulius
- _____ 6. Why did Romulus kill Remus?
- A. because Remus committed a crime
 - B. because Remus stole his money
 - C. because Remus mocked him
 - D. because Remus wanted to kill him
- _____ 7. How many hills was Rome built on?
- A. seven
 - B. eleven
 - C. five
 - D. nine
- _____ 8. Who was Romulus and Remus's father?
- A. Numitor
 - B. Mars
 - C. Titus Tatius
 - D. Amulius
- _____ 9. On what day did the Romans celebrate Quirinalia?
- A. December 25
 - B. February 17
 - C. January 11
 - D. July 14
- _____ 10. What was Remus's first job?
- A. a shepherd
 - B. a security guard
 - C. a fisherman
 - D. a soldier

The Romans abducted the Sabine women. When the Sabines men came to fight for them, the abducted women pleaded with men on both sides to make peace. Why do you think the women asked the Sabines and the Romans to get along? What reasons might they have had for not wanting their tribesmen to fight to rescue them?

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Do you think the story of Romulus and Remus is true? Explain your answer using supporting evidence from the reading. .
