# Economic Causes

**During the *Pax Romana*, bustling trade flowed over routes patrolled by Roman legions and ships. Rome's treasuries were enriched by gold and silver taken from conquered territories. Most important of all, the empire's farms grew enough grain to feed the population of the cities. During the third century C.E., all three sources of prosperity evaporated.**

**Economic problems were widespread in the empire. Heavier and heavier taxes were required to support the vast government bureaucracy and huge military establishment. The Roman economy suffered from inflation (an increase in prices) beginning after the reign of Mar Aurelius.**

**Once the Romans stopped conquering new lands, the flow of gold into the Roman economy decreased. Yet much gold was being spent by the Romans to pay for luxury items. The coins became less valuable. To make up for this loss in value, merchants raised the prices on the goods they sold.**

**The higher taxes imposed by the government caused many poor farmers to abandon their lands. The use of cheap slave labor had discouraged improvements in technology. Serious food shortages resulted for all these reasons**. **In addition the population itself declined as war and epidemic diseases swept the empire.**

**Directions: Using the documents and images at the station, answer the questions that follow. On the back of this document be prepared to create your own summary synthesizing why economic causes helped to cause the fall of Rome in 476 C.E**

Document : PEI / Switzerland Gold 1995.

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Document :Peter Stearns, The Global Experience .

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Document : Uses of the past Herbert J. Muller. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Document : Edward Gibbon, History of the Decline.

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