

Romulus and Remus

retold by Stephanie Paris

The Roman Empire was huge! Maybe you have heard the saying “All roads lead to Rome.” This is because the city of Rome was very important. It was the most important city in Europe. This lasted for hundreds of years. The Roman Empire went from Britain to Egypt. It went from Spain to Syria. But the huge empire started with one city. And that city started with a story.

Long ago, there were two brothers. One was named Numitor. The other was Amulius. Numitor was king of Alba Longa. But his brother tricked him. Amulius took the throne. Numitor was sent away. His daughter was Rhea Silva. She was forced to become a priestess. She had to serve the goddess Vesta. She could not marry. She could not have children. Amulius did not want her to have any male heirs. He was afraid they might want to be king.

Rhea Silva was very beautiful. Mars fell in love with her. He was the god of war. Soon, the two were married. It was a secret. The couple met in hidden places. They sneaked around. They hoped no one would see them. They were careful. But Rhea gave birth to twins. They could not hide it. Amulius was angry! The king took the twins. He put them in a trough. He put it in the river Tiber. He wanted them to drown. He hoped they would be eaten by animals.

Were the babies killed? No. That would make this a very short story! The babies landed safely. They were found by animals. One was a she-wolf. The other was a woodpecker. Some guessed that Mars sent them. They could help his sons. The she-wolf nursed the twins. She treated them like her pups. And the woodpecker brought food. This was strange. But the boys did well. A short time passed. Then they were found by a shepherd. He was named Faustulus.



Faustulus had a wife, Loba. They adopted the babies. The twins were cared for. They were loved. The babies grew into boys. The boys grew into young men. Then as happens in stories like this, the twins found out who they were. They learned they were princes. They felt they had a purpose. The shepherds became warriors. They raised an army. They swore to cast out Amulius. They would put Numitor back on the throne.

Battles were won. Deals were struck. The twins won. Their grandfather, Numitor, was again king! The brothers celebrated. But they could not go back. They did not want to be shepherds. They were used to leading. It would be long before their grandfather died. It would be long before they inherited his crown. Instead, they decided to build a city. It would be their own. They both knew where to go. They went to the place where the she-wolf had found them. They went to the banks of the river Tiber.



Here the story gets sad. Romulus and Remus argued. Romulus wished to build on the Palatine Hill. Remus wanted the Aventine Hill. Both were good places. Neither brother would give in. Each started his own city on his favorite spot.

One day, Remus came to visit his brother. He wanted to see how the building was going. He saw the low wall. He teased Romulus. “A child could get over this wall!” he cried. Then he leaped over the stones. He wanted to prove his point. Romulus got very angry. He raised a rock. He struck his brother. He killed Remus! It was an accident. He cried for his twin. But Romulus said, “So die everyone who should leap over the walls of my city!”

Romulus named the city Rome. It was named after him. He declared himself king. The city needed people. The first ones were criminals! There were runaway slaves, too. After a war, Rome linked up with two tribes. One was the Sabines. The other was the Latins. Together, they got more land. They made the city into a kingdom. Then Numitor died. The people of Alba Longa made Romulus their king. They became part of Rome. So Rome grew. It got bigger from the very start! At last, Romulus became old. Death was coming. His father, Mars, returned. The god cast a whirlwind upon the Earth. It took his son up into the heavens. Jupiter made him a god. Then Romulus was known as Quirinus. He was worshipped. He was celebrated by the people of Rome.

Element Focus: Character

How might you have done things differently from how Romulus did them?

Romulus and Remus

retold by Stephanie Paris

The Roman Empire was vast! Maybe you have heard the saying “All roads lead to Rome.” This is because for many hundreds of years, the city of Rome was the most important city in Europe. At one point, the Roman Empire stretched from Britain to Egypt. It went from Spain to Syria. But that huge empire started with a single city. And that city started with a story.

In ancient times, there was a pair of brothers. They were named Numitor and Amulius. Numitor was king of Alba Longa. But his brother tricked him. Amulius seized the throne. Numitor was sent away. His daughter’s name was Rhea Silva. She was forced to become a priestess of the goddess Vesta. Vestal priestesses could not marry. They could not have children. Amulius did not want her to give birth to any male heirs. He was afraid they might want to take the throne.

Rhea Silva was very beautiful. Mars fell in love with her. He was the god of war. Soon, the two were secretly wed. The couple met in hidden places. They sneaked around so no one would see them. They were careful. They kept their relationship secret. But then Rhea gave birth to twins. The union could not be denied. Amulius was furious! The king took the twins. He put them in a trough. He sent them down the river Tiber. He wanted them to drown. He hoped that they would be eaten by some wild beasts.

But what if the children had been killed? This would not be much of a story! Instead, they landed safely on the shore. They were found by a she-wolf and a woodpecker. Some guessed that Mars sent these animals. They could help his sons. Both animals are sacred to Mars. The she-wolf nursed the twins. She treated them like her own pups. And the woodpecker brought other food. This was strange. But, the boys thrived. After a short time, they were found by a shepherd. He was named Faustulus.



Faustulus and his wife, Loba, adopted the babies. They were cared for and loved. The babies grew into boys. And the boys grew into young men. Then as happens in tales of this kind, the twins found out who they were. They learned they were princes. Romulus and Remus felt they had a greater purpose. The shepherds became warriors. They raised an army. They swore to cast out Amulius. They would restore Numitor to the throne.

Battles were won. Deals were struck. And in the end, the twins succeeded. Their grandfather, Numitor, was once again king! The brothers celebrated. But they understood that they could not go back to being shepherds. Now they were used to leading. They did not wish to await their grandfather's death. It would take too long to divide his kingdom. Instead, they decided to build a city of their own. They both knew where the city would be. They went to the place where the she-wolf had found them. They went to the banks of the river Tiber.



Alas, it is here that the story gets sad. Romulus and Remus quarreled. They did not agree on the exact location for their walled city. Romulus wished to build on the Palatine Hill. Remus preferred the Aventine Hill. Both were good places. Neither brother would give in. They each began to build their own city in his own favored spot.

One day, Remus came to visit his brother and see how his construction was going. He saw the low wall that Romulus had built. He teased Romulus. "This wall could be breached by a child!" he cried. Then he leaped over the stones to prove his point. In a fit of rage, Romulus raised a rock and struck his brother. He accidentally killed Remus! Though he grieved for his twin, Romulus announced, "So perish everyone who should leap over the walls of my city!"

Romulus named the city Rome after himself and declared himself king. The city was populated at first by fugitives, runaway slaves, and criminals. After a war, Rome linked up with the tribes of the Sabines and Latins. Together, the groups began to expand and strengthen the new city into a kingdom. When Numitor died, the people of Alba Longa declared Romulus their rightful king as well. And so Rome was growing and expanding from the very start! When at last Romulus became old and approached death, his father, Mars, returned. The god cast a whirlwind upon the Earth. He took his son up into the heavens, and Jupiter granted him godhood. Thenceforth, Romulus was known as the god Quirinus. He was worshipped and celebrated among the people of Rome.

Element Focus: Character

For what reasons do you like or dislike the character of Romulus?

Romulus and Remus

retold by Stephanie Paris

The Roman Empire was vast! Maybe you have heard the saying “All roads lead to Rome.” This is because for many hundreds of years, the city of Rome was the most important city in Europe. At the height of its glory, the Roman Empire stretched from modern Britain to Egypt and from modern Spain to Syria. But that enormous empire started with a single city. And that city started with a story.

In ancient times, there lived a pair of royal brothers named Numitor and Amulius. Numitor was king of Alba Longa until his brother tricked him. Amulius seized the throne for himself. Numitor lived in exile, but his daughter, Rhea Silva, was forced to become a priestess of the goddess Vesta. Vestal priestesses were not allowed to marry or have children. Amulius did not want her to give birth to any male heirs that might challenge him for the throne.

Rhea Silva, however, was very beautiful. Even as a Vestal, she soon attracted the attention of the war god, Mars. Despite her vows, the two were secretly wed. The couple met in concealed places. They sneaked into abandoned corners to see each other. Always careful, they kept their relationship hidden. But when Rhea gave birth to twins, the union could no longer be denied. Amulius was furious! The king took the twins and put them in a trough, floating them down the river Tiber. He hoped that they would drown or be eaten by some wild beasts.

But, of course, if the children had been killed then and there, this would not be much of a story! Instead, they came to rest safely on the shore of the river. There they were found by a she-wolf and a woodpecker. Some guessed that Mars sent these creatures to help his sons. The wolf and the woodpecker are both animals sacred to the god of war. Whatever the case, the she-wolf nursed the twins as her own pups. The woodpecker brought other food to nourish them. Despite this odd arrangement, the boys thrived. After a short while, they were found by a shepherd named Faustulus.



Faustulus and his wife, Loba, adopted them. Cared for and loved, the babies grew into young men. Then, Romulus and Remus discovered their true identities. As princes, Romulus and Remus felt they had a purpose. They became warriors. They raised an army and swore to cast out Amulius and restore Numitor to the throne.

Battles were won. Deals were struck. And in the end, the twins succeeded in their goal. Their grandfather, Numitor, was once again king! The brothers celebrated their success. But they understood now that they could not go back to being shepherds. The young men were accustomed to leading. They did not wish to await their grandfather's death so they would divide his kingdom. Instead, they determined to build a city of their own. There was never a doubt in either mind where this city would be. They sought out the place where the she-wolf had found them on the banks of the river Tiber.



Alas, it is here that the story takes a tragic turn. Romulus and Remus quarreled over the exact location for their walled city. Romulus wished to build on the Palatine Hill, while Remus preferred the Aventine Hill. Both were attractive locations, and neither brother would give in. Each began to build his own city in his own favored spot.

One day, Remus came to visit his brother and see how his construction was going. When he saw the low wall that Romulus had built, he mocked him. "This wall could be breached by a child!" he cried, leaping over the stones to prove his point. In a fit of rage, Romulus raised a rock and struck his brother, accidentally killing him! Though he grieved for his twin, Romulus announced, "So perish everyone who should leap over the walls of my city!"

Romulus named the city Rome after himself and declared himself king. The city was populated at first by fugitives, runaway slaves, and criminals. After a war, Rome linked up with tribes of Sabines and Latins. Together, the groups began to expand and strengthen the new city into a kingdom. When Numitor died, the people of Alba Longa declared Romulus their rightful king, as well. And so Rome was growing and expanding from the very start! When at last Romulus became old and approached death, his father, Mars, returned. The god cast a whirlwind upon the Earth. He took his son up into the heavens, and Jupiter granted him godhood. Thenceforth, Romulus was known as the god Quirinus. He was worshipped and celebrated among the people of Rome.

Element Focus: Character

What are some explanations for Romulus's actions?

Romulus and Remus

retold by Stephanie Paris

The Roman Empire was vast! Maybe you have heard the saying “All roads lead to Rome.” This is because for many hundreds of years, the city of Rome was the most important city in Europe. At the height of its glory, the Roman Empire stretched from modern Britain to Egypt and from modern Spain to Syria. But that enormous empire started with a single city, and that city started with a story.

In ancient times, there lived a pair of royal brothers named Numitor and Amulius. Numitor was king of Alba Longa until his brother tricked him. Amulius seized the throne for himself. Numitor lived in exile, but his daughter, Rhea Silva, was forced to become a priestess of the goddess Vesta. Vestal priestesses were not allowed to marry or have children, and Amulius wished to prevent her from giving birth to any male heirs that might challenge him for the throne.

Rhea Silva, however, was very beautiful, and even as a Vestal, she soon attracted the attention of the war god, Mars. Despite her vows, the two were secretly wed. The couple met in concealed places and sneaked into abandoned corners for their rendezvous. They were careful to keep their relationship hidden. But when Rhea gave birth to twins, the union could no longer be denied. Amulius was furious! The king took the twins and put them in a trough, floating them down the river Tiber, hoping that they would drown or be eaten by some wild beasts.

But of course, if the children had been killed then and there, this would not be much of a story! Instead, they came to rest safely on the shore of the river. There they were found by a she-wolf and a woodpecker. Some guessed that Mars sent these creatures to help his sons since the wolf and the woodpecker are both animals sacred to the god of war. Whatever the case, the she-wolf nursed the twins as her own pups, and the woodpecker brought other food to nourish them. Despite this odd arrangement, the boys thrived and survived until they were found by a kindly shepherd named Faustulus.



Faustulus and his wife, Loba, adopted them. Cared for and loved, the babies grew into young men. Then Romulus and Remus discovered their true identities. As princes, Romulus and Remus felt they had a purpose. They became warriors, raising an army and swearing to cast out Amulius and restore Numitor to the throne.

Battles were won, and deals were struck. In the end, the twins succeeded in their goal. Their grandfather, Numitor, was once again king! The brothers celebrated their success, but they now understood that they could not go back to being shepherds. The young men were accustomed to leading and did not wish to await their grandfather's death to divide his kingdom. Instead, they determined to build a city of their own. There was never a doubt in either mind where this city would be. They sought out the place where the she-wolf had found them on the banks of the river Tiber.



Alas, it is here that the story takes a tragic turn. Romulus and Remus quarreled over the exact location for their walled city. Romulus wished to build on the Palatine Hill, while Remus preferred the Aventine Hill. Both were attractive locations, and neither brother would give in. They each began to build his own city in his own favored spot.

One day, Remus came to visit his brother and see how his construction was going. When he saw the low wall that Romulus had built, he mocked him. "This wall could be breached by a child!" he cried, leaping over the stones to prove his point. In a fit of rage, Romulus raised a rock and struck his brother, accidentally killing him! Though he grieved for his twin, Romulus announced, "So perish everyone who should leap over the walls of my city!"

Romulus named the city Rome after himself and declared himself king. The city was populated at first by fugitives, runaway slaves, and criminals. After a war, Rome linked up with tribes of Sabines and Latins. Together, the groups began to expand and strengthen the new city into a kingdom. When Numitor eventually died, the people of Alba Longa declared Romulus their rightful king as well. And so Rome was growing and expanding from the very start! When at last Romulus became old and approached death, his father, Mars, returned. The god cast a whirlwind upon the Earth. He took his son up into the heavens and Jupiter granted him godhood. Thenceforth, Romulus was known as the god Quirinus and was worshipped and celebrated by the people of Rome.

Element Focus: Character

Explain several reasons why the character of Romulus is not a typical heroic protagonist.