

Name _____

Date _____

Ancient Roman Myths

Follow your teacher's instructions for reading and discussing the summaries below with your partner. Above each, complete the head with the type of myth: foundation, political, or moral.

_____ **Myth**

Horatius Cocles was a legendary Roman hero of the late 6th century BCE who defended the bridge across the Tiber when the city was attacked by the Etruscans. He defended the Sublician bridge alone against the entire Etruscan army, giving Romans time to destroy the bridge and defeat the enemy. He then threw himself into the Tiber. According to some versions of the legend, he survived and was able to reach Rome. Other versions indicate he lost his life and drowned in the river.

_____ **Myth**

According to legend, Rome was founded by Romulus and Remus, twin sons of Mars, the god of war. The twins were abandoned in their cradle on the Tiber River, where they were found by a wolf. She looked after them until they were discovered by a shepherd who brought them up. The site said to be the wolf's cave was sacred to the Romans. They made it a shrine and founded a settlement on the Palatine Hill. In the legend, Romulus later killed Remus in a struggle about who was the leader of the new city built on that site. According to the Romans, Romulus became king on April 21, 753 BCE and named the city after himself.

_____ **Myth**

After Romulus' death, royal power was held by members of the Roman Senate for one year, until they elected Numa Pompilius to be the next king. Numa Pompilius was born on April 21, 753 BCE—the day that Rome was founded. Before accepting the position, he consulted the god Jupiter and the omens were favorable, so he took up his position as king of Rome. During his reign, Numa Pompilius claimed to be in direct contact with Jupiter and other gods and goddesses, even having a battle of wits with Jupiter himself when he sought protection from lightning and thunder. When a disease began spreading across Rome, a shield fell from the sky on Palatine Hill, which Numa Pompilius claimed was a protection from Jupiter and which ended the disease.