

The Ultimate Certamen Guide: History

These tips cover Roman history from the monarchy to the fall of the Roman Empire. The information is cumulative; each tournament builds on the content previously learned (e.g. while Fall Forum mainly covers Early Republic to Punic Wars, you are also expected to remember the information about the Monarchy which you should have already studied for the Walton tournament).

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at shirleyhong2000@gmail.com

****the bolded and italicized words are in Latin.**

****Nota Bene:** Cramming will not always work , so please pace yourself. The North Gwinnett Certamen Team depends on you! Bonam fortunam!

****Disclaimer:** this is NOT a study guide; these are TIPS ONLY. YOU MUST study ALL the material , regardless of whether I stress it in the guide or not.

Recommended sources: "Connor Harrison's History Notes for Certamen" and "Outline of Roman History I, II, III" (referred to as "Ketan Rama" notes in this guide), and certamen questions from colleges and states. Use Connor Harrison if you're short on time and use Ketan Rama if you're not busy (using both is preferred). Both sources are available on the website.

The History category covers:

- Important figures
- Wars and battles
- Political and social classes
- Geography
- Architecture
- Culture (there is a separate culture guide)
- Military techniques (sometimes)

The **Novice** level focuses on earlier/better-known events and institutions.

The **Intermediate** level focuses on slightly more obscure information, but there are more questions asking for basic content than obscure content.

The **Advanced** level focuses on relating obscure information to important figures and occurrences. Knowing lots of details will be one of the most important aspects in the advanced level.

Extra Study Tips: If you are a **Novice** or **Intermediate** player using the Connor Harrison or Ketan Rama outline, you are good to go. For **Advanced** players, those notes are fine, but be prepared to really know the material by heart if you want to perform well in rounds. There will be information tossed up that will not specifically be in the notes, so consider reading *A History of Rome* by Max Cary and H.H. Scullard.

Looking at certamen questions in general will strengthen your understanding for the type of questions asked during rounds. Just look up “certamen questions [insert level]” and there’ll be a lot of results from different colleges and states!

Topic: Monarchy

Suggested study time: One week prior to the Walton tournament

Monarchy is fairly easy to study because the content focuses more on the attributes and accomplishments of the kings rather than the dates.

For New Novice Players: Novice is the easiest level. Speed is extremely important in novice: everyone will know the information, but you have to be faster to get the tossup!

For New Intermediate Players: Remember that the intermediate level is just a little harder, so don’t just know the stories: know the basic political/military/social classes and customs as well!

For New Advanced Players: Same time frame as above. The questions in the advanced level are more difficult than intermediate, so know the stories and obscurities by heart, and know the political/military/social classes and changes.

***FOR ALL LEVELS: I have not mentioned any type of architecture/establishment, but you are expected to know all the major ones mentioned in the notes! Most of them are basic information.

For Returning Intermediate Players : Over the course of 7 days up until the tournament, review one king each day, preferably using Connor Harrison/Ketan Rama. Remember: it will not be as easy as novice. Study the stories/political happenings and remember some obscurities.

For Returning Advanced Players: Same time frame as above. You know the drill and the type of questions usually asked. You got this.

Topic: The Early Republic to the Punic Wars

Suggested study time: One week prior to Fall Forum

From this point forward, the advice will apply to all players within a level, regardless of whether or not you are a new or returning player.

Starting from the Republic until the fall of the Empire, remembering dates and years will be crucial.

Some **examples** of questions concerning dates:

-Novice: At what military disaster in 321 B.C. were the Roman forces surrounded by Samnites and forced to walk “under the yoke”? (BATTLE OF) CAUDINE FORKS

-Intermediate: At what battle of 190 B.C. was Scipio Africanus unable to fight due to sickness, being replaced by his brother Scipio Asiaticus and the ex-consul Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus? MAGNESIA

-Advanced: Which emperor reintegrated the Gallic Empire into the Roman Empire by defeating their army at the battle of Chalons in 274 AD? AURELIAN

**examples are from the Yale database

Things to consider: The biggest difference the Republic has from the Monarchy is the way the information is organized. The Monarchy is split nicely in the order of the kings and the important happenings that occurred in each king’s reign. The Republic is not like that; because the political system has changed drastically, it is best to study this time period by reading a couple pages of the guides per day. Studying the Republic by pages rather than by dates is efficient because (1) Connor Harrison and Ketan Rama are not completely chronological (the wars can overlap sometimes), and (2) studying 2 pages a day will help you remember more details than trying to cram.

Also, from here on out you must know the reasons behind certain wars and political decisions. (e.g. the marriage between Caesar’s daughter, Julia, and Pompey sealed the First Triumvirate. This is near the end of the Republic, but it is still a valid example.)

Novice: Same deal with monarchy, speed is most important.

- Know specific years
- Studying the notes is enough
- Learn laws & when they were established

Intermediate: Intermediate is more similar to novice than advanced, so again, the information is not as big of a problem as speed.

- Lesser known figures
- Identify battles by dates (some tossups mention battle year before details)
- Family members of important leaders
- Know laws (see novice)

Advanced: Early Republic doesn't have too many obscurities, but just in case it's good to know minor details about lesser-known battles and figures.

- MUST associate battles names with years at this point
- Know details about battles
- Laws, laws, laws!

Topic: The Punic Wars to the End of the Republic

Suggested study time: Two weeks prior to the Eastside tournament

This is the harder two-thirds of the Republic. It's easier to confuse the accomplishments of different figures and there are many wars to keep track of. Be careful as you study!

Novice: Just because novice level is the easiest does not mean you should only study Julius Caesar. There are many, MANY, figures and wars in this time period, but knowing the specifics of the big ones will help. Again: don't forget the years!

Intermediate: The advice is the same as for novice. Take the notes little by little, and details are important! There are typically more minor occurrences asked in this time period, and knowing specifics should get you to buzz faster! Don't just skip over wars like the Macedonian or Mithridatic Wars: those are actually important! Even if they seem complicated, there are a lot of questions concerning them!

Advanced: It's extremely easy to mix people and wars up here, especially when literally half of the names sound the same. A lot of people have similar accomplishments, so be very careful! Post-Punic Wars are when things start to get complicated and twisted, especially the political and familial relationships among the more significant figures. Again, read the notes little by little and you should be A-OK! Also, don't skim over anything! You need to know as many details as possible for all wars, important occurrences, and figures. This when things start to get obscure!

Topic: The Julio-Claudian Dynasty to the Flavian Dynasty

Suggested study time: Two weeks prior to the Florida/Georgia tournament

We are back to imperial rule! It is much easier to study one emperor at a time in chronological order here. However, it is easy to confuse names of minor figures with each other/other variations of the name (example: Marcus and Marcius, Gaius and Gnaeus, etc.). One wrong syllable can cost you the tossup/bonus! Keep in mind that familial/political relationships will play a major role in the Empire. Be extremely cautious when you get to the Barracks Emperors as well!

Novice: Typically, the information for novice concerning the Empire will be pretty basic. Stick to the notes and you'll be perfectly fine!

Intermediate: The questions will start to get slightly more difficult in intermediate. For instance, the more obscure hints will be mentioned at the beginning of the question while the more well-known hints will be revealed at the very end. This is why it is important to know obscure details!

Advanced: If you didn't think the questions were hard in earlier time periods, you will now! Advanced Empire questions will typically ask about minor figures and details. You REALLY have to dig into the material and know as many details as possible! Make sure you know...

- the rivals/relatives of the emperors
- the Barracks Emperors (mostly the well-known emperors such as Maximinus Thrax, Aurelian, Philip the Arab, the Gordians, etc. Unfortunately, many of the Barracks emperors are considered well-known! Oops!)

Topic: Five Good Emperors to the Diocletian's Retirement

Suggested study time: Three weeks prior to the Lupercalia tournament

The difficulty level of studying increases chronologically throughout the duration of the Empire. You've studied all this material, but there's even more to come! I've mentioned the word "detail" many times already, but it will never end! The deets are just THAT important, especially for intermediate and advanced levels. The material only SEEMS like it gets harder from here because you're losing motivation after memorizing all this information, but it's not! It's the same as studying the Julio-Claudians (except the Tetrarchy, it gets MUCH harder from the Tetrarchy onward).

****Also, BEWARE THE MANY JULIAS IN THE SEVERAN DYNASTY!!!**

Novice: The notes may seem overwhelming, but do the best you can! Make sure you take it piece by piece and prioritize everything before the Tetrarchy if you're really desperate, which you shouldn't be! However, knowing the major figures will benefit you much more than knowing specific details, as you're not expected to know the fairly difficult bits.

Intermediate: As I'm sure you know by now, intermediate will be just a tad bit more difficult in terms of the amount of content you need to know. Top players know ALL of the details, so make sure you know them too! Study hard!

Advanced: DETAILS, DETAILS, DETAILS!!! Build off of the basic information. Luckily, a lot of the advanced questions from this time period ask the same things, but that does not mean you can depend on that! The Tetrarchy is where things start to get iffy: it's like the Republic again except now there are FOUR people ruling at a time and they are all important people doing important things that you need to know about! No need to fear, studying page by page from the notes is manageable and will get you to remember most details!

Topic: Constantine the Great to the End of the Empire

Suggested study time: Two weeks prior the Ides of March tournament

You're almost done! Unfortunately this period gives history players the most trouble: there's action on top of action on top of action. Don't be too overwhelmed: the material is easier than you think. Take it step-by-step and eventually the name "Gratian" won't seem so foreign! You got this!

Novice: Focus on the big shots of this time period (Constantine, Theodosius, etc.). The questions will not typically ask anything too obscure, ESPECIALLY from this time period. In general, there will be more questions from earlier time periods, so don't worry TOO much about obscure emperors like Gaiseric or Arcadius. However, you SHOULD know Romulus Augustulus at the very least (in addition to the more notable figures).

Intermediate: If you use Connor Harrison, I would highly recommend focusing on the emperors with bolded names in this section. The questions are most likely to ask about Constantine and Theodosius, but people like Honorius are just as likely (perhaps a LITTLE less likely, I will admit) to be tossed up.

Advanced: You will most likely hate this section and despise it with your soul. But it's okay! There are only a couple pages more until the end of the timeline. Unfortunately,

you will have to focus more on every emperor in general. Many advanced questions tend to ask about the Late Empire, so it is best to know this time period well.

Congratulations! You made it to the end! The information may seem daunting, but studying Roman history can be really fun if you're surrounded by the right teammates with the right attitude. No matter how hard studying may be, never give up! Persist, and one day that first place trophy can belong to you as well! Bonam fortunam, history player, and thank you for reading until the end.