

A Comparison of Roman and Barbarian Behavior: Rome Loses!

In the fifth century, Romans became increasingly familiar with barbarians such as the Goths, Scythians, Alemanni, and Huns, lessening the fear and hatred with which they viewed the barbarians. Indeed, as Roman society deteriorated and Roman government became more corrupt and ineffective, some Romans began to compare their society with that of the barbarians—and Rome did not always come out the winner. One such critic was the fifth-century Christian poet Salvian, whose essay on the respective merits of Roman and barbarian civilization is presented in this selection.

James Harvey Robinson, ed., *Readings in European History* (Boston: Ginn, 1904), 1:28-30.

Chapter 6: The Pax Romana

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Questions

1. Based on this document, what are the problems extant in Roman society at the time?
2. Why does Salvian maintain that the barbarians are less wicked, corrupt, cruel, and sinful than his fellow Romans?