



The Beginning of Rome

The epic of Rome is the *Aeneid* of Virgil, the greatest poem in the Latin language. Virgil modeled it on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. He tried to connect the origins of Rome to events that

followed the fiery destruction of Troy by the Greeks. From about the 200s B.C., the Romans tried to relate the origins of their gods to the Greek myths. As things turned out, most Roman mythology simply became Greek mythology dressed up with Latin names.

The Roman Venus [VEE-nuhs], who watched over the fertility and flourishing of gardens, assumed identification with Aphrodite [ah-roh-DIE-tee]. Through her son, the Trojan prince Aeneas [ee-NEE-uhs], she came to have a unique role in the stories the Romans developed to connect their origins with the Greek heroic age.



Venus

Aeneas Finds a New Land

As the Greeks burned and conquered the city of Troy, very few of Troy's citizens escaped. Among those that did was Aeneas, a prince. He, his father, and his son fled to the hills where they gathered with other refugees. Aeneas's wife, Creusa [kree-OO-suh], was killed in the mad rush out of the city, but her spirit came to Aeneas and told him that he was destined to find a new home in Italy, and that his descendants would build a beautiful city and empire that would rule the entire world.

Aeneas led the Trojan refugees to the new land, encountering many difficulties along the way. They built a town on the banks of the Tiber River. In time, his son, Ascanius [as-KAN-ee-uhs], grew up and moved to another town, Alba Longa. It was here that the descendants of Aeneas and Ascanius, the twins Romulus [ROM-yoo-luhs] and Remus [REE-muhs], were born.



Romulus and Remus were found and cared for by a mother wolf when they were babies.

Romulus and Remus and the Dream of Rome

The ancient Romans believed that Romulus and Remus were born of a mortal mother and the war god, Mars [MARZ]. The best-known version

Mars = Ares