



Romulus and the Capture of the Sabine Women

ROMULUS founded Rome in the year 753 B.C. After he had built his city he had some difficulty in getting people to live in it. He had only a few followers and was not able to obtain any more. He decided, therefore, to make Rome a place of refuge, to which people who had got into trouble in other countries might come for safety.

And so when those who had committed crime in other places, and had to flee to escape punishment, found out that Romulus would give them a refuge, they came in large numbers to his city. People also came who had been driven from home by enemies, or had run away for one reason or another. It was not long, therefore, until Rome was full of men. There were men from many different tribes and countries. Thus the Roman nation began, and for years it steadily grew and prospered.

But the Romans were much troubled about one thing. A great many of them had no wives, and they could not get any, because the women of the neighboring tribes would not marry them, for the Romans had a bad name. Romulus was very anxious that his people should have good wives, but how they should get them greatly puzzled him for a long time. At last he hit upon a plan and began at once to carry it out.

Note:
After this section, do the page, *Capture of the Sabine Women* in your own history of Rome book.

He sent messengers to the cities all around to announce that on a certain day a great festival in honor of the god Jupiter would be held on the plain in front of Rome. There were to be games, combats, horse-racing, and other sports. The people were invited to attend the festival and also to take part in the contests for the prizes.

When the festival day came, a multitude of men and women from far and near assembled before the walls of Rome. Hundreds of pretty girls were there in fine dresses. A great many came from the Sabine tribe. This was a tribe of warriors that lived on a mountain near Rome.

Suddenly Romulus blew a loud blast upon a horn. Then, quick as a flash, the Romans seized the girls and bore them off to Rome.

Character Study: Write the answer or just answer aloud to someone else.

1. What kinds of people did Romulus invite to live in his new city?
2. Why wouldn't the women of the neighboring tribes marry the Romans?
3. How do you think what the Romans did to get wives affected their reputation? Did it get better, worse, or stay the same? Why?
4. Do you know of an American colony which was started with the idea of giving people who had gotten into trouble a new start? It starts with a "G".

Art Study: The Capture of the Sabine Women

Many artists have painted pictures or formed sculptures of the capture of the Sabine women over the past 2700 years. Here is one by Nicolas Poussin, a French painter, who made this painting in 1637-38 while in Rome.



Capture of the Sabine Women, Nicolas Poussin, 1638

- *This painting does a good job of showing the frenzy and confusion that must have taken place during the event. Answer these questions as you study the painting:*
 1. Who is the man in red overseeing the scene?
 2. What do you think the older woman on her knees near the center of the painting is doing?
- *If you think about it, there are some details which were different from the actual story of the capture:*
 1. Where is the action happening in the painting?
 2. Where did the festival actually take place?
 3. Do you think Rome would have had such large, fine buildings so early in her history?