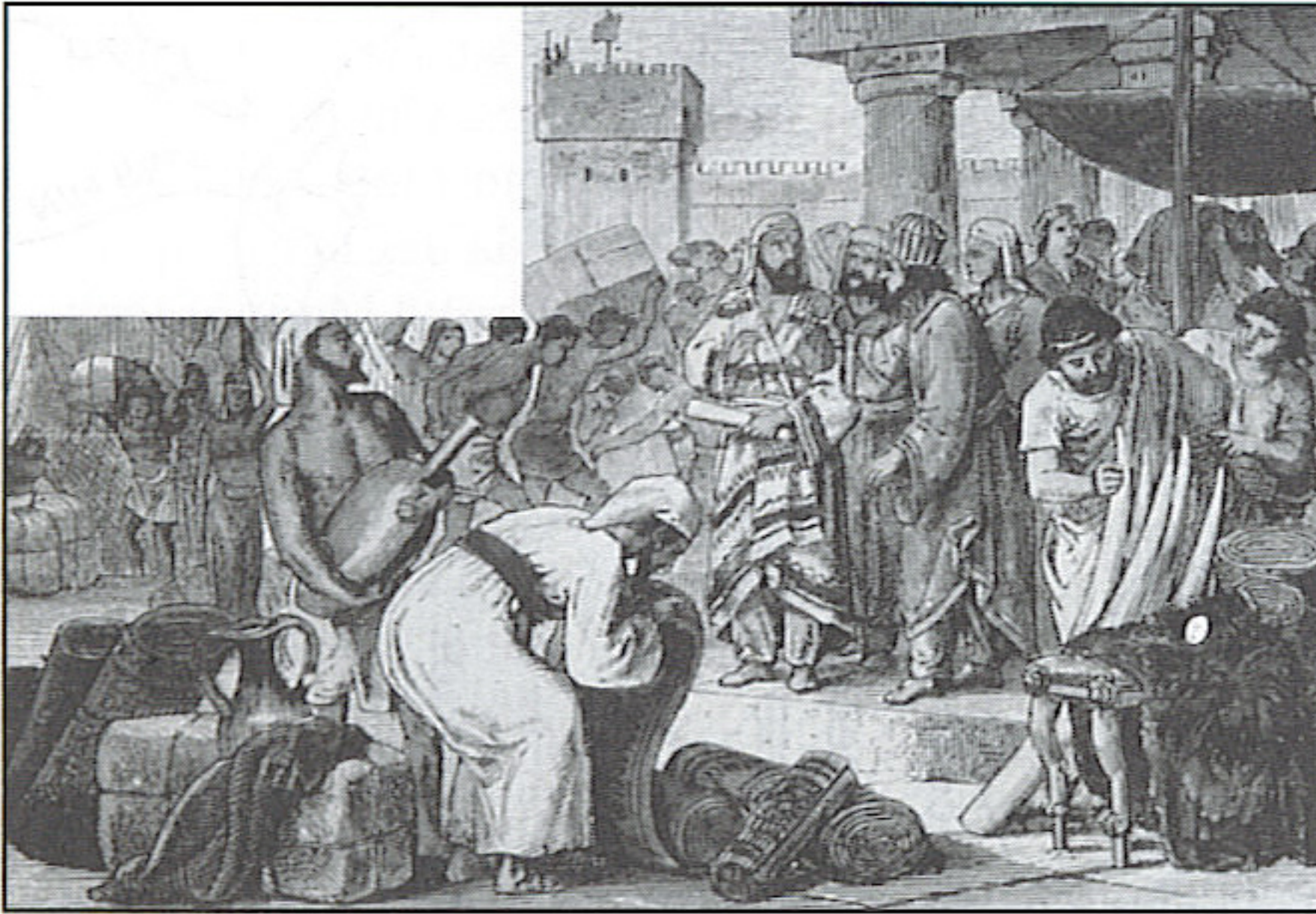


Information About the Punic Wars

Event A: The Rise of Carthage



Like Rome, Carthage (pronounced KAR-thij) began as a small, unremarkable town with little hint of the superpower it would become. Phoenician (pronounced fuh-NEE-shen) traders established Carthage on the shores of Tunisia in North Africa in the mid–eighth century B.C.E. The Phoenicians, who also established several city-states in the eastern Mediterranean, were master shipbuilders and successful merchants. Their powerful warships, called

biremes (pronounced BY-reemz), were propelled by two banks of oars and contained a wooden ram on the bow for making holes in enemy ships. From their most prosperous city-state of Tyre (pronounced TIRE), the Phoenicians used their powerful ships to set up profitable trading colonies on islands throughout the Mediterranean. They also established colonies, such as Carthage, in Spain and North Africa.

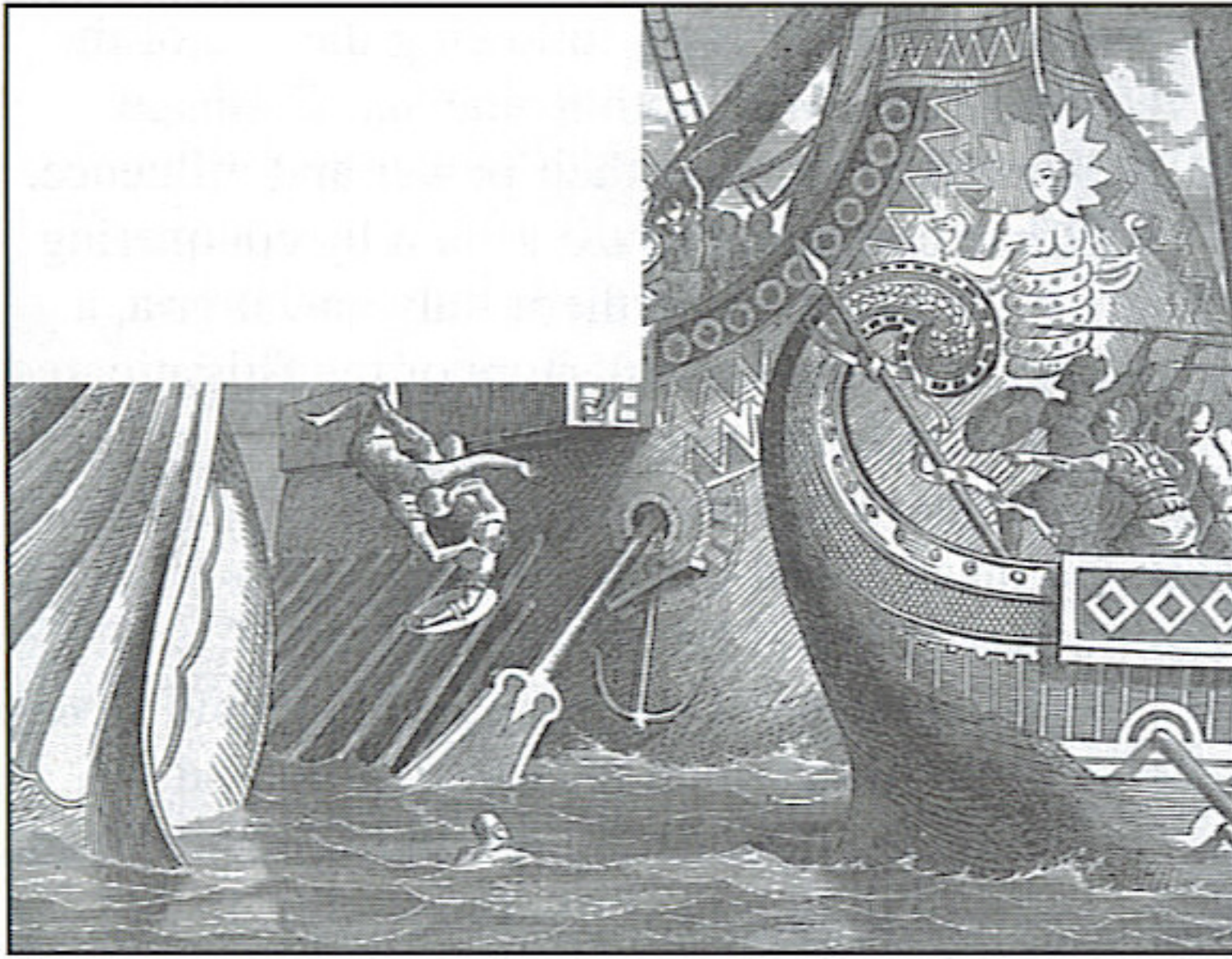
The Phoenicians were attracted to Carthage because of its key geographic position. Carthage was located at the narrowest part of the Mediterranean Sea and contained two excellent harbors. By establishing a trading colony in Carthage, the Phoenicians were able to prevent others from sailing into the western half of the Mediterranean, and to gain complete control of the area. As a result they also had access to Carthage's valuable trade goods, such as lead, ivory, salt, and slaves.

For several decades, Phoenician leaders in Tyre dominated the affairs of Carthage. However, beginning in the 600s B.C.E., invaders from surrounding areas conquered Tyre. Weakened by defeat, the Phoenicians were no longer able to protect the colonies they once held. Soon, other seafaring nations made plans to seize the former Phoenician colonies, including Carthage, which was the largest and the wealthiest.

What happened next? After the collapse of Phoenician power, how do you think Carthage protected itself and expanded?

Notes about the outcome of the event:

Event B: The First Punic War



As Carthage's power in the Mediterranean grew, Rome began to look for ways to limit its rival's expansion. Eventually, competition for control over the western Mediterranean between the two powers erupted into the First Punic War in 264 B.C.E. The incident that sparked the fighting took place in Sicily, when a group of rebellious Sicilian soldiers, called the *Mamertines* (pronounced MAM-er-teenz), seized the town of Messina. Messina was located next to a narrow channel, or *strait*, between the "toe" of the Italian peninsula and Sicily. At first

the Mamertines turned to a local Carthaginian fleet to help them secure control of Messina. However, when it appeared the Carthaginians might use their involvement as an opportunity to conquer all of Sicily, the Mamertines appealed to the Romans for help.

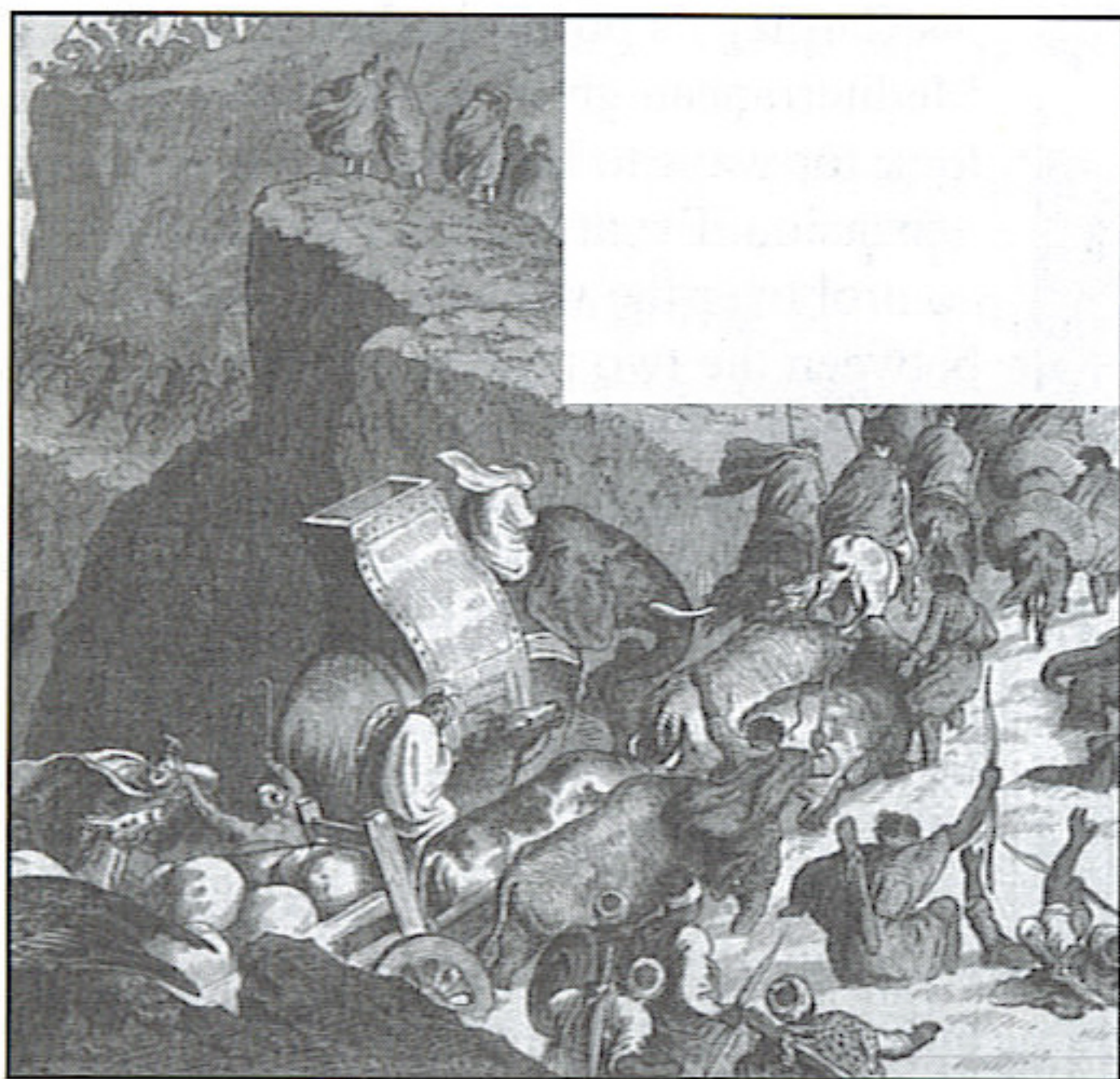
The request from the Mamertines presented an excellent opportunity for the Romans to stop Carthaginian expansion. The Romans believed that by assisting the Mamertines, the Carthaginians had broken a treaty signed by the two nations in the sixth century B.C.E. In the treaty, Carthage and Rome had agreed to stay out of each other's territories. According to this treaty, Italy belonged to the Romans, while the western Mediterranean belonged to the Carthaginians—Sicily was considered territory for both Roman and Carthaginian merchants. Roman leaders accused Carthage of violating this agreement and declared war in 264 B.C.E.

After declaring war, Roman leaders recognized that they faced serious challenges in a conflict with Carthage. Carthage had a strong navy that provided supplies to its army in Sicily. Carthage could also use its navy to blockade Sicilian ports, and thus prevent food and equipment from reaching Roman soldiers. In contrast, the Romans did not have a strong navy and did not know how to build warships. Moreover, they had no experience with training sailors. However, despite these disadvantages, the Romans did have armies of well-trained men who were dependable in battle.

What happened next? What tactics do you think the Romans used to defeat the Carthaginians in the First Punic War?

Notes about the outcome of the event:

Event C: The Beginning of the Second Punic War



During the 20 years following the end of the First Punic War, both Rome and Carthage worked to increase their power and influence. Rome continued its expansion by conquering the Po Valley in northern Italy and Illyria, a region on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea. Carthage, too, increased its strength through the efforts of Hamilcar Barca (pronounced HAM-il-kar BAR-kah). Hamilcar believed that if he created a strong Carthaginian colony in Spain, he would have a place from which to attack Rome and avenge the humiliating defeat his country had suffered during the First Punic War. In 237 B.C.E. he organized an army and prepared to conquer the Spanish peninsula.

Accompanying him on his expedition was his teenage son, Hannibal (pronounced HAN-ih-bul), who shared his father's hatred of Rome and his desire for revenge.

Shortly after Hamilcar drowned in an accident in 229 B.C.E., Hannibal—although only 26 years old—took command of the Carthaginian forces in Spain. The troops were devoted to Hannibal. Even after he became a general, Hannibal ate with his men, dressed like them, and slept on the same hard ground at night. He had a combination of reckless bravery and wise judgment. According to the Roman historian Livy, “he was the first to enter battle and the last to leave it.”

Hannibal was determined to draw the Romans into war so he could repay them for the way they had treated Carthage. In 218 B.C.E. he attacked Saguntum (pronounced sah-GUN-toom), a city in Spain that was a Roman ally. After an eight-month siege, the city fell. When the Romans heard of the defeat of Saguntum, they declared war on Carthage and prepared to send a fleet to capture Hannibal. This action marked the beginning of the Second Punic War. Rather than defend Saguntum, Hannibal decided that his best chance to defeat the Romans would be to attack Italy itself. Hannibal believed that, once in Italy, he could encourage and lead a rebellion among the various Italian peoples Rome had conquered. Such an attack on their homeland would catch the Romans completely by surprise, since the Romans knew Hannibal had no fleet with which to transport his soldiers from Spain to Rome.

What happened next? How do you think Hannibal moved his army into Italy?

Notes about the outcome of the event:

Event D: The End of the Second Punic War



For 15 years, Hannibal marched up and down the Italian peninsula inflicting staggering losses upon the Romans. During one series of battles the Romans lost a total of 65,000 men. These were the worst military defeats in Roman history. Nevertheless, Hannibal never attacked Rome itself; capturing the city seemed impossible. He

had no siege weapons, and Carthaginian leaders refused to send reinforcements because they were more concerned with protecting their settlements in Spain. Also, to his disappointment, almost none of the people Rome had conquered joined him. Thus, he did not have a safe base from which he could launch an attack on Rome. Despite these setbacks, no Roman general was able to defeat Hannibal's forces in battle.

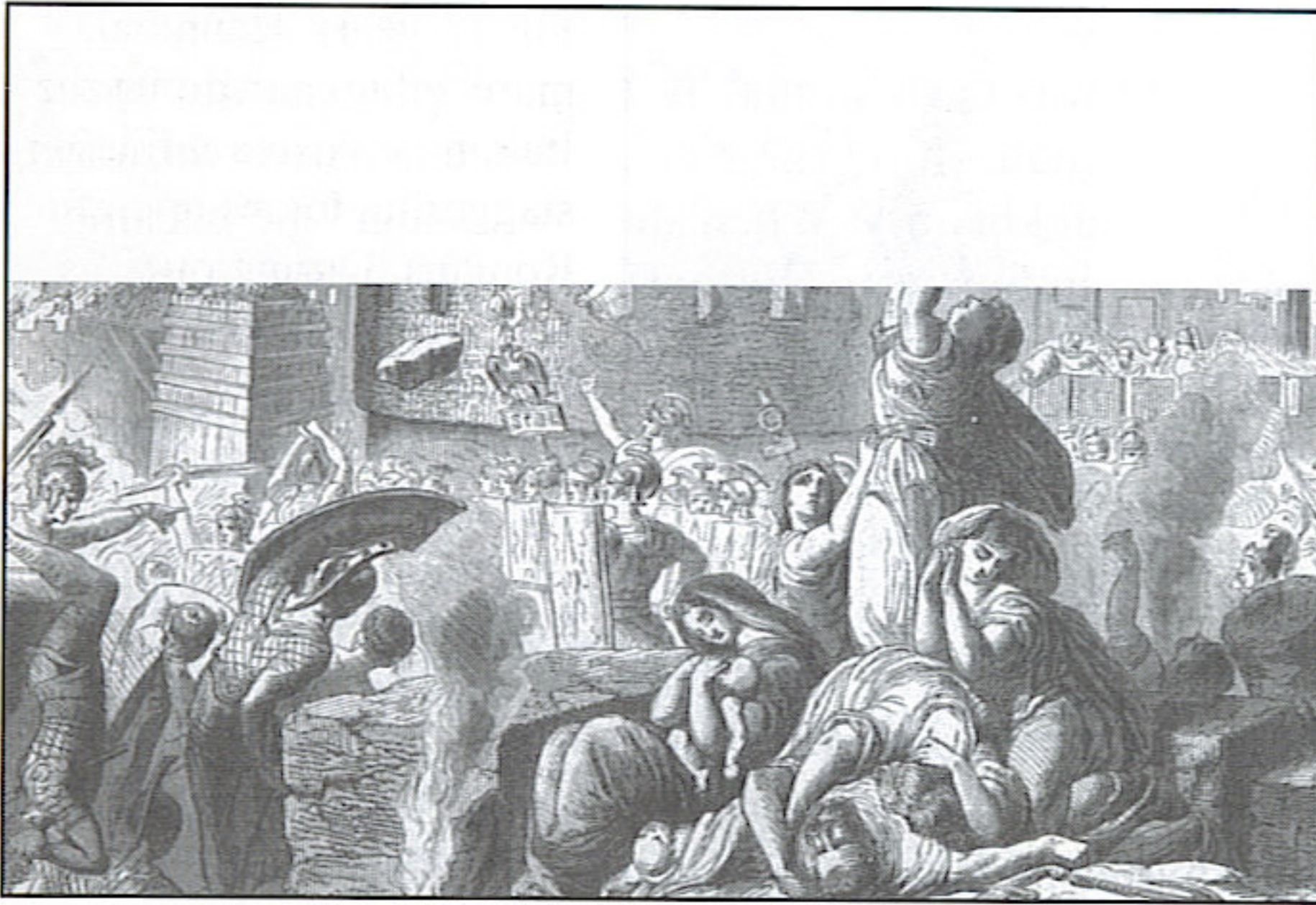
After years of humiliating losses and terrible casualties, Rome finally found a leader who was equal to Hannibal in courage and intelligence. The new Roman leader, Publius Cornelius Scipio (pronounced POO-blee-uss kor-NEE-lee-uss SIP-ee-oh), was respected for his bravery, cleverness, and religious devotion. When Scipio was only 25, the Senate made him commander of the Roman forces in Spain. Scipio greatly admired Hannibal's military leadership and studied the Carthaginian general's tactics carefully. Using what he learned, Scipio drove the Carthaginians from Spain and brought the region under Roman control in 207 B.C.E.

Following his victory in Spain, Scipio obtained permission from the Roman Senate to sail to Africa to attack Carthage directly. Upon landing in Carthage, the Roman army began plundering the area around Carthage, and the Carthaginian leaders ordered Hannibal to return home from Italy to defend the city. For Hannibal, this return was a bitter disappointment. He felt that the Carthaginian leaders' unwillingness to reinforce him when victory was near could lead to defeat in the Second Punic War. Nevertheless, he obeyed the order and sailed for home.

What happened next? What do you think happened to Hannibal after he returned to Carthage?

Notes about the outcome of the event:

Event E: The Third Punic War



In the decades following the Second Punic War, Rome continued to expand its territories throughout the Mediterranean region. Meanwhile, Carthage carefully honored the treaty it had signed with the Romans and did not acquire any new territories. Carthage did not build new warships, paid the fine to Rome, and declared no wars. Having lost much of their military power, the Carthaginians watched as the Mediterranean Sea became a “Roman lake.”

Despite Carthage’s decline in power and status, some Roman leaders still felt that it had not been punished severely enough. They demanded vengeance. The ability of the Carthaginians to rebuild their trade and to increase their wealth especially angered the Romans. Hostile feelings increased in 153 B.C.E., when Roman ambassadors returned from Carthage reporting that the city was larger and more beautiful than Rome. Following this report, one Roman leader made it a practice to end each of his speeches with the words, “Carthage must be destroyed!”

Consumed by hatred and mistrust, Roman leaders began to antagonize Carthage, hoping to provoke another war. When neighboring Numidians (pronounced noo-MID-ee-ans) attacked Carthaginian towns, the Romans refused to let the Carthaginians take defensive action. In addition, the Romans sent ambassadors to Numidia and secretly encouraged additional attacks. Finally, in 149 B.C.E., the Carthaginians decided to take action and fought back against the Numidians. Recognizing that this attack violated their treaty with Rome, Carthaginian leaders quickly prepared to make amends to the Roman Senate. They sent a group of ambassadors to Rome, hoping to re-establish peace with Rome. However, the Roman Senate refused to talk to these representatives and instead declared war on Carthage, starting the Third Punic War.

What happened next? How do you think the Romans finally destroyed the power of Carthage?

Notes about the outcome of the event: