

From *The History of Rome*

Aeneas' son Iulus had founded the city of Alba Longa, and a long line of his descendants ruled the city as kings and succeeded each other peacefully until the death of King Proca. Proca had two sons, Numitor and Amulius. Amulius drove out his brother and seized the brother's male children, and made his niece, Rhea Silvia, a Vestal Virgin, seemingly to do her honor, but actually condemning her to perpetual virginity to prevent the possibility of children.

But it was already written in the book of fate that this great city of ours should arise. The Vestal Virgin was raped and gave birth to twin boys. Mars she declared was their father. Perhaps she believed it, perhaps she was merely hoping to cover up her guilt. Whatever the truth of the matter, neither gods nor men could save her or her babes from the savage hands of the King Amulius. Their mother was bound and flung into prison; the boys, by the king's order, were condemned to be drowned in the river. Destiny, however, intervened; the Tiber had overflowed its banks; because of the flooded ground it was impossible to get to the actual river, and the men entrusted to do the deed thought that the flood-water, sluggish though it was, would serve their purpose. Accordingly they made swift to carry out the king's orders by leaving the infants on the edge of the first flood-water they came to...

A she-wolf, coming down from the neighboring hills to quench her thirst, heard the children crying and made her way to where they were. She offered them her teats to suck and treated them with such gentleness that the king's herdsman, found her licking them with her tongue. The herdsman, Faustulus took them to his hut and gave them to his wife Larentia to nurse. (Some think that the origin of this fable was the fact that Larentia was a common whore and was called Wolf by the shepherds.)

Such then was the birth and upbringing of the twins. Romulus and Remus, after the control of Alba had passed to another king, were suddenly seized by an urge to found a new settlement on the spot where they had been left to drown as infants and had been then brought up. Unhappily the brothers' plans for the future were marred by the same source which divided their grandfather and Amulius: jealousy and ambition. A disgraceful quarrel arose from an insignificant matter. As the brothers were twins and all question of seniority was barred, they determined to ask the gods of the countryside to declare by bird-sign (augury) which of them should govern the new town once it was founded and give his name to it.

Remus, the story goes, was the first to receive a sign of six vultures, and no sooner was this made known to the people than double the number of birds appeared to Romulus. The followers of each promptly saluted their master as king—one side basing its claim upon being first, the other upon number of birds seen. Angry words came, followed all too soon by blows, and in the course of a fray, Remus was killed. This then was how Romulus obtained the sole power. The newly built city was called by its founder's name—Rome.

QUESTIONS: *Using examples from the passage, answer the following questions.*

Tell whether you would classify Romulus and Remus as “heroes”. Perhaps you would call one brother more “heroic” than the other. Make sure to tell your reasons for your answer.

Tell why you think it would be important to the Romans for Mars, the God of War, to be the alleged father of Romulus and Remus. Tell whether there are any other elements of war that tie into the story.

Children being raised by animals is not just common in mythological stories. This motif is found in many other stories as well. Tell why you think it is important that Romulus and Remus are saved by the she-wolf. What does this tell you about them or their future?

Feuding brothers is common in stories, folk tales, and myths from around the world. Tell why you think having a pair of arguing brothers in the story makes it more compelling. Tell why you think the Romans enjoyed the story of the feuding brothers. What does it add to the story?