

## Example 5

### The Fall of Rome

from *Heath Grammar and Composition*

Historians have long been fascinated by the fall of the Roman Empire and the causes of the fall. Although at one time most historians blamed the invasion of barbarians for Rome's collapse, a more careful study shows that Rome had long contained the seeds of its own destruction. For one thing, the economy of Rome was in serious disorder. Historian Max Weber argues that the decline of slavery and cities coupled with the development of self-sufficient manors left the city-based governments in poverty.

At the same time, wealthy Romans indulged in unheard-of luxury, widening the gap between the social classes. Another historian, Mikail Rostovtzeff, adds to the causes of Rome's collapse an intellectual crisis. He claims that the influx of conquered nationalities "barbarized" Rome, sapping it of its intellectual vigor. Perhaps most important, Rome's political structure was in disarray. Uncertainty over who held the ruling power, the people or the nobles in the Senate, led to revolutions and massacres. Although no one of these forces could have toppled the great empire alone, the combination of internal weaknesses left the Empire defenseless against the final blow of the barbarian invaders.

---

*Step Up to Writing* page 2-40