**Give a RARE response to the following question: How would you classify Rome’s “death?”** Was it “murder” (caused by others), “suicide” (caused by the Romans themselves, or was it “old age” (natural decline of a civilization)? Were there factors that simply made the fall of Rome inevitable (nobody’s fault, but unavoidable)?

Murder?

1. Pressure from Parthians and Sassanids in the east (modern-day Iraq and Iran)
2. Provincial revolts, especially Jews in 66-70 and 131-33 CE (AD)
3. Pressure from barbarians along the Rhine and the Danube
4. Increasing military sophistication of barbarians as a result of contact with

 Roman armies

1. Roman defeat at Adrianople, 378 CE (AD)
2. Sack of Rome by Alaric the Visigoth, 410
3. Invasion under Attila the Hun, 455
4. Overthrow of emperor Romulus Augustulus by barbarian mercenaries under Odacer the German, 476

Suicide?

1. Plantations worked by slaves replace independent farmers
2. The Roman mob-former farmers become unemployed slum dwellers in the cities, especially in Rome
3. Bread and circuses-the Roman mob, dependent on government-provided jobs, food, and entertainment
4. Frequent civil wars, especially during the 200s CE, due to military interference in Roman politics
5. Increasing tax burdens based on costs of controlling urban mobs and military defense
6. Increasing dependence on barbarian mercenary troops, similar to problems of Chinese military defense
7. Overextended borders, similar to ancient China
8. Overdependence on slave labor
9. Conflict between traditional Greco-Roman religion and a spreading Christianity introduced from the east
10. Destruction of library at Alexandria by a Christian mob, 415 CE

Old Age?

1. General wear and tear of long-term imperial administration and defense
2. Increasingly rigid social class structure and declining opportunities for advancement
3. Exhaustion resulting from ever-increasing taxes
4. Abandonment of traditional Greco-Roman religion for Christianity; people place their hopes in life after death
5. Increasing pessimism about life on earth

Inevitable?

1. Plague of 165-66 CE kills half the Roman empire’s population
2. Roman mines run out of gold and silver, starting in 160s; Roman emperors forced to cut gold and silver content of Roman coinage
3. Declining value of Roman coinage forces ruinous inflation. Roman currency almost useless as a medium of trade by 280s CE
4. Rome collapses into a barter economy by 280s CE
5. Climate change in central Asia (colder and drier) starting in 160s leads to increasing barbarian migrations and pressure on empire’s borders