

Hannibal Barca

A poem by Paul Perro

A military genius
(Or so most experts say)
He came from somewhere called Carthage
(Known as Tunisia today).

Hannibal fell out with the Romans
After he moved to Spain.
They quarrelled over territory;
He thought they were a pain.

Hannibal built up an army -
Thousands of soldiers, and
He even had some elephants
He'd brought from his homeland.

He marched them all to Italy,
A journey filled with dangers -
They crossed the Pyrenees and Alps
(Both massive mountain ranges).

"But Elephants can't climb mountains!
No way!" it's often muttered.
But yes, they can, because they are
Surprisingly sure-footed.

Once there he had hoped the locals
Would want to become his allies.
But they all seemed to think that
Fighting with Rome would be unwise.

So Hannibal and his army
Fought on nevertheless.
They were tactically astute and
They did have some success.

Despite winning some battles though,
They never conquered Rome,
And one day Hannibal got some
Disturbing news from home.

Apparently the Romans who'd
Seen Spain left unprotected,
Had conquered it, an outcome which
Our hero had not expected.

But that's not all, now Carthage too
Was under Roman attack.
Carthage was Hannibal's homeland
And so they all rushed back.

The Battle of Zama was where
The two armies would meet.
Unfortunately, for Hannibal
It ended in defeat.

Spartacus

by Paul Perro

He was a soldier, then a slave,
Who famously led a revolt.
Spartacus took on the Romans,
And gave them quite a jolt.

It was while he was in training
In a school for gladiators -
Slaves forced to fight with each other
In the Roman amphitheatres.

None of these slaves wanted to die
A violent death in the coliseum
So when Spartacus did escape
He decided he would free 'em.

The escapees travelled around
Freeing slaves in other regions
Most gave their thanks and joined the
ranks.
Together they fought off Roman legions.

The Romans sent a general
Named Crassus on a mission.
He was clever and he was tough
And he was quite a tactician.

So Crassus marched with his army
To take on the slave army, and
After a few battles
The Romans had the upper hand.

So Spartacus and his army
Went south, until they reached the sea.
Once there they asked some pirates to
Take them to Sicily.

Unfortunately however,
The pirates betrayed them.
They did not give the slaves the ships
Even though they'd paid them.

The slaves were finally defeated
At The Battle of Siler River
Spartacus himself was killed
And the revolt crushed forever.

The battle was very bloody
And most of the slave army died.
More than 6000 prisoners
Were caught and crucified.

Today Spartacus is known as
A man of valour and conviction,
Even though his revolt ended
In defeat and crucifixion.

Pompeii

by Paul Perro

There once was a Roman city
And it was called Pompeii.
Disaster struck it in the year
79 Anno Domine.

Nearby there was a mountain and
Just in case you're curious,
I will tell you the mountain's name –
It was called Mount Vesuvius.

Except it wasn't a mountain
It was really a volcano,
Something which the Pompeians
Sadly did not know.

One August night it spewed out fire,
Lava, rocks - volcanic.
The Pompeians were all afraid
And ran about in panic.

The city was destroyed that night
With heat and bangs and crashes
And buried under hundreds of tons
Of volcanic ashes.

Pompeii lay lost and forgotten
For hundreds and hundreds of years
Until the 1800s when
It was found by engineers.

They dug the ruins out and now
It's a tourist attraction today.
Every year millions
Visit ancient Pompeii.

The California Gold Rush

by Paul Perro

James worked on a farm in the West
He dreamed of being rich.
One day he found something shiny
Just lying in a ditch.

"It's gold!" thought James, excited, and
He showed it to farmer Sutter.
The farmer was not happy though,
He started to frown and mutter.

"Don't tell anyone" said Sutter
"About what you have found.
If people hear there's gold about
They'll come from miles around.

They'll come to search the area
And trample on my farm.
They'll trample on my vegetables
And do my livestock harm."

James said for him not to worry
He would button his lip.
But two days later in a bar
He let the secret slip.

He mentioned it to his cousin
Who then told his own brother
Who mentioned it to his friend
And that friend told another.

Soon people started to arrive
To see what could be found.
They'd heard rumours that gold nuggets were

Were just lying around.

Lots of people really believed
The hills were filled with gold.
Men and families packed their things and
From the East wagons rolled.

Others came from across the sea
From Mexico and Peru,
From Hawaii, China, Chile,
From France, and Britain too.

They all left their lives behind them
To become gold miners.
The year was 1849
They were the forty-niners.

Some people did not look for gold
But still got rich enough.
They set up shops for miners and
They sold expensive stuff.

But after a few years has passed
Gold was harder to find.
So many people were looking
All the land had been mined.

And poor old Sutter the farmer
Looked out across his land.
His fields were thoroughly trampled
His rivers, thoroughly panned.

And so California had changed
Not boring old fields, no,
There was an exciting city,
'Twas called "San Francisco"!

Francis Drake and the Spanish Armada

by Paul Perro

Francis Drake was a pirate who
Sailed all around the world.
He liked to attack Spanish ships
And steal their jewels and gold.

He gave the treasure to the queen,
She thought him a hero.
The Spanish were scared and called him
The dragon, "El Draco."

One day Francis was playing bowls
With some friends by the sea,
When he spied some Spanish ships coming,
They'd come for their jewellery.

"Quick" said his friends, "Let's go at once
And chase those ships away!"
But Drake said "No, let's finish our game,
We still have time to play."

And when at last the game was over,
Francis Drake said "Right!
Let's play a trick on the Spanish,
We'll give them such a fright."

He took an empty ship and he
Set fire to the mast,
Then pushed it at the Spanish who
Were looking on, aghast.

They saw the fireship coming
And they were filled with fear.
"The dragon!" they said, "Vamanos!
Let's get out of here!"

The Armada turned around
And headed back to Spain.
Drake laughed and shouted out at them
"Don't dare come back again!"