Under the rule of Herod and his successors, the Temple Mount was a sacred precinct of enormous proportions, measuring 480 meters in length and 280 meters in width. It was surrounded by four tremendous retaining walls built of ashlar blocks with dressed margins. The remarkable scale of the construction is particularly evident from the size of the stones; this corner of the precinct incorporates stones some ten meters long, weighing about fifty tons. Josephus’ description is thus surely appropriate: “... and the wall itself [surrounding the Temple Mount] was the greatest ever heard of by man (Antiquities xv, 11.3)."
King Herod (37-4 BCE)
Herod, son of Antipater, descendant of an aristocratic Idumean family, was crowned in 40 BCE king of Judea. Herod's appointment was suggested to the Roman senate by Mark Antony, as an opposition to the appointment of Antigonus by the Parthians. In the third year of his reign, Herod set out to conquer the city of Jerusalem from the Hasmonean king. Fifty-five days of siege and fierce battle ended with its fall, and the Jew’s retreat into the area of the temple and the Upper City. They continued their struggle led by Antigonus against Herod and his troops. After three desperate years of battle (37 BCE) and three months of siege, the city was finally taken by Herod. Herod enforced order and took revenge on his opponents, beginning with the execution of 45 of Antigonus’ supporters. He went about slaying the Hasmonean priests in an attempt to establish his sovereignty. Since he could not serve as High Priest, he could not rule the temple. He, therefore, strived to appoint a High Priest loyal to his interests, nominating an outsider - Hananeel the Babylonian - thus turning his back on the hereditary character of the High Priest’s office. Despite his ill-doings, Herod was well-aware of the sympathy that the Jews felt toward the Hasmonean family, and therefore married the Hasmonean princess Mariamne, assuming this would legitimize him among the Jews. Rivals and potential rivals discarded, Herod took another step forward in his attempt to win over the Jews: namely, his offer to rebuild the temple and to enlarge the Temple Mount. Herod declared his intentions to the Jewish people, thus demonstrating his high regard to this undertaking. Toward the end of his reign, Herod installed a huge gold eagle above the large gate of the temple. This awakened the otherwise latent anger of the Jewish authorities. Despite Herod’s many attempts to please the Jewish people, the rebuilding of the temple being the most prominent, this tragic king never won the heart of his own people.
Theme: Definitions
Image: Line drawing of flying centering

Text:
**flying centering:** centering is the wooden framework used to construct a vault. It is considered ‘flying centering’ when it is elevated above ground level. During the construction of Robinson’s Arch, flying centering was probably supported by the stones seen projecting from the Western Wall and on the now-demolished opposing pier.
Vitruvius describes a variety of cranes, ranging from simple levers to more complicated devices (On Architecture, Book X, Chapter II, 1:14). These devices were probably similar to those used to build the Temple Mount. The crane reconstructed at the Jerusalem Archaeological Park consists of a bipod made of wooden beams secured with ropes. By alternately tightening or loosening the ropes, the whole device could be inclined farther forward or backward. A winch (a horizontal rotating beam with attached poles serving as cranks) at the foot of the bipod, and a rear winch set in the ground, enabled eight to ten people to operate the crane. The hoisting cable was passed through several suspended pulleys; as each pulley could lift a weight equal to twice the force exerted on it, two pulleys could lift four times the force. Thus, with two pulleys, a stone weighing about one and a half tons required a force of 400 kilograms; eight men turning the winch would each have to exert a force of only 50 kilograms.
Herodian Temple Mount PC Application
Proof of Concept: Information Panels

Theme: Temple Mount Excavations
Image: Photo of relieving arch

Text:
Relieving arches over the entrances to the pier shops reduced the weight on the main lintels.