

# Junior Cycle Classics

## Roman History • Roman Social Life & Civilization



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# **Roman Social Life and Civilization**

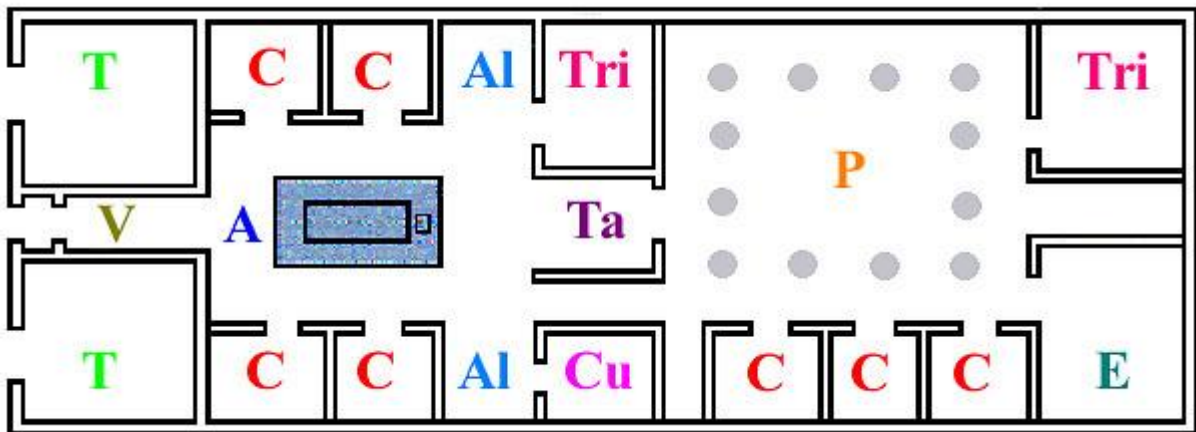
# 1. ROMAN HOUSING

## **(1) The domus**

The Romans lived in three different types of houses. The first type was a domus. Most wealthy Roman families had a comfortable **domus** in town. Although these houses varied in size, *domus* followed the same basic design, and was sturdily built from stone, cement and wood. Windows were often just a slit in the outside wall which was widened on the inside to let in the maximum light. They were sometimes glazed. Larger windows were often barred with an iron grille and often shuttered. Houses were peaceful, private places, but they were also designed to welcome visitors. Important people made their homes look very grand to impress their guests.

### **(a) Rooms**

Below is a plan of the rooms in a typical **domus**. However, it must be remembered that not all houses followed this simple arrangement. Some luxurious dwellings had two halls and two courtyards, while others at Pompeii had a private suite of baths and heating system.



V	vestibulum	entrance hall
A	atrium	formal entrance hall
T	taberna	shop
C	cubiculum	small room; bedroom
Al	ala	"wing" opening from atrium
Ta	tablinum	office; family records room
Cu	culina	kitchen
Tri	triclinium	dining room
P	peristyle	colonnaded garden
E	exedra	garden room





**The facade (outside):** The outside wall of a domus were plastered and painted white. Along the bottom there was usually a coloured panel, which was normally painted red. There were usually no windows at street level. This was to keep out noise, sun, smells and burglars.



**Vestibulum (entrance hall):** The *vestibulum* was a long, narrow passage, which connected the front door to the atrium. Only the family and important guests entered the house this way. Other people, including slaves, used a side entrance. The front door was nearly always a double door. The floor of the vestibulum was often decorated with mosaics with a message for the visitor, such as “Greetings” or “Welcome Money.” Mosaics of dogs were a popular choice. In the entrance of one house at Pompeii is a mosaic showing a chained dog

baring its teeth with the warning “Beware of the dog” (*cave canem*). Often a real dog, or a slave, kept guard in the vestibulum.



**Atrium (formal entrance hall):** Having walked through the vestibulum, one enters the atrium. This was a formal room where the master of the house (*paterfamilias*) received his guests and clients, but it was also used for family occasions. The atrium was covered by a roof that sloped inwards. The rain water ran down towards the centre where there was a large rectangular opening.

This opening was called a **compluvium**. Here the water passed through spouts in the shape of animals, such as dogs, wolves and lions, and fell into a large, rectangular, shallow pool which was set into the floor of the atrium. This was called the **impluvium**. When the water rose to a certain level in the impluvium it was piped to a tank under the house. The compluvium and impluvium had other benefits as well. The compluvium was the main source of light for the atrium, while the impluvium had a natural cooling effect on the hot climate of Rome. It also added to the beauty of the room, as it was often decorated with mosaics and small statues.

**Tabernae (shops):** The two rooms at the front of a domus were usually rented out as tabernae. As you can see from the plan, there was no access from inside the house to these shops. Instead, these rooms had separate doors that opened on to the street.

**Cubiculum (bedroom):** There were several small rooms (*cubicula*) grouped around the atrium. They were used for different functions, including private meetings and libraries, but usually they were used as bedrooms. These rooms seldom had windows, and they were often furnished with no more than a small chest and a bed.

**Alae ('wings'):** Beyond the cubicula, the atrium usually opened out into two 'wings'. These were called *alae*.



**Tablinum (office; records room):** The tablinum was a room located directly behind the atrium. It was open on two sides, though both sides could be closed with curtains or folding doors. Family records were stored in this room, as well as the family's money which was kept in a chest. Elite families also displayed the busts of their famous ancestors here. The master of the house, the paterfamilias, would greet his many clients on their morning visits here.

These visits were usually from 6am until 8am. The tablinum often had an attractive mosaic floor and wall paintings.



**Culina (kitchen):** There was no set place for the kitchen in a domus. It was usually located somewhere behind the atrium. It was frequently a tiny, dangerous, dark, hot and smoky room. So it is unsurprising that the cooking was done by slaves. There was a sink and an oven, whose top was used to keep pots warm. These pots sat on metal grids, under which embers could be placed for a form of 'stove-top' cooking.

**Toilet:** Toilets were usually found either next to, or actually in, the kitchen. A wooden seat was built over a lavatory pit, which, when flushed with a bucket of water, discharged into a cesspit near the house or under the street.



**Triclinium (dining room):** The dining room was called the triclinium. It is one of the most interesting rooms in a domus because it is so different from our own dining rooms. Romans ate while reclining on couches. They leant on their left elbows and ate with their right hands. There were three large couches in a dining room. These couches were covered with cushions and sloped backwards. They each held three people, and were placed on three sides of the

table. The couches were usually made of wood, with bronze adornments. Triclinia were often decorated with mosaics. As you can see from the plan, there are often two triclinia in a house. One

was a winter dining room, while the other, which opened onto the peristyle, was a summer dining room.



**Peristyle (garden):** Instead of surrounding their houses with large lawns and gardens, the Romans created their gardens inside their houses. The most popular type of garden was the peristyle with its colonnades where one could walk in the shade during the heat of the day. Ideally this type of garden had colonnades on all four sides. Marble discs were often hung between the columns. These would revolve in the breeze flashing as they caught the sun. Gardens were planted with flowers, shrubs, and neat hedges; and they were decorated with statues and fountains and fish ponds.

**Exedra (garden room):** The exedra (garden room) was a large, elegant room usually located off the peristyle garden. It was used for formal entertainments and lavish dinner parties. Again, the exedra was usually decorated with beautiful wall-paintings and mosaics.

#### **(b) Central heating**



Wealthy Romans had a central heating system called a hypocaust. This ingenious Roman invention was powered by a furnace, which heated up the air under the floor. Once the house heated up it stayed warm for a long time. Other houses used small charcoal burning braziers made of bronze.



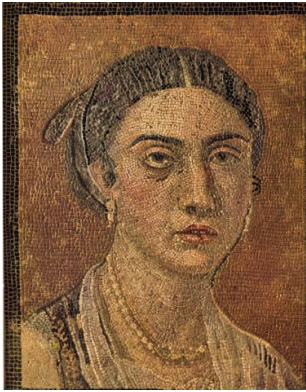
**(c) Lighting:** was provided by candles or oil lamps made of terracotta or bronze. Oil was poured in through a hole in the centre which was closed with a plug. The lamps had one or more spouts with wicks in them. The oil soaked up the wick providing a constant source of fuel for the flame. These lamps gave off a small amount of light. Therefore, a large number were required to light a room.

#### **(d) Decoration**

(i) Furniture: Grand houses were extravagantly furnished with intricately carved marble tables, couches decorated with ivory and gold, gleaming lamp stands and life-size statues. Sometimes

the floors were covered with leopard skins or fine Egyptian rugs. However most Roman houses had just a few simple pieces of wooden furniture, including tables, couches, cupboards, and beds.

(ii) Wall-painting: The Romans decorated their walls with frescoes. Artists began painting pictures on the walls while the plaster was still wet. Early frescoes consisted of simple blocks of colour, while later ones included architectural and theatrical scenes.



(ii) Mosaics: They decorated their floors (and sometimes walls, ceilings and fountains) with mosaics. The earliest mosaics covered the floor with a plain design of black and white squares. These mosaics placed all the squares at the same angle. Later came the 'worm' mosaic, where artists arranged pieces of different shapes and sizes in a series of squares. Simple mosaics used pebbles. More ornate mosaics were made of blocks of coloured stone called tesserae. Favourite subjects included domestic animals (dogs and cats), wild animals (birds), food, people, scenes from the theatre and skeletons.

## **(b) *Insulae***

The wealthiest Romans owned an elegant domus, but most people lived in apartment blocks called *insulae*. These buildings were in poor areas of town and they were often crowded and dirty. The main archaeological evidence for *insulae* comes from the Roman port of Ostia.

**Construction:** *Insulae* were built with concrete, which was invented in the second century B.C. Brick and wood was also used. They could be up to seven storeys in height, but were usually limited to four or five. Each *insula* contained a number of *cenacula*, or apartments. The poorest people rented small rooms on the top floor, while the richer had the larger rooms on the lower floors. One room usually housed a whole family. Sometimes an *insula* was built around a central courtyard, but more frequently it was a single building with windows looking out upon the street. Often these buildings were so badly built that they collapsed. They also often caught fire as they were built with wooden beams.

### **Facilities of *insulae*:**

- Most *insulae* had no running water or toilets (except on the ground floor), and so many people had to use the public fountain and bath houses.
- Wax candles or smoky oil lamps were used for lighting.
- There were no kitchens, so people bought their food from snack bars.



### **Differences between a *domus* and an *insula*:**

- The *insula* rose vertically upon a narrow base. The *domus* spread horizontally.
- The *insula* faced the street. The *domus* faced inwards towards its atrium and peristyle.

### **(C) *The villa***

Many wealthy Roman families had a large house – or villa – in the countryside, where they went to escape the stress of city life. The family usually owned all the farmland around their villa, and made money by selling produce from their farm.

The first villas, built during the Republic, were simple farmhouses surrounded by orchards, vineyards and fields for growing crops and keeping animals. Most of these farms were run by a manager, as the owner usually lived in town. They often included granaries, oil-presses, wine-presses, and cellars to store large storage jars.

As Rome became more prosperous, and more people wealthy, grand villas were built all over the Empire. They were decorated like the *domus*. These villas sometimes included a bakery, a bath-house and a swimming-pool. Most villas were still part of a farm – or estate – but many were situated well away from the fields. However, a few of the larger villas had no connection with farming, and were built simply as lavish country homes. The nearby fields only grew food for the owner and his family.

The grandest villas had spacious gardens full of statues and ornamental pools. People relaxed in courtyards surrounded by elegant columns. Many of the most impressive villas were situated on beautiful stretches of coastline (e.g. Baiae on the bay of Naples), where the owners could spend summer days bathing in the sea. One of the most impressive villas was built by the Emperor Hadrian at Tivoli near Rome. He included a stadium, library and two bath houses there. The Emperor Tiberius had no fewer than 12 villas on the island of Capri.

### **Sample Short Past Paper Questions: Housing**

1. What was the main difference between a domus and a villa?
2. What kind of building was an *insula*?
3. Mention two disadvantages of living in the kind of building called an insula.
4. Describe the main features of the *atrium* in a Roman house.
5. Where was the *impluvium* in a Roman house? What was its function?
6. Where was the *compluvium* in a Roman house? What was its function?
7. What was a *triclinium*? Describe its main features.
8. What was the function of the *tablinum* in a Roman house?
9. How were Roman houses (a) decorated, (b) heated and (c) lit?
10. Where was the *culina* located in a Roman house? What was its function? Describe what it looked like.
11. Where was the peristyle located in a Roman house? What was its function? Describe what it looked like.
12. Where was the vestibulum located in a Roman house? What was its function? Describe what it looked like.
13. Where was the *exedra* located in a Roman house? What was its function? Describe what it looked like.

### **Sample Long Past Paper Questions: Housing**

14. 2012



- (i) Where would you normally expect to see mosaics in a Roman house? (2)
- (ii) Explain **two** differences between a *domus* and an *insula*. (6)
- (iii) Imagine you are a Roman boy or girl whose family has just moved into a house like the one illustrated above. Write a letter to a friend describing its main features. (12)

15. 2003



- (i) In a Roman house where would you find a mosaic like this? (2)
- (ii) Describe the kind of floor and wall decorations you would expect to see in the house of a wealthy Roman. (8)
- (iii) Imagine you are a Roman living on the top floor of a run-down block of flats (*insula*). Write a letter to a friend describing your accommodation and what life is like there. (10)

## **2. ROMAN FOOD**

### ***Breakfast, lunch and dinner***

The **ientaculum** was a Roman breakfast. It was usually just a drink of water or wine, along with a piece of bread or wheat biscuits sweetened with honey.

The **prandium** was a Roman lunch. It was usually eaten at midday. It was a simple meal consisting of eggs, cheese, cold meat and fruit; or something cold leftover from the previous day's main meal, called the **cena**. Many Romans did not eat this meal, but waited until the **cena**. At one house in Herculaneum (a town near Pompeii) the prandium was found ready on a table. It had been preserved by mud which had engulfed the town. It was a lunch of bread, salad, eggs, cake and fruit. The shells of the eggs were not even broken.



The **cena** was the main meal of the day. It was usually eaten in the late afternoon. During the early republic it was a simple meal. Wheat was eaten as a kind of porridge together with sauces and vegetables. In later times meals improved. The main food of poorer Romans was still bread, porridge and also stew, but the average Roman would now eat roast poultry or fish.

### ***Wine and Water***



The Romans drank lots of wine and they could choose from around 200 types which were made all over the empire. Wine was often spiced, or sweetened with honey and usually diluted with water. Drinking it undiluted wasn't considered respectable. Other popular drinks included grape juice and goat's milk and people could also drink from public fountains.

### ***Spices and Sauces***

Rich Romans loved spicy food and most of their meals were highly seasoned or eaten with a strong sauce. One of the most popular sauces was a thick, salty concoction called *liquamen* or *garum* which was made from pickled fish. Strongly flavoured sauces were favoured and a wide range of spices was imported. Salt was in demand as a preservative as well as a flavouring and it was also imported.



## ***Cooking***

Poor people did not cook. Most people lived in apartment blocks with wooden beams and floors (*insulae*), and it was forbidden to light cooking fires inside, in case the building burned down. Instead of cooking at home, people usually bought hot food, such as pies, sausages and stews, from snack bars in the street.



In wealthy houses slaves did all the cooking in the kitchen called the ***culina***. There was no set place for the ***culina*** in a *domus*. It was usually located somewhere behind the atrium. It was a small, dark, and smoky room. There was a sink and an oven, whose top was used to keep pots warm. These pots sat on metal grids, under which embers could

be placed for a form of stove-top cooking.

A Roman kitchen was equipped with many of the same utensils that we use today, including saucepans, cheese graters, and strainers. These items were usually made of bronze which can make food taste strange, so some pans were coated with silver. Food was boiled, grilled, stewed, or roasted on a spit. To preserve food it was smoked, pickled or salted.

## ***Dinner parties***



Wealthy Romans loved to eat elaborate food and they often threw lavish dinner parties. Hosting a party was a great way for people to show off their wealth and power, and important Romans tried to outdo each other by making their banquets more and more extravagant.

A dinner party usually began in the early evening. The guests would remove their sandals at the door and their feet were washed by a slave, before being announced by an usher. They would then be shown to their place and have their hands washed with perfumed water. Having clean hands was important as people usually ate with their fingers.

Meals were eaten in a dining room called the ***triclinium***. Guests ate here while reclining on couches. They leant on their left elbows and ate with their right hands. There were three large couches in a triclinium. These couches were covered with cushions and sloped backwards. They

each held three people, and were placed on three sides of the table. These couches were usually made of wood, with bronze adornments. Triclinia were often decorated with mosaics. There were often two triclinia in a house. One was a winter dining room, while the other, which opened onto the peristyle, was a summer dining room.

A full meal was sometimes made up of seven courses but always had at least three. It could last as long as ten hours.

**Starters:** Starters included radishes, mushrooms, shellfish, sardines, and eggs. Starters were often followed by a drink of mulsum (wine sweetened with honey).

**Main course:** The main course consisted of fish, game, poultry and sometimes pork. It was served with a variety of vegetables and sauces. The most common vegetables were beans, beetroot, garlic, marrows, and onions.

**Dessert:** Desserts included honey cakes, stuffed dates, nuts and fruit. The most common fruits were grapes and figs, but apples, pears and mulberries were also eaten.



Lavish dinners could also include such delicacies as dormice in honey, a pig stuffed with blood puddings and sausages, flamingos' tongues or even elephant trunks. The way food looked was just as important as how it tasted, and cooks particularly enjoyed disguising one food as another. The writer Petronius boasted that his chef could make a pig's belly look just like a fish.

Normally, there were only a small number of guests. However, the triclinium would have been full, and the slaves must have found it difficult to move about freely and serve a meal. Rather than clearing the dishes after the main meal, the slaves removed the table instead and replaced it with another table full of desserts. This part of the meal was known as *secundae mensae* (second tables).

Food was served on dishes made of glass or pottery, but if the host was very rich there would also be ornate platters of gold and silver. Cups were made of bronze, silver and coloured glass. At one house in Pompeii, 118 pieces of silver were found, including plates, cups, and bowls.

During the meal there may have been musicians and entertainers. On special occasions a famous poet would be invited to read one of his new poems. As dusk descended lamps on the lamp-stands were lit. The feasting could go on until late into the night.

## **Sample Short Past Paper Questions: Food**

1. What kinds of entertainment were often provided at a Roman *cena*?
2. Describe what happened at a Roman *cena*.
3. Describe a Roman *ientaculum*.
4. Describe a Roman *prandium*.

## **Sample Long Past Paper Question: Food**

**2015**

Look at the illustration below of a Roman *cena* and answer the questions which follow:-

- (i) Describe the main features of the triclinium in a Roman house and explain why it is called a triclinium. (8)
- (ii) Imagine you are the client of a wealthy Roman who has invited you to a special *cena*. Write a letter to a friend describing the evening. Mention the way the triclinium is decorated, the guests, the various courses of the meal and the entertainment. (12)





### 3. THE ROMAN FAMILY

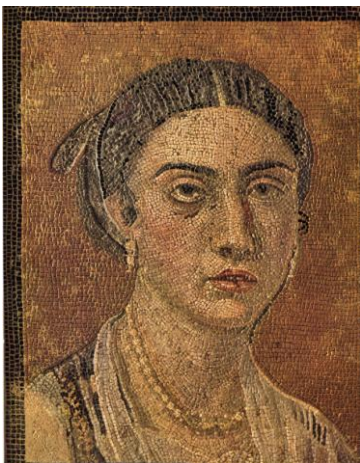


The family was an important part of Roman life, and most Romans took their duty to their family very seriously.

**Paterfamilias:** The *paterfamilias* was the head of the Roman household. His family included his wife and children, his son's wives and children and all their slaves. His main role was **to look after the family**. He had complete authority over them all. He was entitled to treat them as he wished, and had the right to sell them or even kill them. He was also responsible for **looking**

**after the religious activities** in the house. He led the daily ceremony at the lararium.

If the *paterfamilias* was wealthy he also acted as a ***patron***. A *patron* was a wealthy Roman who had a lot of supporters, called **clients**, who relied on him for help. Clients were expected to visit their *patron* every morning. He would usually conduct business with them in the *tablinum*. These clients would accompany him whenever he went out, and vote for him if he entered politics. In return, the patron would help his clients with their career and occasionally ask them to dinner.



**Women:** The life of women in a wealthy Roman family was very different. While Roman men had the right to engage in business and politics and also to vote, women could not do any of these things. Instead, the main roles of Roman women were **to have children** and **to manage the household**. These two roles were very important in Roman life, and were often remembered on Roman women's tombstones.

However, although women had very few rights, many of them were very powerful behind the scenes. A wife often ran her husband's business while he was away and the many politicians' wives took an active interest in their husbands' careers.

Unsurprisingly, the population of Roman women was less than Roman men. This was due to the exposure of female babies at birth, the death of mothers in childbirth, and because of malnutrition; it is thought that girls may not have been fed as well as boys.



However, the life a Roman woman was probably not as bad as the life of an ancient Greek woman. Ancient Greek women had to do all the housework, and they may also have had to live in seclusion (stayed at home). In contrast, wealthy Roman women supervised slaves doing all the housework, although they did do some spinning and weaving themselves. Also, Roman women did not live in seclusion. With their free time, they attended festivals, the theatre, the amphitheatre and the baths, while poorer Roman women worked outside the *domus* as midwives, hairdressers, or in the family shop or farm.

### **Children:**

When a child was born in the family household the *paterfamilias* had the power to decide whether to recognise the child as part of the family or to expose the child (which led to their death). If the child was accepted this was the signal for celebration. **Wreaths** were hung on doorposts to announce the baby's arrival.



When girls were eight days old and boys were nine days old, the family held the **Day of Purification**. This was a major family event. Presents were bought and the **bulla**, a golden amulet, was hung around the baby's neck as a lucky charm. The baby was named and prayers were said for his or her health and happiness.

Sons were usually given three names: **praenomen** (first name), **nomen** (tribal or clan name), and **cognomen** (name of the specific branch of the clan). Sometimes a fourth name was added, e.g. Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus. Daughters were named after the feminine form of the nomen and the genitive form of either their father or their husband's cognomen; for example, Julia Caesaris or Clodia, Metelli. If families had more than one daughter, they were distinguished by the words *maior* and *minor* ("elder" and "younger"). If there were more than two, numerals were added, e.g. Cornelia prima, Cornelia secunda, Cornelia tertia etc.

**Children were firmly under the authority of the paterfamilias.** In theory, the paterfamilias was even entitled by law to kill his children, though in practice this did not happen. At the age of 16, boys were released from their father's authority by a coming of age ceremony. Then the boy removed his bulla and swapped his *toga praetexta* (a toga with a purple stripe), for a plain white toga. Girls were only released from their father's authority if they got married. They were then under the authority of their husband. However, very often girls remained permanently under their father's authority, even when they were married. This meant that a marriage could be ended more easily.

### **Sample Short Past Paper Questions: Family**

1. What was a *bulla*? What was its purpose?
2. List the three parts of a Roman citizen's name. Give an example of such a name.
3. What was the role of the *paterfamilias* in a Roman family?
4. Describe the relationship between a *patronus* and his *clientes* in Roman society.
5. What was the role of the *materfamilias* in a Roman family?
6. What was the role of the *paterfamilias* when a new child was born into a Roman family?

## 4. SLAVES



**Slaves who worked in Roman homes were also considered part of the family of the paterfamilias.** A wealthy Roman household needed a minimum of ten slaves to run it. They did the shopping, cooking and cleaning. They also served at meals and helped the mistress with her hair, clothes and makeup. Many slaves were very well educated, especially slaves from Greece.

These slaves were expensive to buy. They worked in wealthy Roman homes as private tutors, doctors and librarians.

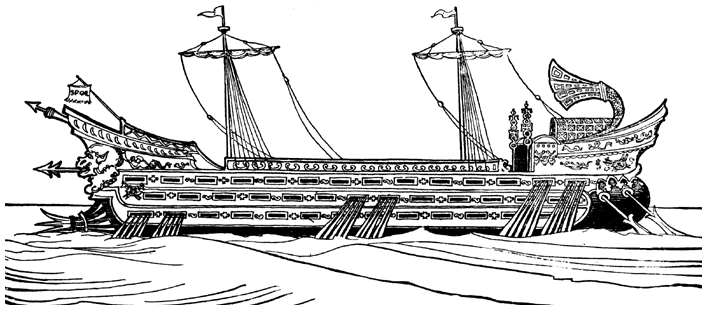
Slaves were either born into the family or else wealthy Romans bought their slaves from dealers. **Slaves came from different sources**, including: prisoners of war, piracy, kidnapping, exposed babies and criminals. Moreover, sometimes parents who were in debt were forced to sell their children into slavery.

**Slaves had no rights and belonged entirely to the paterfamilias.** However, in many Roman homes, they were treated kindly and sometimes the children of a trusted slave were brought up as companions for the master's children. In other homes they were treated as animals. If a paterfamilias or a member of his family was attacked and killed by one of his slaves, all the slaves under his roof would be killed as both a punishment and a warning. If a slave ran away and was caught his forehead was branded with the letters FUG standing for *fugitivus*, meaning runaway or fugitive. All slaves wore an identity tag inscribed with the name and address of their master.

**Slavery wasn't always for life and some slaves were granted freedom** as a reward for loyal service. Other slaves managed to save small amounts of money (*peculium*) and buy their own freedom. It would usually take 20 years to save enough. However, most slaves did not have this opportunity, as they did not get any money. The setting free of a faithful slave involved an important ceremony. Usually the **paterfamilias** gave a big party. The slave knelt down wearing a pointed hat and was tapped on the shoulder by the paterfamilias. He was then given a *toga praetexta* and called a 'freedman'. Sometimes the paterfamilias set him up in business. The freedman then became a **client** to the paterfamilias who now became his **patron**. If the patron was going up for election the freedman would vote for him. These freedmen could then buy their own property and keep their own slaves. Some were very successful and had good careers, including the famous Roman poet Horace who was the son of a freedman.

There were other types of slaves in Rome who were not part of the family of a *paterfamilias*. These included:

(1) **Urban slaves.** Most urban slaves worked for the government as:



a) **Secretaries.** These were educated slaves usually from Greece.

b) **Cleaners.** These were unskilled slaves who assisted the aediles

in cleaning the streets.

- c) **Bath-workers.** These were unskilled slaves who assisted the aediles in cleaning the baths and stoking the furnaces.
- d) **Gladiators.** These slaves fought to the death. Very occasionally a gladiator was freed because fought bravely and survived many fights.
- e) **Galley slaves:** These were criminals condemned to row ships chained to their oars.
- f) **Building-site workers:** These slaves were given the most dangerous jobs. They sometimes worked for the government, but they also worked for private individuals.
- g) **Shop workers** and workshops (e.g. as a carpenter, blacksmith). These slaves worked for private individuals.

## (2) Rural slaves

- **Mine-workers.** Unsold slaves were sent to the mines. Life expectancy was one year. Some never saw daytime. They were given the minimum food and water and they worked to death.
- **Farm workers:** These slaves worked 9-15 hours a day, 7 days a week. They ploughed the fields and did general farm work. They were managed by an overseer (*vilicus*). Most of the landlords were absentee landlords. The slaves were chained at night. A hardworking slave might get extra food or clothes and the chance of promotion to overseer.

## Spartacus

Spartacus is perhaps the most famous Roman slave. He was a Thracian gladiator who escaped from the Roman town of Capua and in 73BC he led a slave revolt which spread throughout southern Italy. 90,000 slaves took part in the revolt. They overran southern Italy for three years, but finally in 71BC Spartacus was defeated and killed in Lucania in 71BC by Crassus. He crucified any rebels he captured all along the Appian Way. His courage made Spartacus a legend in his lifetime.



## Sample Short Past Paper Questions: Slaves

1. Explain why Greek slaves were often the most expensive.
2. What was the ceremony of *manumissio*? Describe what happened.
3. Name two sources from which the Romans got slaves.

## Sample Long Past Paper Questions: Slaves

### 4. 2001

- a. Describe what happens at the ceremony of manumission. (4)
- b. Mention **two** common ways in which people became slaves in the Roman world. (4)
- c. Imagine you have been a slave in the Roman world for twenty years. You have served your master well and are now being set free. Describe your work during your years of slavery. Say why you are being set free, and what you plan to do once you are free.

### 5. 2007



- a. Describe what is happening in the illustration. (4)
- b. Mention **two** common ways in which people became slaves in the Roman world. (4)
- c. Imagine you are the slave of a wealthy family in Pompeii. Write a letter to a friend describing the routine of your daily life and what you would like to do if you are set free.

## 5. ROMAN RELIGION

### Gods at home



**Lares:** The Lares were spirits who originally guarded the fields, but later also watched over the house. They were usually depicted in paintings and statuettes as two young men who were dancing and drinking. They were worshipped in the atrium of a Roman *domus* or *villa* at a shrine called a *lararium*.

**Genius:** Another guardian spirit was the Genius. He protected the family

through the generations. He ensured that the family line would continue. He was often depicted as a snake in paintings and mosaics.

**Penates:** These spirits looked after goods and property, especially the larder and food cupboards.

**Janus:** Janus was the god of the doorway.

**Vesta:** Vesta was the goddess of the hearth.

**Worship of gods at home:** These gods were worshipped at the *lararium* where the family held daily prayers and offered food and wine. On special occasions, the gods were given extra gifts.

## Official State Religion



**Major State Gods:** There were many Roman gods and goddesses. The three most important were Jupiter, Juno and Minerva. They shared a temple on the Capitol Hill. Most Roman gods were borrowed from the Greeks. This is why most gods have two names: one Greek and one Roman. Each god controlled a different aspect of life.



**Other State Gods:** The Roman State also had its **Lares**, **Penates**, **Janus** and **Vesta**. **Vesta** was a very important state goddess. She had a shrine in the forum, where a fire burned constantly. This fire was looked after by six women known as the Vestal Virgins. They were chosen from Rome's leading families. It was a privilege to be selected but they had to do the job for 30 years and were not allowed to marry.

**Sacrifice:** The state gods had large and impressive temples built for them. Ceremonies were held outside the temple, but individuals could also go inside for a private prayer. One very important ceremony was sacrifice. Offerings to the gods ranged from simple cakes and flowers to elaborate statues, but the most popular gift was an animal. Sacrificing a valuable animal was meant to show the gods how much they cared about them. Priests sacrificed oxen, sheep, pigs and doves on open-air altars in front of temples. Once the creature had been killed, its internal organs were taken out and examined by a **haruspex**. The Romans believed that the **haruspex** was able to interpret omens and to find out the will of the gods in this way. After this, the organs were burned on the altar, and the rest of the meat was served up as a feast for the god's followers.

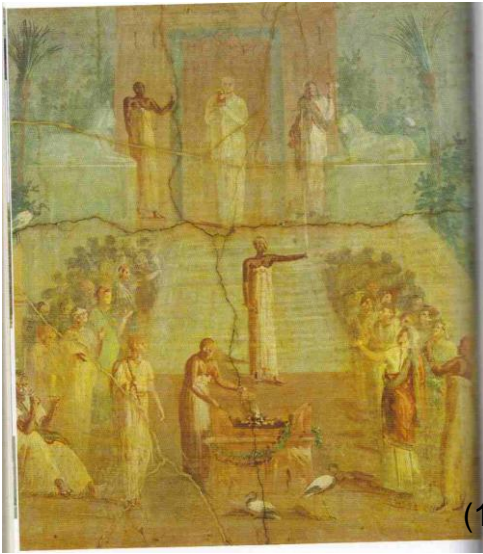
**Augur:** The Romans also believed that omens could be interpreted from the flight of birds, cloud shapes and lightening. In Rome there was a group of 16 prophets known as augurs who did this.

**Pontifex Maximus:** The chief priest was the called the Pontifex Maximus.

**The emperors:** State religion changed under the emperors. When Julius Caesar died he was deified (i.e. he became a god). This became the usual practice for all emperors when they died.

## Other Religions

### ***(a) Mystic or Mystery Religions***



The Romans also practiced 'mystery' religions, which were not recognised by the state. These religions shared a belief in the afterlife. State religion offered no such comfort. They were called 'mystery' religions because worshippers had to undergo secret or 'mystery' rituals in order to become a member of the religion.

Mystery religions include the worship of:

- (1) **Cybele.** She was known as the Magna Mater, the Great Mother. She ruled healing and nature.
- (2) **Bacchus.** His Greek name was Dionysus. He was the god of wine.
- (3) **Mithras.** This religion started in India. It stated that all men were equally worthy.
- (4) **Isis.** The worship of Isis began in Egypt. She was the goddess of wheat and barley.

### ***(b) Christianity***

Christianity spread rapidly in the first century AD. It was popular with the poor, who found comfort in the promise of everlasting life. They refused to believe in the official state gods, and were persecuted by the state because of this. Eventually in 394BC, Christianity became the official state religion.



## **Sample Short Past Paper Questions: Religion**

1. What were the *Lares* and *Penates* in Roman religion?
2. What was a *lararium* in a Roman house? Where was it usually situated?
3. What was the role of an augur in Roman religion?
4. What was the role of a *haruspex* in Roman religion? / What were the main duties of a *haruspex*?
5. Name the Capitoline gods and say what their function was in the Roman state.
6. Who were the Vestal Virgins and what was their role?
7. Name two Roman gods or goddesses. Describe their roles.

## **Sample Long Past Paper Questions: Religion**

### **8. 2005**

- (i) Who was Vesta? What was the role of the Vestal Virgins? (8)
- (ii) Imagine you are a Roman who has been asked to explain some of your main religious beliefs to friends in the provinces. Write a letter of explanation including information about some of the following: the *Lares* and *Penates*; the major gods and goddesses; sacrifice and the augur and *haruspex*.

### **9. 2014**



- (i) Where would you normally expect to see a *lararium* in a Roman house? (2)
- (ii) What was the function of a *lararium*? What were the *Lares* and *Penates*? (6)
- (iii) Imagine you are a Roman boy or girl. You have been asked to explain Roman religious customs to friends in the provinces. Write a letter including information about the major gods and goddesses; the Vestal Virgins; sacrifice and the *augur* and *haruspex*. (12)

## 6. ROMAN WEDDINGS & FUNERALS

### MARRIAGE



Roman marriage scene, showing the couple linking right hands

Roman girls usually married between the ages of 12 and 14. Boys were usually much older.

**The Sponsalia.** The *Sponsalia* was the engagement ceremony. It was attended by the prospective bride and groom, and their parents. The father promised his daughter to the groom-to-be. Gifts were given to the bride-to-be and a gold ring was placed on her third finger of her left hand. A dowry was worked out.

**The Night before the Wedding:** On the day before her marriage, the bride usually offered her toys to the household gods, the Lares. She was given jewellery and other gifts.

**The Nuptiae:** The *Nuptiae* was the wedding. It was held in the house of the bride's father. Friends and clients of both families attended. The bride was dressed in a

straight white tunic, a yellow cloak and an orange veil and shoes. Her hair was divided into six locks and adorned with ribbons. At the wedding ceremony the bride addressed the bridegroom with the words 'ubi tu Gaius, ego Gaia' meaning 'Wherever you are Gaius, I Gaia am there.' Words of consent were spoken and the matron of honour performed the marriage ceremony by linking the bride's and bridegroom's right hands. The marriage contract, which included details of a dowry, was then signed by ten people. There followed a wedding feast, usually at the expense of the bridegroom.

**The Deductio.** The *Deductio* was a procession. This was thought to be the most important part of the ceremony. The bride was escorted in a procession to the bridegroom's house, where he had already gone to welcome her. A boy carrying a torch walked before her, and two others walked by her side. She carried wool, a distaff and a spindle, the symbols of her future life. When the bride arrived at her new husband's house, the bridegroom carried her over the threshold to avert an ill-omened stumble. The next day she wore a married woman's clothing for the first time.

## **FUNERALS**



Roman patrician, holding wax portraits of his dead ancestors

When a person died, his or her eyes were closed. All present shouted the dead person's name, and a coin was placed under the person's tongue to pay Charon to carry his or her spirit across the river Styx to the underworld. It was believed the spirit then went to either Elysium (heaven) or Tartarus (hell).

Then the burial preparations began. Firstly, the body was washed, anointed with oil and dressed in fine clothes. It was then placed on a special couch in the atrium and surrounded by flower wreaths and candles. Mourning and grief were expressed loudly and openly. Women kept up a continual lament.

The day of the funeral was announced by a herald. Torch-bearers and *praeficae* (professional mourners) led a procession. Next came mourners wearing or carrying wax portraits of the dead person's ancestors. These mourners also dressed in the ancestors' grandest clothes to show off their wealth and status. Sometimes they stood in chariots. Next was the dead person carried on an open litter (portable couch). Finally, the living family mourners came.

The whole procession moved to the burial site for either a cremation or burial. This was held outside the walls of the city in order to prevent disease. For burial the body was placed in a coffin called a sarcophagus. For cremation the corpse was either placed in a pit which was filled with wood or onto a funeral pyre. When the ashes were cooled they were placed in an urn and then into a tomb.

Some of the tombs were huge structures built along the main roads into the city. Food, drink, clothing and tools were also buried with the dead person. Interestingly, the funeral did not end interest in the dead person's welfare. It was important to look after the ghost, partly to prevent haunting. Anniversary banquets were held to cheer up the dead, and libations were poured at their tombs.

## **Sample Short Past Paper Questions: Weddings and Funerals**

1. Who would say *ubi tu Gaius, ego Gaia* and under what circumstances?
2. Describe two customs connected with a Roman funeral.
3. Describe two customs connected with Roman marriage / wedding ceremonies.

## **Sample Long Past Paper Questions: Weddings and Funerals**

4. **2008**



- (i) Describe what is happening in the illustration. (6)
- (ii) Imagine you are a Roman boy or girl writing a letter to a friend in Greece. In your letter describe to your friend the main customs connected with Roman marriage ceremonies. (14)

5. **2016** Look at the illustration below of a funeral procession on a Roman sarcophagus and answer the questions which follow:-



- (i) Describe what is happening in the relief carving above. (4)
- (ii) Describe two customs connected with Roman funerals. (4)
- (iii) Imagine you are a Roman senator. Write a *laudatio funebris* (funeral speech) for a distinguished colleague and friend who has just died. (12)

OR

Imagine you are a Roman boy or girl. Write a letter to a friend in the provinces describing a funeral you have just attended. (12)

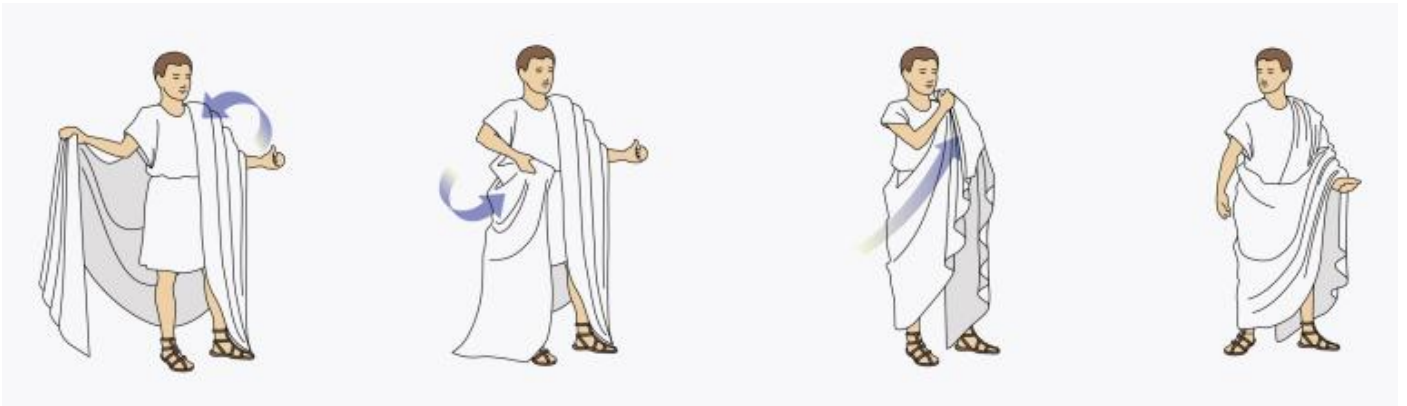


## 7. ROMAN CLOTHING

### Tunics and Togas for Men



The main garment for men was a **tunic** made out of two rectangles of wool stitched together and tied with a belt. A tunic was short-sleeved and knee-length. Over their tunic, Roman citizens sometimes wore a **toga**. A toga was a large piece of white woollen cloth worn over the left shoulder, carried under the right armpit and again over the left shoulder. However, because the toga was so heavy and awkward, it was usually only worn on important public occasions.



#### *Different types of tunic and toga*

- A senator's tunic had two broad purple stripes at the front. Purple was the most expensive dye and only the wealthiest people could afford it.
- The tunics of the equites had two narrow stripes.
- A consul's toga had a purple band along one of the long sides.
- An emperor's toga was completely purple.
- A boy until the age of 16 wore a **toga praetexta**. This was plain white woollen garment **with a broad purple band** at the edge like a senator.
- After the age of 16 boys wore a **toga virilis**. This was a plain white woollen garment. There was no purple edge. This change in toga was part of an important ceremony in which a boy was considered to have become a man. As well as getting a new type of toga, the boy also offered his locket, called a bulla, to the household gods. He then went with his father to the public records office (*tabularium*) to have his name registered. He was now recognised as a Roman citizen.



## Tunics, Stolas and Pallas for Women



Women also wore a short-sleeved knee-length **tunic**. Unmarried women wore a longer **tunic** as well over this, while married women wore a long robe called a **stola** which reached to the ankles and had a wide flounce attached to the lower hem. Women also wore a rectangular shawl, known as a **palla**. The palla was either draped around their shoulders or looped over the head like a hood.

## Children

Most children wore **tunics** like those of their parents. Some boys wore the **toga praetexta** which was replaced by the **toga virilis** at the age of 16. All children wore a locket called a bulla, which warded off evil spirits.

## Shoes and Hats

Leather shoes (*calcei*) were worn in the city and boots (*perones*) were worn in the country. A **petasus** was a broad brimmed hat worn by men to protect them from the sun.

### 1. Sample Short Past Paper Questions: Clothing

1. Name and describe two articles of Roman clothing.
2. Name and describe two articles of clothing worn by a Roman woman.
3. Give one reason why a Roman might be reluctant to wear the toga.
4. What was a toga praetexta? Who would wear it?
5. What was a toga virilis? Who would wear it?
6. What did Roman children wear?

## 8. ROMAN EDUCATION

Children from poor families had to go out to work at an early age, but families who could afford it sent their children to school when they were seven. It is estimated that only about 20% of Roman men could read and write. Like today, in Roman times, the more education people had, the more likely they were to get better jobs and earn more money. Learning to read and write was the first important step. Without literacy the top jobs were out of a person's reach, including the law, military and politics. Literacy brought more than education to Romans: it gave them influence and power.

### ***Roman Schools***



Schools were usually located in a **pergola** on the side of a street with only a curtain separating them from the noise of the city. However, sometimes wealthy families had their children taught at home privately; these lessons were usually held in the peristyle. Most schools only had about 12 pupils. Most teachers were Greek slaves.

The school year began in March. Festive days, as well as every ninth day, were holidays. There was probably also a summer holiday. The school day lasted from dawn until noon without a break.

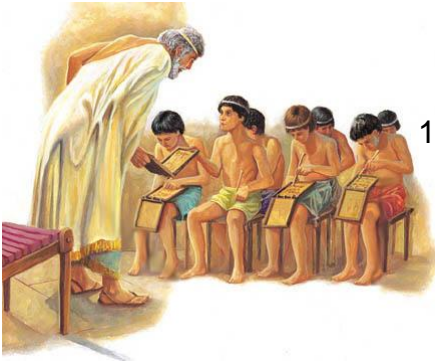
Pupils were always accompanied to school by a senior slave called a *paedagogus*. He made sure that the pupil arrived at school on time, and behaved properly when he was there. Our word today for a strict teacher, a pedagogue, comes from the name of this slave. Discipline at school was strict; beatings were very common.



Instead of paper, most pupils used **cerae**. These were wax tablets made of pieces of wood coated with wax. Instead of pens, a **stylus** was used. A stylus was an object made of metal, bone or ivory, pointed at one end like a pen in order to write in the wax, and flattened at the other end in order to erase the writing. Older pupils

used pens made from reeds, and either papyrus or parchment made from cow hide. Ink was made from either soot, or the ink from squid or octopus. Instead of books, pupils used **scrolls**. These were made by gluing together pages to form one long strip which could then be rolled up on a staff. To help them in maths, they also had charts on the walls and an **abacus**. An abacus was a counting frame.

There were three types of teacher who taught in three different types of school.



1. (1) The **ludi magister** was a teacher who taught in a **ludus**. This was the equivalent of our primary school. Girls and boys between the ages of 7 and 11 were taught together here, where they learned how to read, write and count. Pupils had to recite the alphabet and copy simple proverbs. The education of many

children ended here. Instead, many became apprentices in order to learn a trade, while girls stayed at home where they were taught practical household duties. Some girls however continued their education at home, and there are some examples of women who were educated, and who later played their part in public life in Rome.



2. (2) The **grammaticus** was a teacher who taught in a school equivalent to our secondary school. Boys between the ages of 12 and 16 were taught Greek and Roman literature, history, geography astronomy, music, mathematics and athletics. Students had to explain grammar and recite from texts.

(3) The **rhetor** was a teacher who taught in a school equivalent to our third level education. Only very privileged children continued to this stage. It was here that one of the most valued Roman skills was taught: oratory or public speaking. The ability to argue a case in public and with confidence was essential for anyone wanting a career in politics, the law, or the military. Debates were carried out among students. A small number of these students completed their education by doing further courses in rhetoric and philosophy at Athens or somewhere else in Greece.

### **Sample Short Past Paper Questions: Education**

1. What were the duties of a *paedagogus* in a Roman family
2. What was the job of a *grammaticus*?
3. What was a *rhetor*? What was the most important aspect of his job?
4. Describe any two Roman writing materials.
5. Where would one use an abacus and for what purpose?
6. Why was the study of Greek so important for the Romans?
7. What kind of education did a Roman girl normally receive?
8. What was the job of a *ludi magister*?

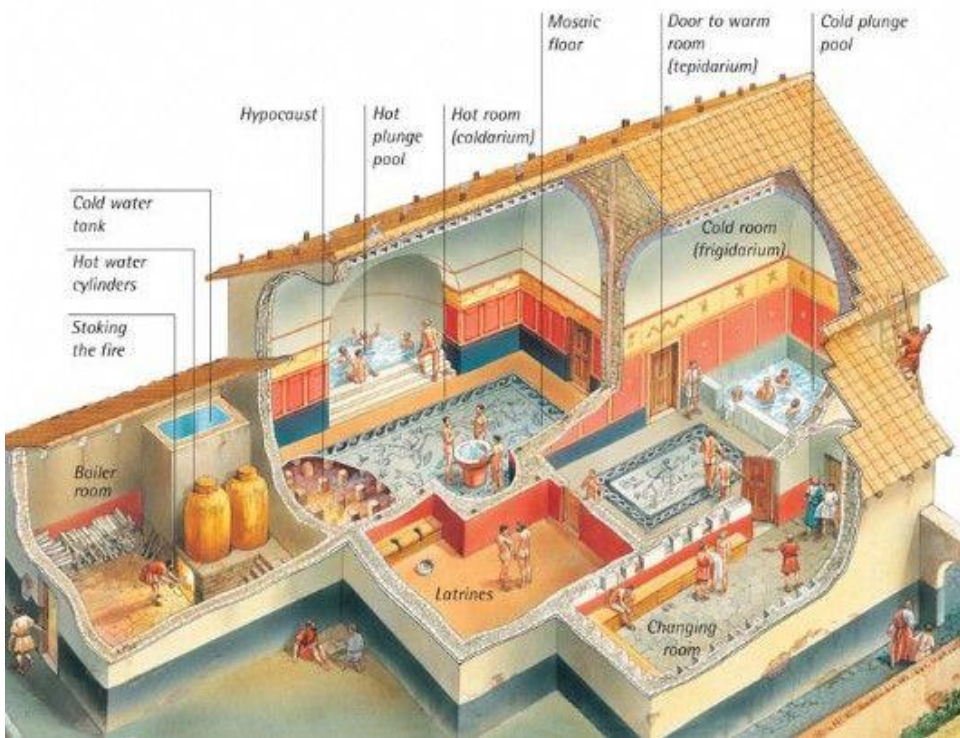
### **Sample Long Past Paper Questions: Education**

**9. 2004**



- (i) Describe what is happening in the illustration.(8)
- (ii) Imagine you are a *paedagogus* to a wealthy Roman family. Write a letter to a friend describing your duties and daily life.(12)

## 9. ROMAN BATHS



Very few Roman houses had a bathroom, so most people made a daily trip to the public bath-house. But a visit to the bath house involved much more than a good wash. The largest bath houses were vast leisure complexes where people could exercise, meet friends, discuss business and politics, or simply relax.

By the time of Augustus there were 170 privately-owned bath-houses, and in AD20 the first state-owned public baths opened. By AD 300, the city of Rome had 11 public baths, called *therma*, and about 1,000 privately owned bathhouses where people could bathe in greater privacy.

Some emperors built spectacular public baths, gleaming with gold and marble and beautiful mosaics to show off their wealth and power. The most impressive baths were those built by Emperor Caracalla, which could hold up to 1,600 people at a time. Other important baths were the baths of Agrippa, Trajan and Diocletian. The public official who looked after the baths was called an *aedile*. (There were four aediles in total. They were also responsible for the markets, streets and games).

The baths were usually open from mid-morning until sunset, and most Romans went every day. Women went in the morning and men in the afternoon.

Entrance to the baths was extremely cheap, especially for men, who were only charged a quadrans – the smallest Roman coin. Women had to pay four times that amount, but children got in free. Wealthy politicians sometimes tried to win votes by paying everyone's fees for a day.



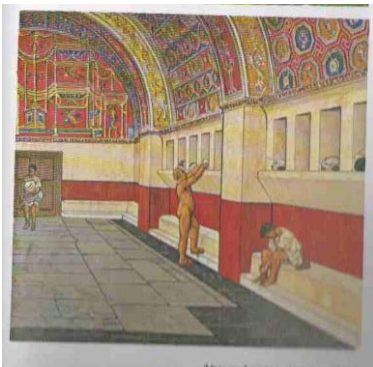
## A typical visit to the baths



### Palaestra

Before bathing, men and women would often go to the *palaestra*. The palaestra was an open-air area covered in sand. Several games were played, including:

- bowling, which was played along a paved alley.
- boxing either a punch-bag filled with flour or clay, or each other
- discus
- gymnastics
- running
- tennis, which used the palm of the hand as a racquet.
- *trigon*, which was a ballgame for three players. Each player stood at the corners of a triangle and flung the ball to each other, without warning. They caught with one hand and threw with the other.
- *trochus*, which involved rolling a metal hoop by pushing it with a hooked stick.
- weight-lifting
- wrestling



### Apodyterium

The apodyterium was the changing room. This room often had stone or wooden benches with holes in the walls where the bathers could put their clothes. Wealthy Romans would leave a slave here to look after their clothes.

### Tepidarium

The bathers then went to a warm room called the *tepidarium*. This area helped them get used to the heat. It had a lukewarm pool.

### Laconicum

After the tepidarium some bathers, usually the elderly, continued to the *laconicum*. This was a hot, steam-filled room like a sauna today.



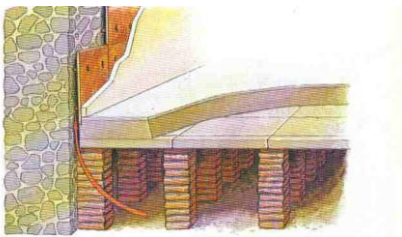
## Caldarium

After the *tepidarium* most bathers went to the *caldarium*. This was the hot room. It had a hot pool. The floor was so hot here that people had to wear special clogs with wooden soles to protect their feet. It was here that the Romans cleaned themselves using oil. The Romans did not have soap, but used olive-oil instead. A slave cleaned the bather here by scraping the oil off, along with the dirt, with a strigil. A strigil was a curved scraper made of metal.

## Frigidarium

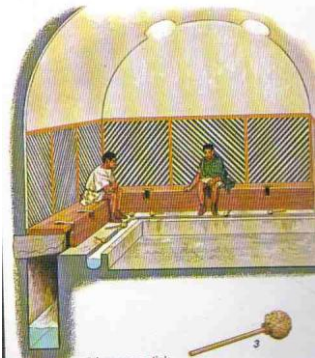
After the caldarium the bathers would go back to the *tepidarium* to cool down before they went to the *frigidarium*. This was the cold room. Usually it was a small circular room with a cold plunge pool, but sometimes it had a large rectangular pool.

## Heating the baths



The baths were heated by a central heating system, called a *hypocaust*. Hot air, warmed by a furnace in the basement, ran under the floors, and inside the walls. To allow this, the walls were panelled and the floor was raised up on small rectangular pillars.

## Toilets



Poor Romans did not have toilets at home. They used public toilets at the baths. Along three sides of the room there was a deep trough. Above this were seats. There was a shallow channel in front of the seats with flowing water. People cleaned themselves with a sponge on the end of a stick, and then rinsed it in the channel.

## After the bath

Roman men often stayed at the baths until closing time. After their bath they could buy a snack at one of the food stalls called a *popina*, walk in the gardens, read in the library, listen to a concert or poetry recital, or play board games such as chess, backgammon, and gambling with dice.



At the end of the day the water was simply emptied out of the baths. **Aqueducts** brought in fresh water everyday. Aqueducts were pipes set into bridges or laid underground.

### **Sample Short Past Paper Questions: Baths**

1. Describe the main features of a *palaestra*. What activities took place there?
2. Describe the main features of the *caldarium* in a Roman baths building.
3. What was an apodyterium?
4. Mention two uses of olive oil in the Roman world.
5. What was a *tepidarium*?
6. What was a frigidarium?
7. How were the baths heated?
8. What was a hypocaust? Describe its main features.
9. Mention the names of two areas in the Roman baths and say what their function was.

### **Sample Long Past Paper Questions: Baths**

#### **10.2013**

- (i) In which area of a Roman baths' building would you find a hypocaust? (2)
- (ii) Describe the main features of a hypocaust and say how it functioned. (6)
- (iii) Imagine you are a Roman on a visit to the baths. Describe your route through the baths and what you did in each area you visited. (12)

#### **11.2006**

- (i) Name **two** of the objects in the illustration. (4)
- (ii) How were these **two** objects used? (4)
- (iii) Imagine you are a Roman who has just returned from a visit to the baths. Describe the route you took through the baths **and** what you did at each stage of your visit. (12)

## **10. GLADIATORIAL GAMES**

Public sports and shows in Rome were called ludi (*games*). There were three kinds: theatrical performances (*ludi scaenici*); chariot races (*ludi circenses*) and gladiator fights and beast hunts (*munera*). At first these public events were staged together to form an entire day's entertainment. By imperial times, however, each event could be seen as a separate entertainment, often in its own specifically designed building.

### **Gladiator fights and beast hunts (*Munera*)**

#### ***Why were there munera?***

Gladiator fights were originally held as part of ancient funeral ceremonies. But during the republic politicians realized that by staging the Games they could (1) keep people entertained, (2) leave less time for them to stir trouble and (3) win votes. They were usually staged to mark important events like a battle victory, but because they were so popular the number of days given to the games grew, and by the time of the emperors there were 93 days of games. The games also grew in size. The emperor Trajan presided over a show that lasted 177 days in which 10,000 gladiators took part. The Games were free of charge.

#### ***Where were the munera held?***



The Games were first held in a wooden stadium built especially for the events. However, by AD81 the Colosseum, known originally as the Flavian amphitheatre, had been built in Rome by the emperor Titus. It was constructed after his capture of Jerusalem by 50,000 Jewish slaves.

The Colosseum was a huge stone stadium with an oval arena in the middle. The arena measured 86 yards long x 59 yards wide. It was surrounded by a wall with netting on top to prevent the animals jumping into the crowd, and covered in sand (arena is the Latin for sand). Dark sand was used in order to soak up the colour of the blood. Underneath the sand were wooden planks, and underneath the planks were the cells for the wild animals.

The Colosseum had four floors, eighty entrances at ground floor, and could hold up to 50,000 people. It was the largest stadium in the empire. On sunny days an awning (*velarium*) was suspended from poles around the top of the Colosseum to shelter people from sun or rain. The pulvinar was the emperor's box. It had special soft seats and its own canopy.

### ***What happened at the munera?***

1. The Games began in the morning with a grand parade of gladiators, musicians, dancers, jugglers and priests past the seat (pulvinar) of the emperor or presiding official.
2. Then the wild beasts were brought out. Some rare animals were simply displayed. Others were made perform circus tricks. One emperor even introduced the amazing spectacle of tightrope-walking elephants. Most animals, such as bears, panthers and bulls, were forced to fight each other or else were hunted down with spears, daggers, bows and arrows. Other times they were let loose on terrified prisoners. Many fights involved the killing of thousands of animals and humans. As many as 5,000 animals might die in a single day.
3. After the beasts came comic acts, mimes and mock fights.
4. Gladiator fights took place in the afternoon. Most gladiators were slaves, criminals or prisoners of war who were forced to fight each other, but some were paid volunteers. A very small number of gladiators were women. There were many types of gladiators, each with different weapons and costumes, and different types were usually pitted against each other.

Gladiators often fought to the death, though anyone who was badly injured could appeal to the emperor for mercy. After consulting the crowd, the emperor gave a signal with his thumb. Experts think that the 'thumbs up' sign meant that the gladiator should be allowed to live.

Victorious gladiators received money and a crown, and those who survived long enough could become rich and famous. After many victories, a gladiator might be given a wooden sword which meant that he was a free man. Many freed fighters became trainers at special gladiator schools.





### The different types of gladiator

- The **Samnite** carried a short sword and large oblong shield; he wore a helmet with a visor and plume.
- The **Murmillio** was a heavily armed gladiator who wore a helmet with a crest that looked like a fish. He also had a sword and a large shield.
- The **Retarius** had no armour and fought with a net and a trident.
- The **Thracian** had a curved dagger and a small round shield.
- The **Secutor** was armed with a helmet, short sword and shield; he chased the Thracian.
- The **Bestiarii** were gladiators who fought against wild animals.

### Sample Short Past Paper Questions: Games

1. What was the *Colosseum*? What happened there?
2. Name two types of gladiator and describe how they were armed.

### Sample Long Past Paper Questions: Games

3. 2009



Describe the main features of a Roman amphitheatre. (4)

(ii) Name **two** types of gladiator and say how they were armed. (4)

(iii) Imagine you are a successful gladiator who has just received the wooden sword.

Write a letter to a friend in which you look back on your career in the arena. (12)

# **11. CHARIOT RACING**



## ***Why were there Chariot Races?***

Chariot races were originally part of religious festivals, but soon became incredibly popular as entertainment, mostly for the same reasons that the Games were popular.

## ***Where were the races held?***

Races were held at a specially designed racetrack, called a circus or hippodrome, and regularly attracted huge crowds. The largest racetrack was the Circus Maximus in Rome. It measured 550m x 180m and could seat 250,000 people, more than any sport stadium in the world today. It was oval in shape with each end flattened. There was a wall down the middle called a spina, and at each end of it there were three pillars; the chariots raced around these. There were marble seats for senators and an imperial box for the emperor. Poorer citizens stood at the back. People started arriving at dawn to get a good seat; unlike at the Games, men and women could sit together. The Circus Maximus was open for 240 days a year. Entrance was free.

## ***What happened at the races?***

1. The spectacle began with a parade, as musicians led in an official who started the races. This might be an important senator, or even the emperor himself. He and his attendants were followed by singers, and priests carrying images of the gods. At the blast of a trumpet, the official raised a white cloth and let it fall to the ground. This signalled the start of the races.
2. There were as many as 24 races in a day, with up to 12 chariots from 4 different teams. Teams were differentiated by the colours red, green, blue and white. Drivers raced counter-clockwise and each race lasted seven laps. At the end of each lap, a marker (located at the end of the spina) was turned over. Markers were in the shape of an egg or a dolphin.

The chariots were normally pulled by two horses (*bigae*) or four horses (*quadrigae*) but sometimes six or eight horses were used. The more horses there were the more difficult the chariot was to control. To stop themselves from falling off the charioteers wound the reins around their bodies.

They carried a knife to cut through them if they were thrown from the chariot. They also wore a light helmet.

The most dangerous part of the race came as the drivers turned the tight corner at each end of the track. Here they jostled for position as they tried to stay as closely to the spina in order to secure the shortest route around the bend. Chariots often collided, and it was common for drivers to be injured or killed. During the race, wreckage had to be cleared and the dead dragged away – slaves did this dangerous job.

### ***A driver's life***

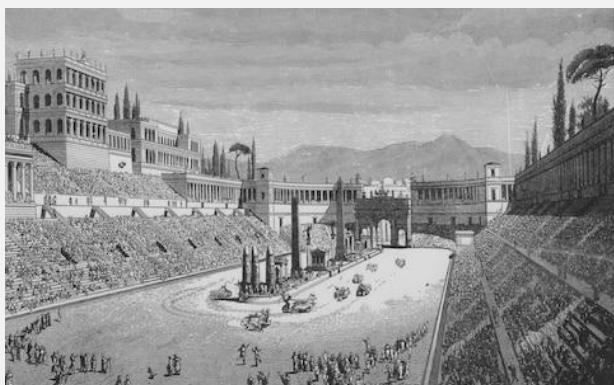
Most drivers were slaves but some were professionals who were paid large amounts of money to compete. Race winners were rewarded with money, a palm leaf of victory and instant fame. Each team or faction had its own stables and trainers and vets and stable boys. Supporters were fanatical and unpopular results could result in riots. Champions became rich and famous. However, although the life of a chariot-driver was glamorous, it could also be short; many drivers died in their early 20s.

#### **Sample Short Past Paper Question: Chariot Racing**

1. Describe what took place at the *Circus Maximus* in Rome.

#### **Sample Long Past Paper Questions: Chariot Racing**

2. **2002**



- (i) What activity is happening at the venue in the illustration? (4)
- (ii) Name a famous venue in Rome for this activity. (4)
- (iii) Imagine you are a Roman boy or girl and you have just returned home after spending a day at the above venue. You are anxious to tell your parents everything you have seen. Write down what you would tell them about the venue and about your exciting day there.

### 3. 2011

- (i) Name the four colours that identified the different teams in a chariot race.(4)
- (ii) Describe two of the main features of a Roman circus or chariot-racing stadium. (6)
- (iii) Imagine you are a charioteer who has just won a chariot-race at the *Circus Maximus*. Write a letter to a friend describing the event. (10)

### 4. 2018



Look at the illustration below of charioteers on a mosaic and answer the questions which follow:-

- (i) Which four colours identified the different teams in a chariot race? (4)
- (ii) Describe two of the main features of a chariot racing stadium. (4)
- (iii) Imagine you are a Roman boy or girl who has just spent the day at the Circus Maximus in Rome. Write a letter to a friend describing what happened at the races there. (12)