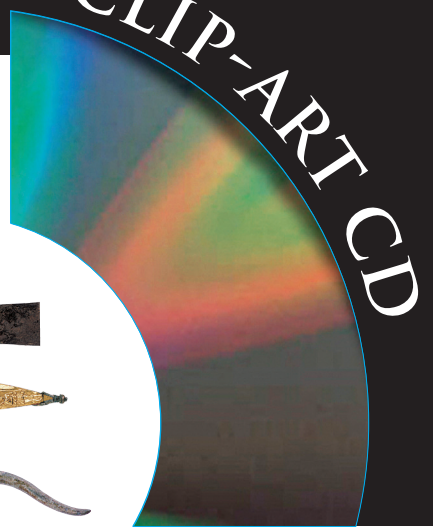




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# ANCIENT ROME



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from gladiator fights to engineering feats





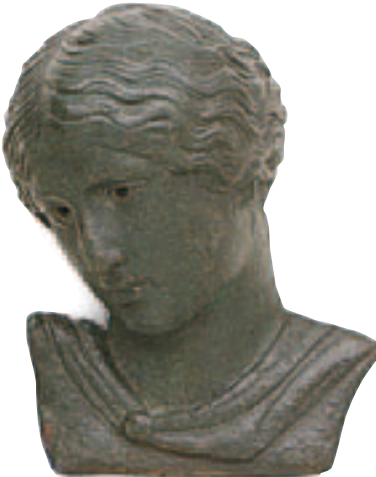
Eyewitness  
ANCIENT ROME





Clay vessel in form of pig

Silver spoon



Bronze bust of a goddess



Silver distaff



"Victor" gaming counter



Silver ladle



Bronze statue of Aphrodite adjusting her sandal



Bronze lamp in form of dog with hare in mouth



Ostrogothic  
radiate brooches



Gold dolphin  
earrings



# Eyewitness

# ANCIENT ROME

Written by  
DR. SIMON JAMES



Bronze hero  
in combat



Gold glass  
picture of a  
*retiarius* (a type  
of gladiator)




Bronze bust  
of Minerva




DK Publishing





Bronze toilet set  
for the baths



Silver brooch with  
a bust of Zeus



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MELBOURNE, MUNICH, AND DELHI

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This Eyewitness © Guide has been conceived by  
Dorling Kindersley Limited and Editions Gallimard

This edition published in the United States in 2004, 2008  
by DK Publishing, 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014

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08 09 10 11 12 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ED629 - 01/08

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Published in Great Britain by Dorling Kindersley Limited.

A catalog record for this book is available from  
the Library of Congress.

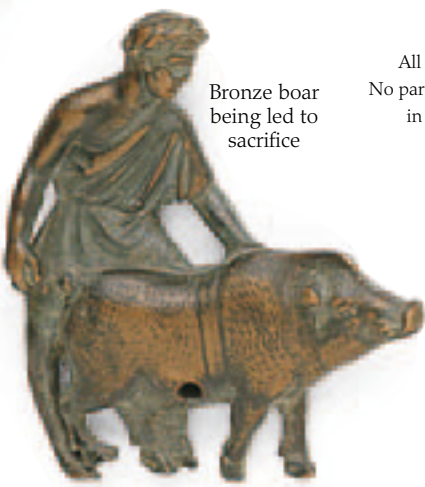
ISBN 978-0-7566-3766-8 (HC) 978-0-7566-0650-3 (Library Binding)

Color reproduction by Colourscan, Singapore  
Printed and Bound by Leo Paper Products Ltd, China

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Bronze *lar*  
(household god)



Bronze boar  
being led to  
sacrifice



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Clay ointment  
flask in form  
of hare



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# City-state to superpower

**ACCORDING TO LEGEND**, Rome was founded in 753 BCE by the brothers Romulus and Remus, sons of the war-god Mars. It was built on seven hills beside the Tiber River, on the borders of Etruria. Early Rome was ruled by kings until 509 BCE, when the nobles drove out the wicked Etruscan king, Tarquin the Proud. Rome became a republic, ruled by two consuls elected from the Senate each year (p. 16). She overpowered her neighbors in Italy, and learned about Greek civilization from Greek city-states in the south. By 260 BCE Rome was a major force. A clash with the trading empire of Carthage in North Africa led to a century of terrible wars. Carthage was finally crushed in 146 BCE, leaving Rome as the greatest power in the Mediterranean.

## REALISTIC ART

Part of a suit of armor, this shoulder guard shows a Greek grappling with one of the legendary Amazons (female warriors). The Romans admired and copied the realistic figures of Greek art.



## The Etruscans

The Etruscan people lived in a group of city-states, north of Rome, and were very influenced by Greece. They were great traders, architects, and engineers, and greatly influenced early Rome.

**ETRUSCAN DESIGN**  
A three-horse chariot running over a fallen man is the design for this Etruscan toilet box leg. The Etruscans may have given Rome the idea of chariot racing (p. 34), and gladiator fights in the arena (p. 30).



## RIVER GOD

This little painted face of fired clay shows that the Greeks were skilled potters.

## The Greeks

The Greeks colonized the coasts of Sicily and southern Italy, and the fertile land made many of the new cities wealthy, with splendid temples and richly furnished houses. These Greek colonies eventually came under Roman control, but brought with them their art, literature, and learning.

## GODDESS OF LOVE

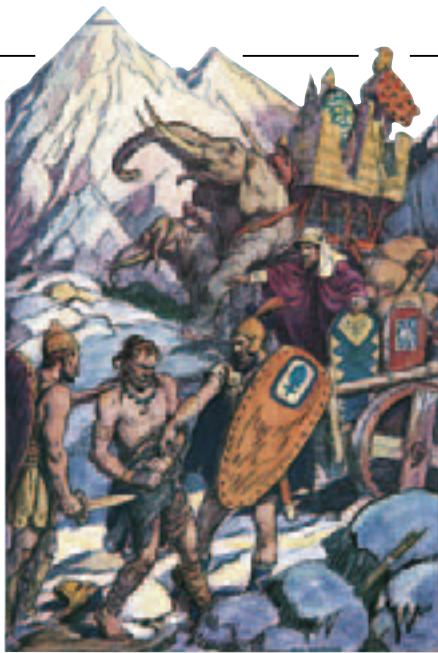
This silver plaque shows the Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite. The Romans saw their goddess Venus like this.





**AN ARMY OF ELEPHANTS**

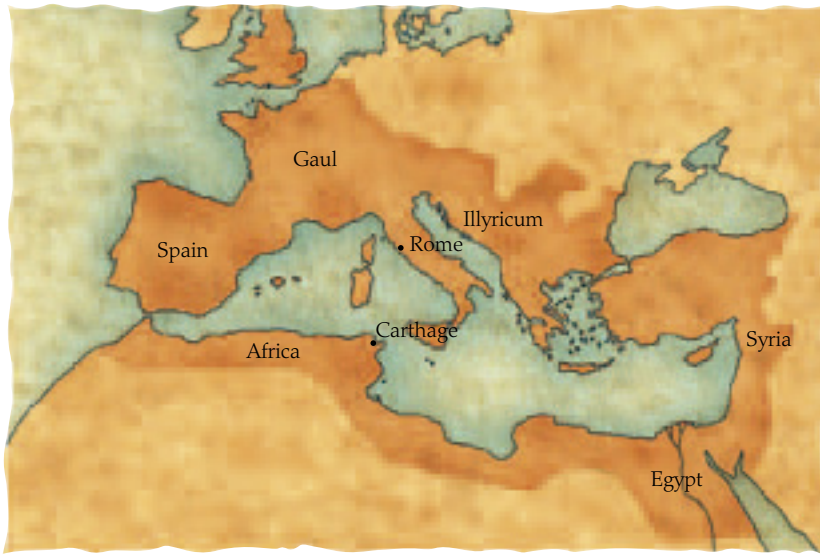
The growing power of Rome faced its stiffest test in 218 BCE, when the determined Carthaginian general, Hannibal, marched from Spain to Italy over the Alps, complete with war elephants, seen here in a Victorian print. Hannibal smashed the legions sent against him, but Rome refused to admit defeat. He fought on in Italy for years, while the Romans grimly held on, raising army after army, attacking Hannibal's bases in Spain, and even landing in Africa. Finally the Carthaginians withdrew. Rome had won new lands, but the cost was terrible.



**VICTORY SYMBOL**

The Romans thought of the spirit of military victory as a goddess. The bronze statuette on the right shows her as an angel-like figure.

*Victory statuette holds a crown of laurel leaves*



**Rome expands**

The clash with Carthage left Rome with her first overseas provinces, and wars with other powerful states to the east soon followed. The generals who won these conflicts brought vast wealth to Rome, but also used their soldiers to fight for personal power in Italy. Civil wars raged across the Roman world.



**THE SHADOW OF ROME**

The Roman Empire was divided up into different provinces. Most of the Mediterranean had fallen to Rome by 50 CE. A few more provinces were added over the next 150 years, including Britain, and the Empire was at its height by the second century CE.

**DEATH TO A DICTATOR**

The most famous warring general of the late Republic, Julius Caesar defeated all his rivals and eventually ruled Rome as a dictator. He was too much like a king for the proud Roman senators (p. 16).



**A SHIP OF WAR**

The Romans learned from Carthage how to fight at sea. The clay plaque above shows a war-galley, propelled by oars, with a ram at the front to sink other vessels. On the deck stand soldiers, ready to board and capture enemy ships in battle. In peacetime the fleet kept the sea-lanes free of pirates.





# The emperors

**R**OME WAS NOT ALWAYS RULED by emperors. For hundreds of years there was a republic (p. 6). But the Republic collapsed in the chaos of civil wars both before and after Julius Caesar's death, when various generals fought for sole power. Order was finally restored when Julius Caesar's adopted son, Octavian (later called Augustus), was left as the only survivor of the warlords. A brilliant politician, he reformed the state and brought peace back to the Roman world. He was, in fact, the sole ruler, with the power of the army to back him up, but he knew that Romans hated the idea of kingship. His clever solution was to proclaim the restoration of the old Republic, with himself simply as first citizen. But the "new Republic" was just for show; Augustus became, in fact, the first emperor, and when he died in 14 CE passed on the new throne to his adopted son Tiberius. Rome was to be ruled by emperors for the next 400 years.



Caligula went mad and was murdered: reigned 37–41 CE

Claudius conquered Britain: reigned 41–54 CE

Nero was the last of Augustus's family: reigned 54–68 CE

**HEADS AND TALES**  
In a world without newspapers, radio, or television, coins were a good way to advertise to people the image of the emperor and his deeds. These are coins of Tiberius's successors.



**A ROMAN TRIUMPH**  
When the emperor won a great victory he would be granted a triumph, the right to lead his soldiers through Rome with their prisoners and booty, while the people cheered. Behind him stood a slave holding a golden crown over his head. Captured enemy leaders would be strangled during the ceremonies.

**MAD EMPEROR**  
Some Roman emperors went mad with power. Nero is the best known of these. Many blamed him for starting the great fire of Rome in 64 CE, so that he could build himself a new capital in its ruins. He finally killed himself.

**EMPEROR'S WEAPON**  
This spectacular scabbard depicts the Emperor Tiberius. It looks gold and silver, but tests show it is made of brass and tinned bronze. The sword and scabbard were found in the Rhine River, Germany.

*Tiberius receiving his nephew, the general Germanicus*

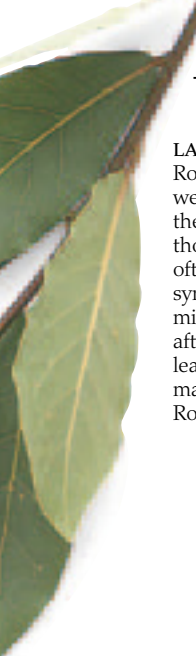


**THE COLOR OF POWER**  
Purple, the most expensive dye, was largely reserved for the emperor's clothes. Senators wore togas with a purple band. Later, it became treason for anyone other than the emperor to dress completely in purple.

Murex seashells, from which purple dye was distilled



**LAUREL FOR A CROWN**  
 Roman emperors did not wear gold crowns because they did not want to be thought of as kings. But they often wore laurel wreaths to symbolize their success and military power—particularly after a conquest. Laurel leaves had long been used to make “crowns” for victorious Roman generals.



*The jeweled crown was added to Augustus's head much later*



**CAMEO OF A GOD**

A carved gem shows the first emperor, Augustus. He was thought to be very handsome, and was a patron of artists and poets. He was proclaimed a god when he died.



**JULIA AND LIVIA**

Members of an emperor's family were also shown in heroic poses, to promote the “royal family” image. Here Augustus's wife Livia is shown as the goddess Juno, and his daughter Julia as the helmeted goddess Roma. Livia greatly influenced Augustus throughout his reign, and they were married for 53 years.



**DRUSILLA**

This portrait in chalcedony (a decorative stone) depicts one of the younger women in Augustus's family, probably Drusilla.

**HEIR TO THE THRONE**

Often the emperor adopted a promising young man as heir to the throne to succeed him when he died. The emperor Antoninus Pius adopted Lucius Verus, who is depicted here in a fine bronze bust. He later became joint emperor with Marcus Aurelius, from 161–169 CE.



*A portrait of Tiberius*

*Traces of wood from the scabbard adhering to the steel blade*



*A legion's eagle standard in a shrine*



**COMMANDING CREST**  
Centurions and other officers wore crests on their helmets, so that their men could see them and follow them in battle.



*Crest shown in position but not attached*

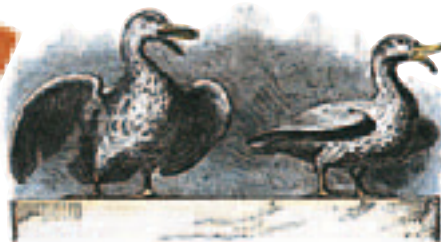
**HEAD PROTECTOR**  
Of Gallic origin, this helmet was cleverly designed to protect the head, face, and neck without blocking vision or hearing. It was often decorated with enameled studs.



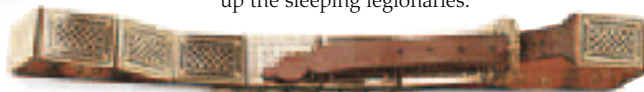
**METAL JACKET**  
The famous armor of metal strips held together by leather straps on the inside was only invented in the first century CE. It was very flexible but heavy, and soldiers had to help each other to put it on and lace it up.

# The legionary

ROME OWED her great empire to her legions, perhaps the most successful armies in history. Each legion consisted of about 5,000 foot soldiers (infantry), all Roman citizens (p. 16) who joined up voluntarily for 20–25 years. Legionaries were rigorously trained, brutally disciplined, and well armed. They were the heart of the army and bore the brunt of battle. Their lives were hard, but they were tough. They could be mutinous—emperors made sure they treated legionaries well. In the second century CE there were 150,000 legionaries, and even more noncitizen, auxiliary troops to aid them (p. 12). Modern replicas of legionary equipment are shown on these pages.



Rome's Capitoline Hill survived capture by the Gauls in 390 BCE because the holy geese who lived there raised the alarm and woke up the sleeping legionaries.



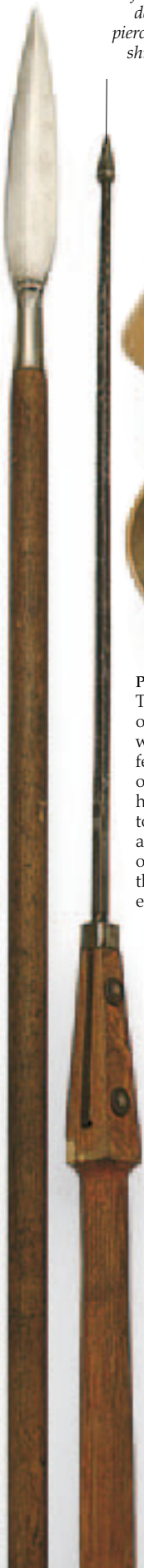
**UNDER THE ARMOR**  
A coarse woolen tunic was worn under the armor and reached to midhigh. At first the Romans did not wear pants, but short breeches were gradually adopted.

**BELTING UP**  
The *baltens* or belt was a soldier's badge of office, worn with the tunic at all times. The "apron" of decorated leather strips gave some protection to the groin in battle. Also, the jangling noise they made when the legionaries marched helped to intimidate the enemy.

*The heavy pendants weighed the leather strips down*



Long point of the pilum designed to pierce enemy's shield—and the man behind it



Woolen cloak

Leather bottle for water or wine

Pack for personal items and three days' rations

**PIERCING POINTS**

The thrusting spear of earlier times (left) was replaced by the fearsome heavy javelin or *pilum* (right), which had a narrow point to pierce both shields and armor. A shower of these flying through the air would break the enemy's charge.

**MARIUS'S MULE**

A fully loaded legionary on the march carried more than armor, weapons, and a shield. Each man had a heavy pack held over the shoulder, which included a toolkit and a dish and pan. This burden weighed 90 lb (40 kg) or more, and often had to be carried up to 20 miles (30 km) in a day! Legionaries were called "Marius's mules," after the general who started the practice.



Mattock for digging ditches



**BOOTS MADE FOR WALKING**

Military sandals (*caligae*) were as important as armor, because the legions won wars by fast marches as much as by battle. These boots were strong and well ventilated, with patterns of iron hobnails specially designed to take weight and to survive miles of marching.

The sword's grip was often of wood, although bone and ivory were also used

The dagger had a double-edged blade



Turf cutter for building turf ramparts

**SWORD AND DAGGER**

A *pugio* or dagger was worn on the left, and *gladius* or short sword on the right. Both were Spanish types, copied by the Romans. The sword was a terrible stabbing weapon, short enough to wield easily in the crush of battle. It was horribly effective against the mostly unarmored Gauls.



# Battle and defense

**B**Y THE BEGINNING of the first century CE, the Romans had acquired most of their empire; seas, deserts, mountains, and forests were providing a natural barrier, and successive emperors decided not to expand farther. Roman soldiers were transformed into the frontier guardsmen of the conquered provinces, subduing any uprisings that might occur. Many of the wars at this stage were fought to stop outsiders from invading the provinces. The legions remained the backbone of the army, but the auxiliary regiments (which included infantry and cavalry), became more and more important: it was their job to patrol and guard the thousands of miles of frontier that now existed around the Roman Empire.

**CATAPULT BOLTS**  
Soldiers in the army used catapults to hurl darts and stones at the enemy. These are the iron tips from wooden darts or "bolts." Each legion had about 60 shooters, fearsome weapons used mostly in sieges.



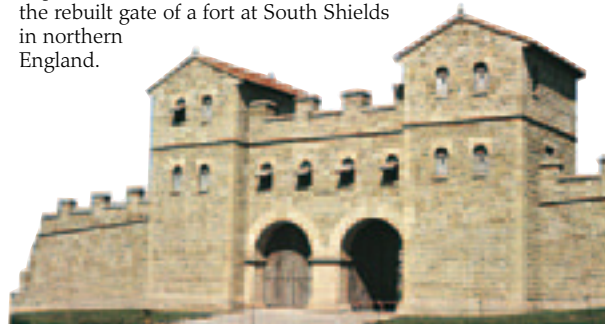
**A PROVINCE WON**  
Julius Caesar conquered Gaul in the 50s BCE, mainly for his own glory. Gallic resistance was finally crushed at the siege of Alesia, where Caesar trapped the Gallic leader, Vercingetorix. This detail from a Victorian painting shows the proud Gaul about to enter the Roman camp to surrender to Caesar, seated on a red platform in the distance.

**AN AUXILIARY SOLDIER**  
Auxiliary soldiers supplemented the legions. Usually recruited from subject peoples of the Empire, they were rarely citizens. This bronze statuette shows an auxiliary soldier wearing a mail shirt.

**SHIELD BOSS**  
Roman soldiers' wooden shields had a metal cover or boss over the central handle. This could be used to give a hard knock to an enemy who got too close!



**A ROMAN FORT**  
Soldiers spent the winter months, and times of peace, in wooden or stone forts. Below is the rebuilt gate of a fort at South Shields in northern England.



**THE SPOILS OF WAR**  
An ivory plaque shows captured arms—one reward for taking over enemy territory. Plunder from conquests helped to finance the splendor of Rome, filled the emperor's coffers, and paid the troops. Rome's wars of conquest also brought several million slaves to Italy, from all over the Empire.





**SCALY PROTECTION**  
Fabric shirts covered with bronze scales were a common type of armor. Several thousand scales were stapled into rows and laced to the shirt.



**BATTLE WITH BARBARIANS**  
This wild entanglement of limbs, horses, and armor is a relief from a stone coffin showing Roman cavalry in combat with northern barbarians. Although the artist did not depict the soldiers very accurately, he gives a fine impression of the bloody chaos of battle.

## The cavalry

The auxiliary cavalry were among the highest paid of Roman soldiers, partly because they had to pay for and equip their own horses. Romans were not very good horsemen, so the army raised regiments in areas where fighting on horseback was traditional, especially Gaul, Holland, and Thrace (Bulgaria). The cavalry was the eyes of the army, patrolling and scouting ahead of the legions, guarding their flanks in battle, and pursuing and harassing defeated enemies.

### HARNES FITTING

This is one of a set of fine silvered harness fittings from Xanten in Germany. Such showy equipment probably belonged to a cavalry officer.



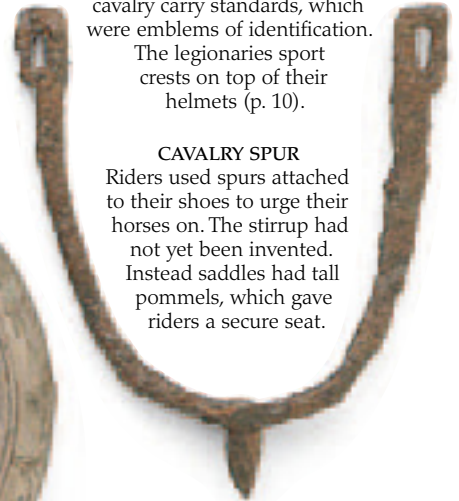
### A PARADE

A relief from Rome shows legionaries and galloping cavalrymen. Some of the cavalry carry standards, which were emblems of identification.

The legionaries sport crests on top of their helmets (p. 10).

### CAVALRY SPUR

Riders used spurs attached to their shoes to urge their horses on. The stirrup had not yet been invented. Instead saddles had tall pommels, which gave riders a secure seat.



### SPEARHEADS

Auxiliary foot soldiers and horsemen used light javelins for throwing (p. 11), but heavier spears for thrusting at close range. Today, only the iron spearheads survive; the wooden shafts rotted long ago. These examples come from Hod Hill in Dorset, England.



### CHAMPING AT THE BIT

A Roman horse harness was basically the same as a modern harness. Leather reins and a bridle were linked to a bit that went in the horse's mouth. This one is identical in form to modern snaffle bits.





# Soldiers in society



**P**EACETIME OR WARTIME, the army had a most important role to play in Roman society. Many poorer people chose a career in the army because it offered a good standard of living and the chance to learn certain trades, such as construction. There were penalties; they risked death in battle, and they were not supposed to marry. But there were some benefits, and many soldiers were able to have “unofficial” wives and children. People from the provinces were rewarded for their service with Roman citizenship for them and their families. Retired legionaries were given grants of land or money. Talent could lead to promotion to

centurion, in charge of a “century” of 80 men. Well-paid soldiers also provided a ready market for local traders. Settlements developed next to forts, and many grew into cities, such as York, England. Soldiers intermarrying with local women helped to spread Roman ways and weld the Empire together. The army kept the famous Roman Peace (p. 60), which brought prosperity to the provinces.

**PARADE MASK**  
In peacetime, Roman soldiers spent a lot of time training. Cavalrymen often wore elaborate armor for parades and display. This bronze mask found at Nola in Italy is from a helmet probably made specially for mock cavalry battles in which riders could practice their skills and show off their prowess.

**CRAFTSMEN AND BUILDERS**  
Soldiers were trained in many crafts, including building. They quarried or made their own materials, like this clay plaque for a roof. It shows the name and emblem of the 20th legion—a charging boar.



**HADRIAN'S WALL**  
At the emperor Hadrian's command, the army built a great wall across Britain to separate the Roman province from the unconquered Caledonians of Scotland. Legionaries, with their technical know-how, built the wall, and the auxiliaries guarded it. Auxiliaries patrolled from forts along the wall, and the legions moved in whenever there was serious trouble. The wall ran for 75 miles (120 km).



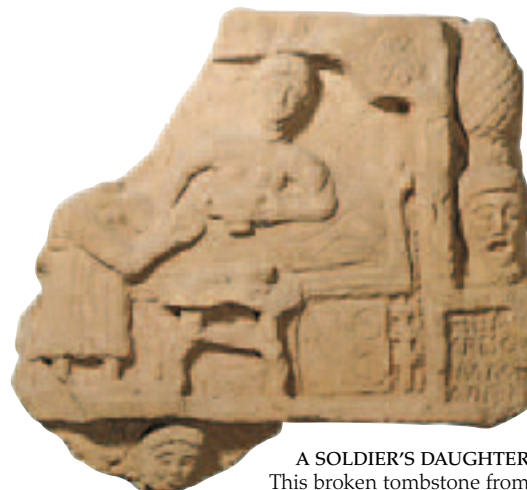
A fanciful view of a legionary, complete with shield and spear







*Elaborate hairstyle on mask*



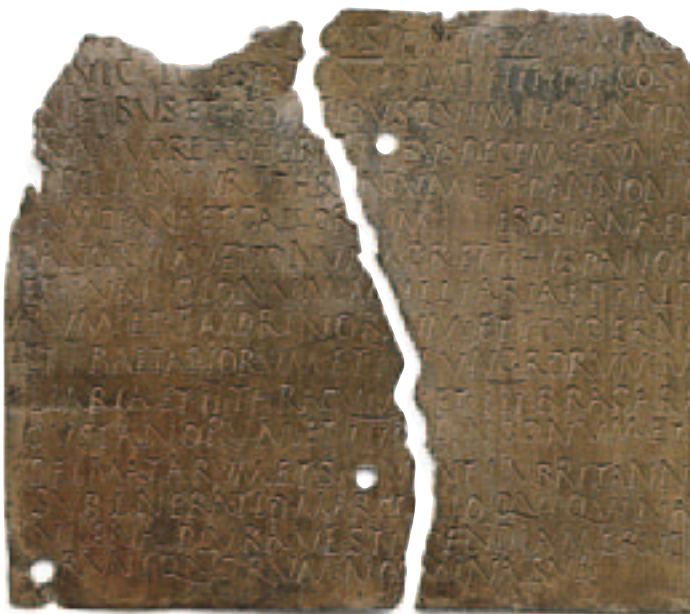
**A SOLDIER'S DAUGHTER**  
This broken tombstone from Lancashire, England, is that of the daughter of a standard bearer. As soldiers and local women married and raised families, they welded natives and Romans together.



*The emperor's image and titles*

*The lid is on the inside*

**PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP**  
When provincials serving with the auxiliaries completed 25 years of service they were usually granted Roman citizenship, which gave important legal rights and privileges. To be able to prove their new status some soldiers had bronze copies of the official document made, like this one from Malpas, Cheshire, in England. It belonged to a Spaniard named Reburus.



**MONEY PURSE**  
Soldiers carried cash in leather or bronze purses like this. Worn like a bracelet, it could only be opened when it was taken off, so it was hard to rob.



**FORGOTTEN HOARD**  
These gold pieces, more than four years' pay for a legionary, were buried in Kent, England, just after the Romans invaded Britain. They may be the savings of an officer who was killed in the fighting and so never came back for them.



# Senators, citizens, subjects, and slaves

ROMAN SOCIETY had a very definite social scale. The people of the early Empire were divided into Roman citizens, noncitizen “provincials,” and slaves. Citizens themselves were divided into different ranks, and had privileges that were denied to noncitizens. The Senate in Rome, the heart of government since the Republic, was now controlled by the emperor. Consuls, other magistrates, and provincial governors were chosen from its members—all wealthy aristocrats. The next rank of citizens, the equestrians, were also rich men who served in the army and administration. It was very possible to change rank in Roman society: equestrians could become senators, and many Roman citizens had slave ancestors. Although many slaves were downtrodden, others were well treated and even powerful; for a long time the emperor’s slaves and freedmen (ex-slaves) ran the civil service.



SPQR

These famous letters stand for *Senatus Populusque Romanus*, which means “the Senate and the people of Rome”. SPQR can be found on inscriptions and coins.

### BROOCH

The brooch or *fibula* was a common item of dress. It was handy for fastening cloaks and other garments at the shoulder.



Sprung safety pin was behind decorative front of brooch



Rods were tied together with a strap

Axe

### SYMBOL OF POWER

Important Roman officials were escorted by *lictors*, men who carried the *fasces*—an ax in a bundle of rods. This symbolized their authority to punish or execute people. The bronze figurine on the right dates to about the first century CE.

### RINGS

Finger rings were widely worn by men and women. Gold rings were a badge of rank for equestrians, and rings with carved stones were used to seal documents. Others were magic charms to ward off bad luck.

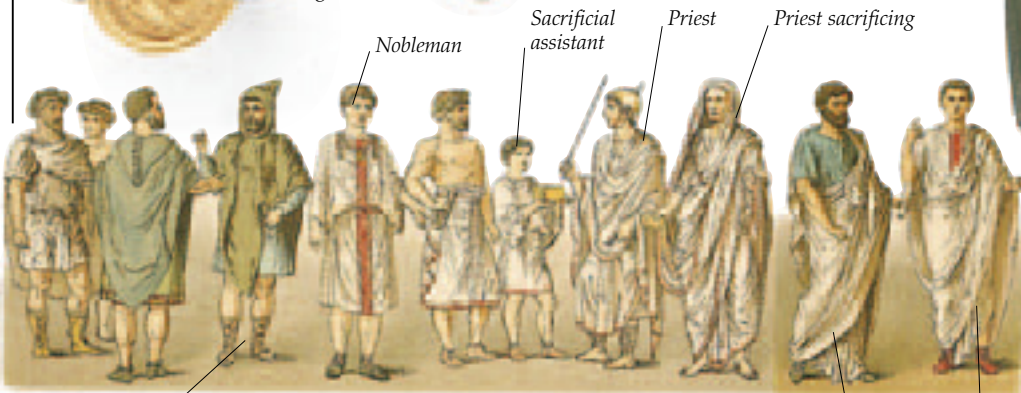
Gold signet ring



Silver rings with busts of Hercules (left) and Mars (below)



Ring made out of a gold coin



Peasant

### MEN'S GEAR

Roman men wore a knee-length sleeveless tunic, perhaps with undergarments and various types of cloak. On formal occasions citizens wore the heavy white toga. Pants were regarded as an unmanly foreign fashion!

Citizen in toga

Senator





**HEADED PAPER**

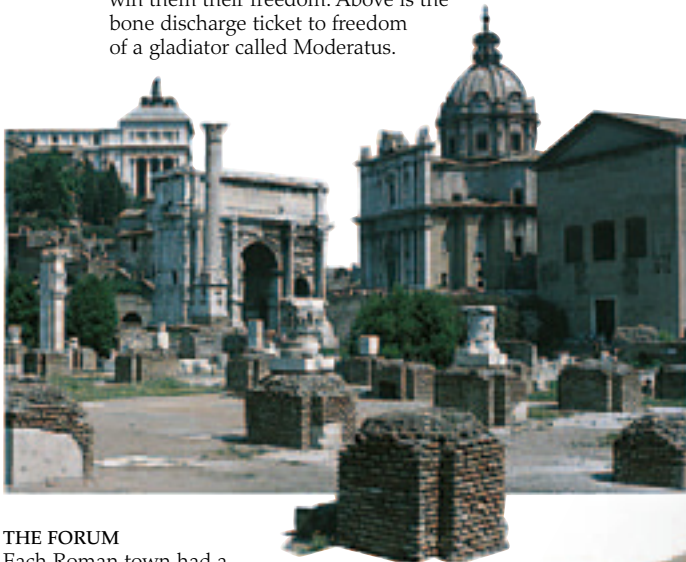
The back of this wooden writing tablet bears the brand of the procurator of the province of Britain. It was the “headed notepaper” of the official of equestrian rank who collected taxes and paid the army in Britain. The procurator was of a lower rank than the provincial governor, a senator who commanded the army and administered justice. Both officials were selected by the emperor, and had staffs of slaves and military clerks.

On the other side there was a layer of wax to write on (p. 40)



**ESCAPE FROM THE ARENA**

People were made slaves in various ways: by war, the courts, and by birth to slave parents. Most gladiators were slaves, but success in the arena could win them their freedom. Above is the bone discharge ticket to freedom of a gladiator called Moderatus.



**THE FORUM**

Each Roman town had a forum, a market square with public buildings around it. The forum in Rome (above) was the heart of the capital, through which ran the Sacred Way to the Capitoline Hill and the temple of Jupiter. On the right of the picture is the *curia* or senate house. Nearby were the imperial palace and the Colosseum.

**CHANGING FASHIONS**

Roman men were avid followers of fashion, especially hairstyle. The Roman gentleman shown in the bronze bust sports the thick hair and clipped beard fashionable around 130 CE. Subsequently, beards were allowed to grow longer and longer, until about 230 CE, when stubby beards and military crewcuts came into fashion.



*Clipped beard fashionable around 130 CE*



# The women of Rome

Silver distaff, used to hold wool or linen fibers ready to spin them into thread

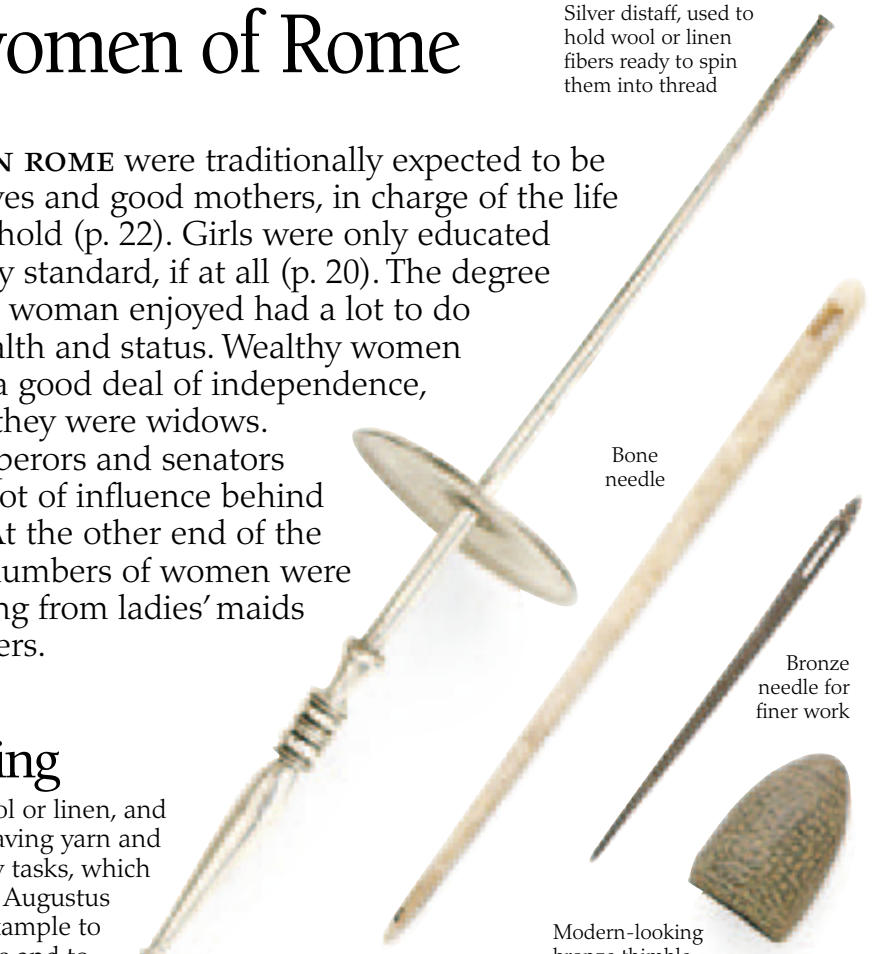


**BUST OF A WOMAN**  
Above is a small silver bust probably from the center of a decorative dish. It may be a portrait of a great Roman lady.

**WOMEN IN ROME** were traditionally expected to be dignified wives and good mothers, in charge of the life of the household (p. 22). Girls were only educated up to primary standard, if at all (p. 20). The degree of freedom a woman enjoyed had a lot to do with her wealth and status. Wealthy women could enjoy a good deal of independence, especially if they were widows. Wives of emperors and senators often had a lot of influence behind the scenes. At the other end of the scale, large numbers of women were slaves, ranging from ladies' maids to farmworkers.

## Spinning and weaving

Most Roman clothing was made of wool or linen, and the necessary jobs of spinning and weaving yarn and making clothes were traditional wifely tasks, which wealthy women avoided. The emperor Augustus made his daughter Julia do it as an example to others to keep up the old Roman ways and to demonstrate wifely virtues. Julia hated it!



Bone needle

Bronze needle for finer work

Modern-looking bronze thimble

## Cosmetics

Many Roman women used makeup. A pale complexion was fashionable, and this was achieved by applying powdered chalk or white lead. Red ocher was used for blush and lip color, and eyes were made up with compounds based on ash or antimony. Some cosmetics were poisonous.

Silver spatula for mixing and applying cosmetics



Scent bottle carved from precious onyx

This wall painting shows a girl pouring perfume into a phial

### WOMEN'S DRESS

Roman women wore an inner and an outer tunic of wool or linen, and sometimes a cloak. The wealthy wore cool imported fabrics like Chinese silk or Indian cotton.



Above is an ivory comb from a grave. It is inscribed "Modestina, farewell." The poor used wooden or bone combs, although more to get rid of lice than for fashion!





**MUMMY MASK**  
This colored wax picture from a Roman period tomb in Egypt gives a clear idea of a wealthy woman's appearance, her hairstyle and jewelry. It was set into the outside of the dead woman's mummy case.



Duck earrings from Syria

Gold earrings shaped like dolphins



Roman women's hairstyles often needed hairpieces to complete the effect



The precious stones on these earrings are sapphire, garnet, and plasma (a type of chalcedony)



Plaited gold wire necklace

Gold crescent-shaped pendant

A necklace of gold and red garnet beads

Bronze ring with the name Sabbina

Gold ring with a sealstone depicting a bird on a branch

## Jewelry

Finger rings, bracelets, and necklaces were widely worn (p. 43). Most jewelry was made out of cheap bronze or sometimes glass. Many women had their ears pierced for earrings. Decorated brooches held clothing together.

## Occupations

There were some careers for women outside the home or the store, but not many. Rich women could become priestesses, of whom the most important were the Vestal Virgins (p. 52). A few ran their own businesses; one was a lampmaker. There were professional midwives, hairdressers, and a few female doctors, but men kept most professions to themselves.



**WOMEN IN THE ARENA**  
The Romans even trained some women slaves as gladiators (p. 30). The stone relief above commemorates the freeing from the arena of Achillia and Amazon (probably "stage names").





**"IS IT NEARLY OVER?"**

Roman children dressed up just like their parents and often accompanied them to official ceremonies. This detail from the *Ara Pads*, an Augustan peace monument, shows members of the imperial family in a sacrificial procession. The children look fairly unimpressed by the whole occasion!



# Growing up

**FOR SOME LUCKY ROMAN CHILDREN**, growing up just consisted of play and school. Roman fathers used to educate their own children until the time of the emperors, when those who could afford it hired tutors. Many also sent the children to school from the age of seven to learn the basics, with abacus and wax tablet. On the way to school children stopped at a bar for breakfast, as Italian children still do. School ran from dawn until noon, and there was much learning by heart, and a beating for failure. Girls rarely got more than a basic education, after which they had to learn household skills from their mothers. Sons of the nobility would go on to prepare for a career in law or government. However, school was for the privileged few, and most children came from poor families.

Some parents even had to leave babies they could not feed outside to die. Most poor children could not read or write and were put to work at an early age.

**YOUNG BOY**

This realistic marble portrait bust depicts a young boy of about five years of age. The strange hair curl identifies him as a worshipper of Isis (p. 50).



Hair curl



**DOZING SLAVE**

Many Roman children were slaves. The oil flask (left) depicts a slave boy sitting on a box and dozing while he waits for his master to return. Many slaves were ill-treated and worked very long hours, so he may be taking a nap while he can. Perhaps his master is enjoying himself relaxing at the baths; this oil flask was probably used in bathing (p. 38).

**LITTLE BOY'S LIFE**

A marble relief from a sarcophagus shows scenes from the upbringing of a boy. On the left, the newborn infant is suckled by his mother, and then is picked up by his father. Next, the boy is shown with a donkey chariot. Finally, he is seen reciting to his father.







*Wear and tear on doll*

**RAG DOLL**  
Dolls have been popular toys for thousands of years. This much-loved and somewhat moth-eaten rag doll from Roman times was well preserved in the dry soil of Egypt.



**TOXIC TOY**  
Children's toys reflected the world around them, like this camel from Egypt. It would not be allowed into the stores today—it is made of poisonous lead.



Glass marbles

Pottery marbles

**ENDURING MARBLES**  
The game of marbles has remained popular through the centuries. Marbles were already popular toys in Roman times, and were made of a variety of materials.



*Elaborately braided hair*

**YOUNG GIRL**  
On the right is a fine marble portrait of a young lady of about ten. Her hair was originally coloured red, and is styled like that of adult women of the time (about 200 CE). Roman children were brought up to look and behave just like miniature versions of their parents.

**MODEL CHARIOT**  
Children have always loved to copy their parents in play, and this model chariot suggests that the thrills of the racetrack were as exciting to Roman children as race cars are today (p. 34).





## MARRIAGE CEREMONY

Brides wore a special dress and a bright orange veil. The couple exchanged vows and clasped hands to symbolize their union and that of their families. The groom holds the written marriage contract.



# Family life

THE IDEA OF THE FAMILY was very important to the Romans, but they had a somewhat different understanding of the word than we do today. The *paterfamilias*, the father and head of the family, was traditionally all-powerful over the contents of his house—including all the people who lived in it, from wife to slave. He had, in theory, power of life and death over his children. In practice, however, wives and children were not usually as downtrodden as this implies. His wife actually had her share of power, controlling the running of the house and its finances, and supervising the upbringing of the children until they were old enough to begin their schooling (p. 20). Larger households also had a number of slaves. Many were harshly treated, but others were sometimes treated as members of the family.

## A Roman wedding

In Roman times, marriages often took place for financial or political reasons. On the wedding day the groom arrived with his family and friends at the bride's house, and the marriage took place in the atrium (p. 24) or at a nearby shrine. A sacrifice was offered, and the auspices were read to make sure the gods approved. The bride and groom exchanged vows and clasped hands and so were married.

**ENGAGEMENT RINGS**  
The groom often gave his future bride a ring with clasped hands, symbolizing marriage.



**FREED SLAVE**  
Hedone, freed maidservant of Marcus Crassus, set up this bronze plaque to the goddess Feronia, who was popular with freed slaves.



**SAD SLAVE?**  
Above right is a model of a kitchen slave weeping as he works at the *mortarium* (p. 44). He is either unhappy with his hard life, or grinding up a strong onion!

## Slaves and pets

Wealthy Roman households would have seemed crowded to modern eyes, and lacking in privacy, with slaves scurrying around cleaning, carrying, and tending to the needs of the family. The household would also include working animals: guard dogs, hunting dogs on country estates, perhaps horses, and cats to chase rats. There would also be a range of pets, mainly for the children.

**GUARD DOG**  
There were many breeds of dog in the Roman Empire, including fierce guard dogs like the one on the right, kept chained by the door to deter thieves.

Dog collar



**DOG TAG**  
Some Roman dogs wore identity tags in case they got lost. This bronze tag from a dog says "hold me if I run away, and return me to my master Viventius on the estate of Callistus".

## UNHAPPY FAMILY

This family portrait shows the emperor Septimus Severus with his wife, Julia Donna, and sons Caracalla and Geta. This imperial family was not a happy one; after Severus died, Caracalla murdered Geta before being killed himself. After this, his memory was officially cursed, and his portrait (above left) was defaced.





# Household gods

Most Romans were religious and respected their many gods (p. 50), especially the particular gods and spirits who protected each home from evil. Every house had its own shrine where daily worship was made by the whole family.

It was also very important to remember the family ancestors. Senatorial families kept wax masks or portraits of their ancestors, and most people would regularly go to the family graves to pay homage to the dead (p. 56).



Crest on snake's head

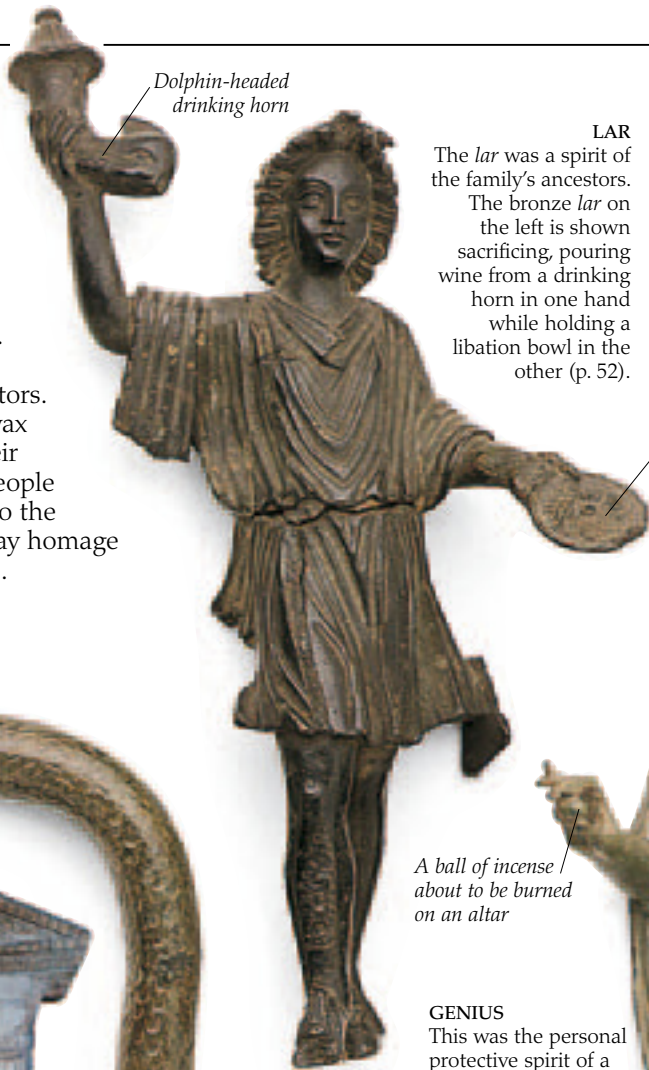
## SNAKE SPIRIT

The dwelling place also had its own protective spirit, which was depicted as a bearded snake (see the shrine below).



## HOUSEHOLD SHRINE

The *lararium* or household shrine from a Pompeii house (left) is shaped like a little temple. A *genius* stands in the middle, flanked by two *lares*, and a snake below.



Dolphin-headed drinking horn

## LAR

The *lar* was a spirit of the family's ancestors. The bronze *lar* on the left is shown sacrificing, pouring wine from a drinking horn in one hand while holding a libation bowl in the other (p. 52).

Libation bowl was used to pour liquids onto the sacrificial fire on the altar

A ball of incense about to be burned on an altar

## GENIUS

This was the personal protective spirit of a man (a woman was guarded by a Juno). This *genius* wears a toga over his head in the pose of a priest sacrificing.



## DEDICATED EX-SLAVES

Romans often had very good relations with their slaves, and when they freed them became their patrons. This marble tomb monument shows Lucius Antistius Sarculo and his wife Antistia, framed by shells, an indication that they have died. The inscription records that it was set up by Rufus and Anthus, two of their freedmen, to their deserving patrons. Clearly Rufus and Anthus greatly admired their former masters, and, incidentally, must have become wealthy themselves to be able to afford such a splendid monument. Even more interestingly, Antistia had once been a slave herself; Antistius had freed her, then married her.



# House and home



## HOUSEHOLD WILDLIFE

As in Italy today, houses and gardens had their own brand of wildlife: scorpions in dark corners and lizards basking on sunny walls.

**I**F YOU WERE A WEALTHY ROMAN, you could afford to have both a townhouse and a country villa (p. 58). In Italy, wealthy Roman homes were usually of the same basic design. The front door opened into an atrium or hall, which had an opening to the sky and a pool in the middle of the floor. A peristyle or colonnaded garden at the back added to the airy feeling of the house—needed in the fierce heat of summer. The rooms were uncluttered and elegant, with high ceilings and wide doors but few windows. Although the walls were brightly painted and the floors were often richly decorated with mosaics, there was surprisingly little furniture; strongboxes, beds, couches mainly for dining, small tables, and perhaps some fine wooden cupboards. But only the lucky few enjoyed the luxury of such a fine house. The great mass of the people lived in rural poverty, or in tall and crowded city tenements. The tenements had no sanitation and were a constant fire hazard. The ground floor of the block of apartments was usually

occupied by a row of stores.



## CAT AMONG THE PIGEONS

Many mosaics captured scenes from everyday life, like this one of a cat that has just caught a pigeon. The picture is made up of several thousand tiny pieces of colored stone, each about a quarter inch (5 mm) square. They were laid in wet plaster by expert mosaic-makers.



## UNDER LOCK AND KEY

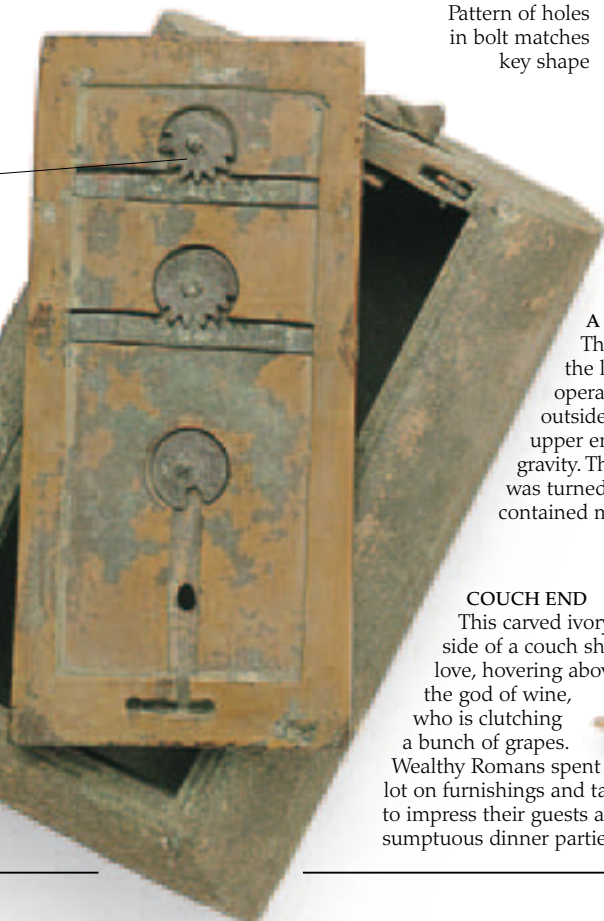
The Romans had locks and keys as a precaution against burglars. The complicated shape of the end of the key (right) fit through a keyhole into the pattern of holes in the hidden bolt (left), allowing the latter to be moved back and forth in the lock to open or lock a chest.



Lizards like this bronze model still live in the ruins of Pompeii

Pattern of holes in bolt matches key shape

Cogs connected to handles on the outside



## A STRONG BOX

This strongbox has two sliding bolts in the lid (shown turned over). These were operated by turning the cogs from the outside. There were also two catches at the upper end: one worked by a bolt, the other by gravity. The lid only released itself when the box was turned on its side. These boxes would have contained money and valuables.

## COUCH END

This carved ivory plaque from the side of a couch shows Cupid, god of love, hovering above Bacchus, the god of wine, who is clutching a bunch of grapes. Wealthy Romans spent a lot on furnishings and tableware to impress their guests at their sumptuous dinner parties (p. 46).







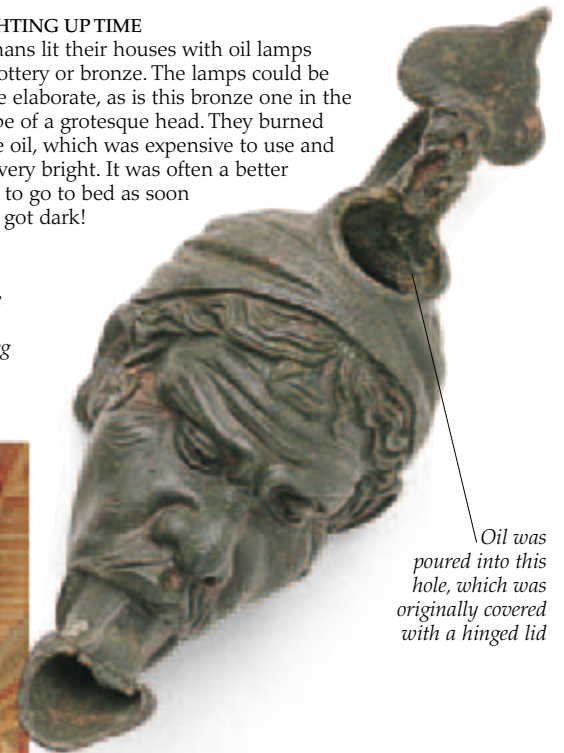
**ELEPHANT LEG**  
This brightly colored bronze elephant's head was, in fact, a leg from a piece of furniture—probably a couch. It may have been modeled on one of the many elephants brought over from Africa to die in the arena (p. 32). The entertainment held in the amphitheater was a popular theme in Roman art and architecture.

*The foot looks like a lion's paw*

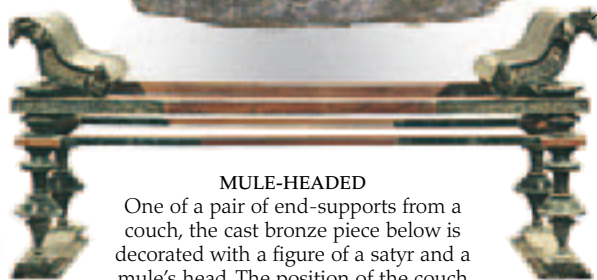
*The ears make brackets for attaching the leg*



**AN ATRIUM**  
Wealthy Roman houses had an atrium inside the front door where guests were received. This drawing of an atrium in a Pompeii house shows the opening to the sky for light. The central pool helped to keep it cool.

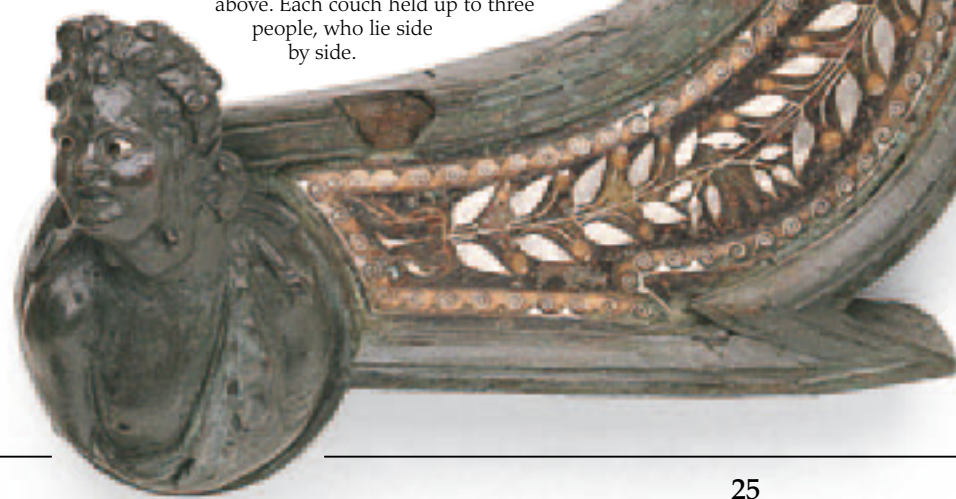


*Oil was poured into this hole, which was originally covered with a hinged lid*



*Position of couch end*

**MULE-HEADED**  
One of a pair of end-supports from a couch, the cast bronze piece below is decorated with a figure of a satyr and a mule's head. The position of the couch end can be seen in the reconstruction above. Each couch held up to three people, who lie side by side.



*Copper and silver inlay*



Part of a wall painting from Stabiae, near Pompeii, this graceful figure represents spring



# Builders and engineers



**PONT DU GARD, FRANCE**  
A vast stone three-storied bridge carried an aqueduct over a gorge. The water flowed through a covered channel along the top. The aqueduct ran for about 30 miles (50 km), ending in a reservoir which supplied 20,000 tons of water to the city of Nimes every day.

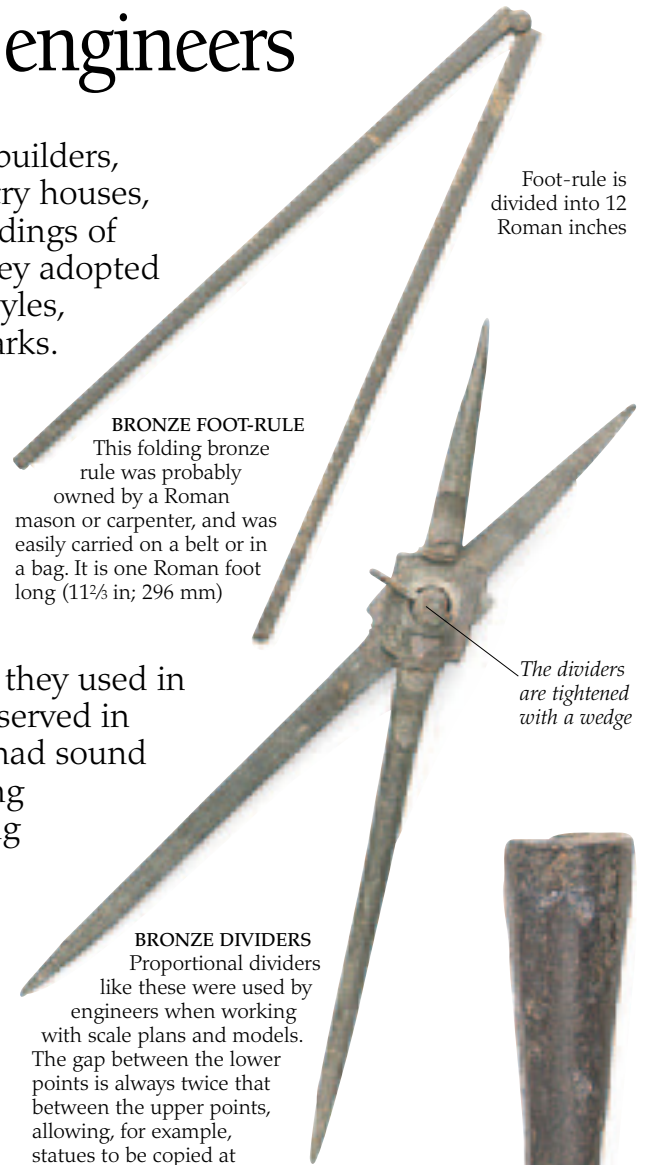
**THE ROMANS** were great builders, constructing temples, country houses, and magnificent public buildings of carved marble. Although they adopted many Greek architectural styles, they had their own trademarks. They made great use of arches, and invented the dome. They used fired bricks, and developed strong concrete by mixing *pozzolana*, a volcanic material, with rubble.

Their structures had a long lifespan—even the mosaics they used in decorating are perfectly preserved in many places. Romans also had sound engineering skills in bringing water supplies to cities along aqueducts, and in building roads and bridges that are in use to this day.

**PLUMB BOB**  
A simple bronze weight for a string gave a perfectly vertical line to make sure walls were straight. The owner's name, Bassus, is inscribed on it. Such simple tools were used to plan and build the Pont du Gard (above).

**BRONZE SQUARE**  
Used for checking the squareness of shapes, this tool would have been useful to carpenters, masons, mosaic-makers, and other craftsmen. It measures 90 and 45 degree angles.

**A ROMAN ROAD**  
Roads were usually very straight and carefully built with a camber (hump) so that rainwater drained off into ditches. This made the roads usable in all weathers. They were made up of several levels, with a firm foundation. Gravel or stone slabs covered the surface.



**BRONZE FOOT-RULE**  
This folding bronze rule was probably owned by a Roman mason or carpenter, and was easily carried on a belt or in a bag. It is one Roman foot long (11½ in; 296 mm)

Foot-rule is divided into 12 Roman inches

**BRONZE DIVIDERS**  
Proportional dividers like these were used by engineers when working with scale plans and models. The gap between the lower points is always twice that between the upper points, allowing, for example, statues to be copied at twice, or half, natural size.

The dividers are tightened with a wedge



**CHISEL**  
Romans used chisels like this iron one when they worked with wood. This was used a lot in building, especially for roof frames, but most Roman wood has long since rotted, including the chisel's handle.



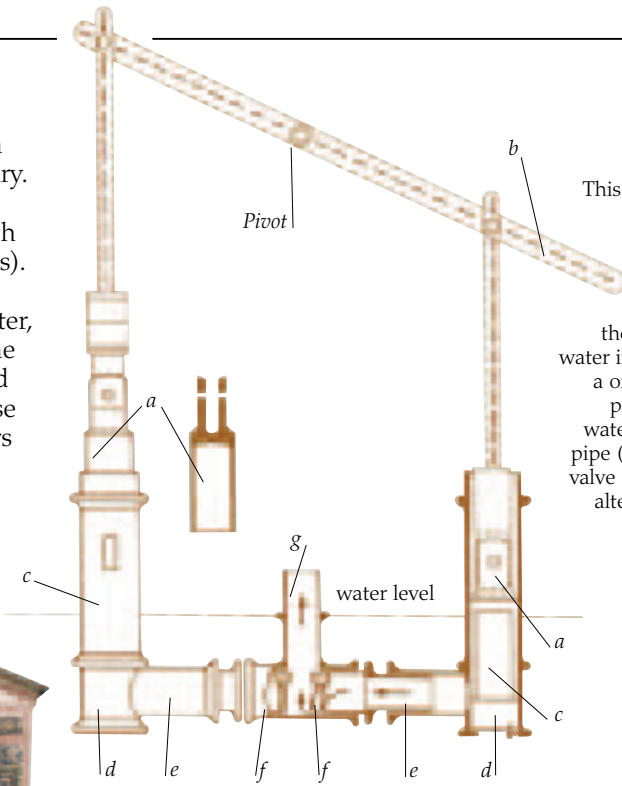


# Roman plumbing

Water supplies were very advanced in many Roman cities, better than anything else until the 19th century. The great aqueducts supplied many water outlets, especially public fountains in the streets (from which most people fetched their domestic water in buckets). Bath houses had their own supplies, as did public toilets. Larger private houses often had running water, while also collecting rainwater from the roof (see the atrium on p. 25). Elaborate systems of lead pipes fed the water under gravity to these places, and after use a system of underground sewers carried the waste away.



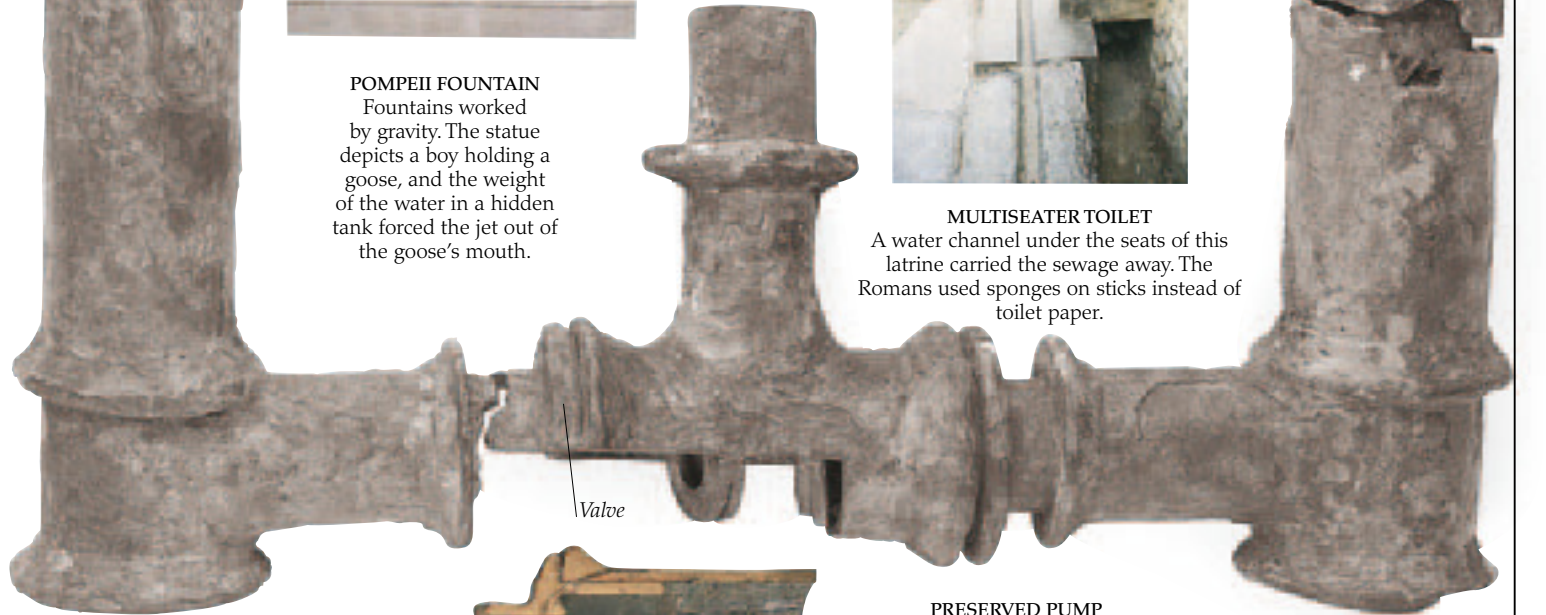
**POMPEII FOUNTAIN**  
Fountains worked by gravity. The statue depicts a boy holding a goose, and the weight of the water in a hidden tank forced the jet out of the goose's mouth.



**WORKING PUMP**  
This reconstruction of the water pump below shows how it worked. Really, two simple pumps joined together; each half had a piston (a) that when raised by the rocking handle (b) sucked water into the cylinder (c) through a one-way valve (d). When the piston was pushed down the water was forced into the outlet pipe (e) and out through another valve (f). The two cylinders acting alternately sent a jet out of the central pipe (g).



**MULTISEATER TOILET**  
A water channel under the seats of this latrine carried the sewage away. The Romans used sponges on sticks instead of toilet paper.

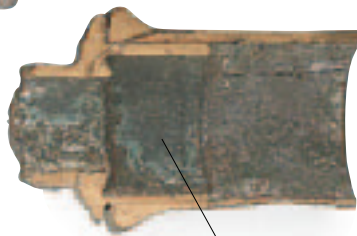


Valve

**PRESERVED PUMP**  
Pumps like this well-preserved lead one were used to raise water to a higher level. The writer Vitruvius records that they were used to fill the tanks of fountains like the one above left.



The valve cover allowed water to flow out, but shut when it tried to go the other way

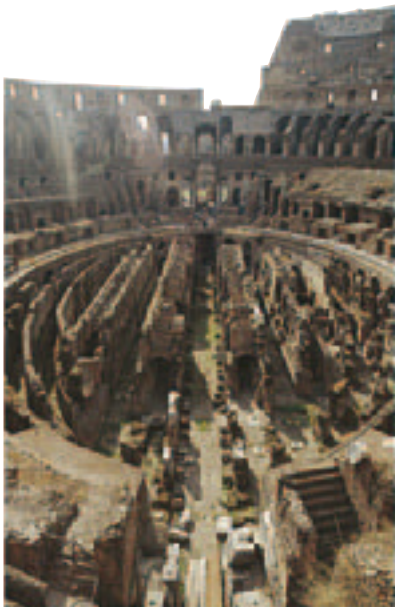


This section has been cut away to reveal the outlet valves and to show the carefully made pipe-joints



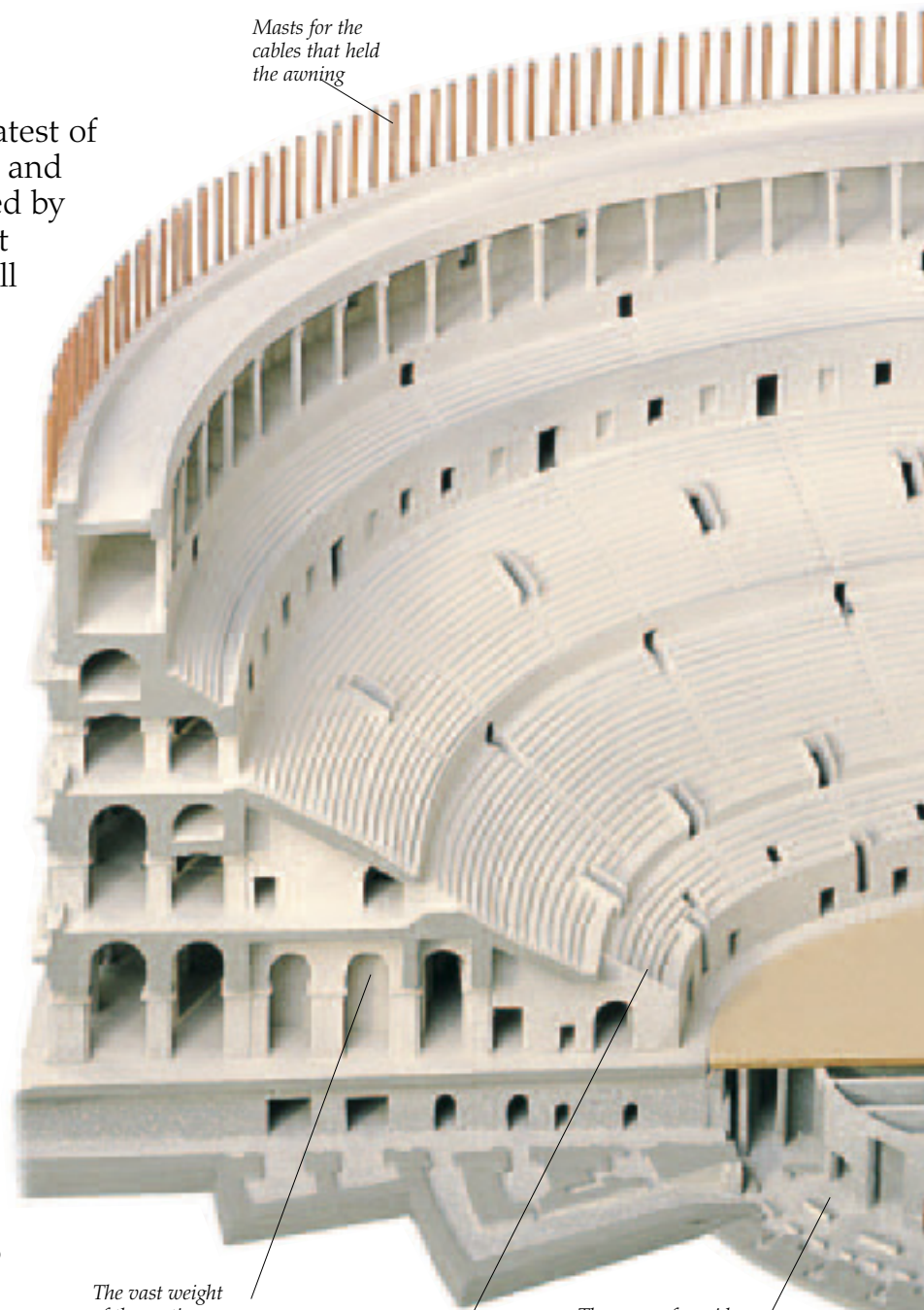
# The bloody arena

**T**HE COLOSSEUM IN ROME is the greatest of the many amphitheaters of the Empire, and a marvel of Roman engineering. Opened by the emperor Titus in 80 CE, it held about 50,000 people, and was designed so well that everyone could have gotten out of the building in a few minutes. The secret was in the skilled use of arched vaults, and the corridors and stairways leading to the seating. The arched vaults on the ground floor formed 80 entrances for the crowds, each marked with a number to help visitors to find their seats. A huge canvas awning was often stretched over the top to provide shade from the sun, and for nighttime shows a massive iron chandelier was suspended above the arena. However, this extraordinary building was constructed for a horrible purpose: to allow people to watch killing and bloodshed for amusement. Gladiators fought each other to the death, and other men fought animals from the four corners of the Roman world. These so-called games were public shows paid for by emperors and other important Romans to gain popularity.



**BLOOD AND SAND**  
The "arena" itself (the sand floor that absorbed the blood of the victims) and the paving beneath it are long gone, revealing the maze of cells and passages below. There were hidden elevators and trap doors to allow animals and men to appear from beneath the ground.

**SEA BATTLE FOR FUN**  
The Roman people grew bored with mere slaughter, and emperors tried to find novel forms of butchery to amuse them. "Sea battles" on lakes, fought by gladiators in small ships, were thought to be held in the arena. The event is imagined here by an 18th-century artist but is no longer believed to be true.



*Masts for the cables that held the awning*

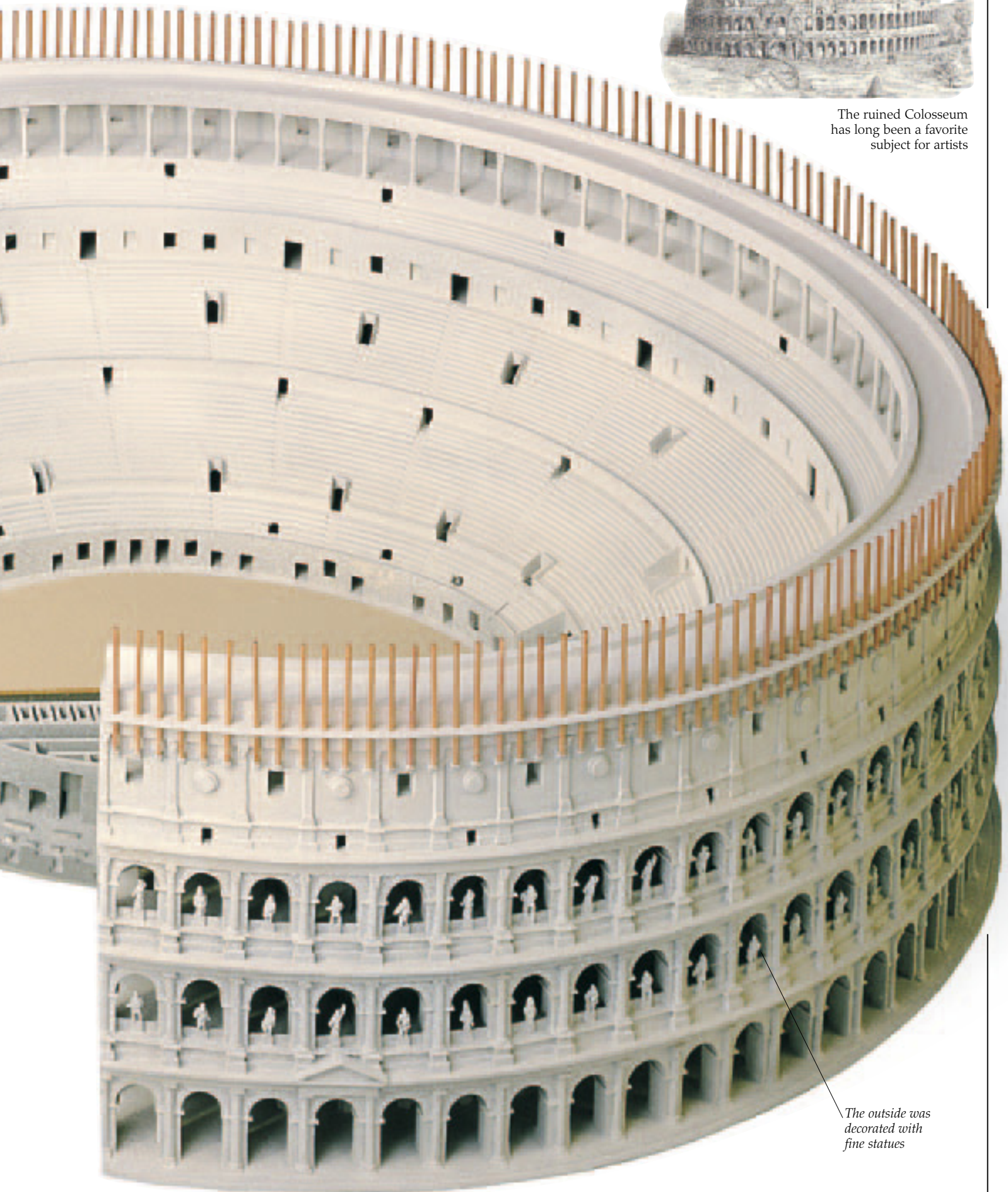
*The vast weight of the seating was carried on arches*

*The seats nearest the front were reserved for the wealthy and prestigious*

*The maze of corridors, cells, and machinery beneath the arena*







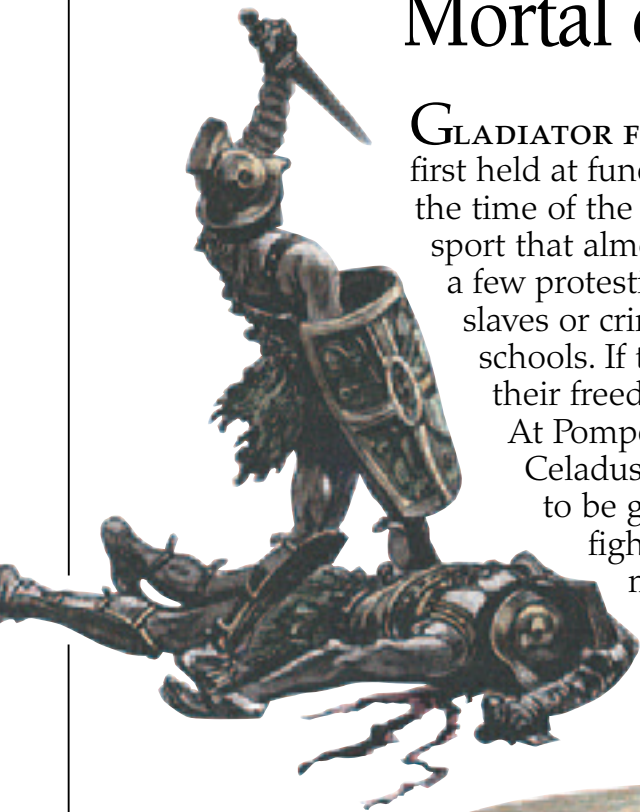
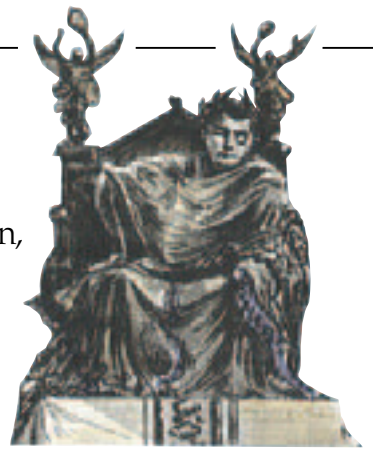
The ruined Colosseum has long been a favorite subject for artists

*The outside was decorated with fine statues*



# Mortal combat

GLADIATOR FIGHTS WERE PROBABLY religious in origin, first held at funerals to honor the deceased. But by the time of the emperors, they were simply a blood sport that almost everyone enjoyed; there were only a few protesting voices. Gladiators were mostly slaves or criminals, and were well trained in special schools. If they were lucky, they survived to win their freedom. Many thought the gladiator's way of life was glamorous. At Pompeii someone wrote graffiti on a wall about a Thracian called Celadus: "the man the girls sigh for." Some men even volunteered to be gladiators, and the emperor Commodus shocked Rome by fighting in the arena himself. But for many of these trained murderers, life was brutal and short. There were various types of gladiators, each with distinct weapons. Regular spectators had their favorites; the emperor Titus liked Thracians, while Claudius detested *retiarii*.

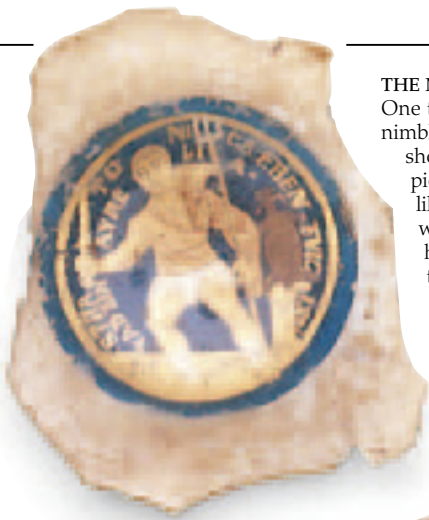


## SMALL SHIELD

A small bronze shield like this might have been carried by a Thracian (p. 33). Originally it was burnished to a bright golden color. It did not offer much protection in the fight.







**THE NET MAN**  
One type of gladiator, the nimble *retiarius* (net man) is shown in this gold glass picture. He was equipped like a fisherman with a weighted net to catch his foe, and Neptune's trident to stab him. If he lost his net the unarmored *retiarius* was usually doomed.

A bust of Hercules

Decorative bronze crest



Twist key

Flap at back protected neck

These large flaps protected the throat

**HANDSOME HELMET**

An elaborate bronze helmet like this one would have been worn by one of the more heavily armed gladiators. It gave good protection to the head, but the wearer could not see very well—dangerous when fighting the speedy *retiarius*. When in action, the face guard was locked with twist keys at the front. Gladiators' armor was designed to look flashy, but it left vital areas like the stomach unprotected from deadly blows.





## Steel and claws

The games in the amphitheater lasted all day. In the morning wild animals were brought on to fight each other or to face "huntsmen," or simply to kill defenseless criminals. Some Christian martyrs died this way, although no definite cases are recorded of this in the Colosseum. Around midday there would be a break for the bodies to be removed and fresh sand spread while excitement rose in anticipation of the main attraction in the afternoon: the gladiators.

### ELEPHANT

In their endless quest for novelty in the arena, the Romans scoured the known world for exotic animals like this African elephant.



### BOUND FOR DEATH

All kinds of animals from foreign lands, like this antelope, were captured and put on ships bound for Rome and the Colosseum. It was so important to the emperors to put on lavish spectacles that they spent vast sums on this horrible trade.

*Leopard is lunging at protected part of arm*

*Unprotected shoulder*



### "THE BRUTE TAMER OF POMPEII"

The Victorians were as fascinated as anyone by the horrors of the arena. This 19th-century lion tamer used "Roman" costume as a good gimmick for his act.



### BEAR

Bears were found within the Empire for entertainment in the arena, and sometimes rarer animals from beyond the Roman world were obtained. These included polar bears, Indian tigers, and rhinoceroses.



### SURPRISE ATTACK

A clay plaque shows a leopard springing at an unwary *bestiarius* (animal fighter). Some of the huntsmen liked to show off, for example, fighting big cats while on stilts, but the spectators enjoyed watching the hunters die as much as they liked to see the animals being killed; it was all part of the "fun."





**A LIFE IN THE BALANCE**  
A bronze statuette of one of the heavily armed gladiators shows his armor on head, arms, and legs, and his unprotected stomach. His shield stands on the ground. He is probably wounded and appears to be raising his left hand to appeal to be spared.



**DEADLY DESIGNS**  
On the left is part of the intricate face guard of a gladiator's helmet. The holes were small enough to protect the face from sword and trident without blocking the view too much. If the wearer was killed, the valuable armor was repaired and passed onto another man.



*Curved sword*



*Shoulder guard to protect the neck*

**THE FINAL MOMENT**

The last tense moment of a fight is shown on this oil lamp. A wounded gladiator stares death in the face as the victor stands over him ready to deliver the final blow.



## The gladiators

"We who are about to die salute you" shouted the gladiators to the emperor and the fighting began, to musical accompaniment (p. 48). Several pairs or groups fought at a time. When a gladiator was wounded he could appeal for mercy. The emperor listened to the crowd's opinion; had he fought well enough to be spared? If not, the people jabbed downward with their thumbs, and he was killed.

**LIGHTLY ARMED**

Some gladiators were lightly armed, as shown in these bronze figurines. On the left is a Thracian carrying a curved dagger and a very small shield; on the right is a *retiarius* (p. 31).



**DUEL TO THE DEATH**  
A clay plaque shows two heavily armed gladiators fighting it out, one thrusting at his opponent's neck, the other going for the vulnerable abdomen.



**SCREEN GLADIATOR**  
Motion pictures such as *Spartacus* and *Gladiator* (above) brought the terror of gladiatorial fights in Rome's Colosseum back to life. Here, screen actor Russell Crowe plays General Maximus, who is ousted from power, sold into slavery, and has to survive the violent life of a gladiator.



# A day at the races

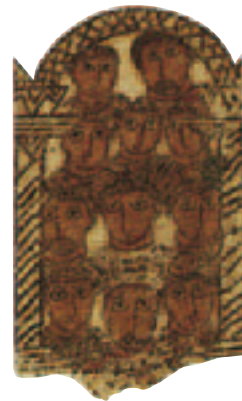
ALL OVER THE ROMAN EMPIRE, people flocked to see the “races” in their free time. A day at the races meant a day spent betting on teams, cheering, and buying snacks from vendors. In an atmosphere charged with excitement, chariots creaked and horses stamped in the starting boxes. At the drop of a white cloth, the starting signal, the gates flew open, and they were off in a cloud of dust, thundering around the *spina* or central barrier. The audience went wild, cheering its chosen

team—in the capital, the four teams were the Blues, Greens, Reds, and Whites, owned by the emperor. People followed their favorite teams and drivers with the passion of modern sports supporters. Sometimes rivalry between fans led

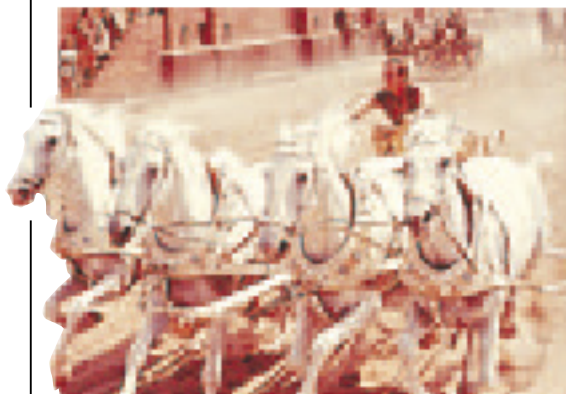
to violence. In Constantinople in 532 CE fighting between the Blues and the Greens developed into a rebellion against the government in which thousands died.



**THE WINNER**  
A victorious charioteer (above) received a victor's palm and a purse of gold, and was hailed as a hero.



**WATCHING THE SHOW**  
This mosaic shows people watching the races. Here, men and women could sit together, unlike at the gladiatorial and theatrical shows. The poet Ovid records that it was a good place to meet a boyfriend or a girlfriend!



## BEN HUR

The epic film *Ben Hur* captured the excitement and danger of a charioteer's life. Controlling a *quadriga* or four horses at full gallop was quite a task, especially on the turns, which held a special peril. At these, many charioteers took a tumble.

Chariots were very light for maximum speed



## CHARIOT AND HORSE

Chariots called *bigae* were pulled by two horses; *quadrigae* had four horses. Special stables housed the trained racehorses. This bronze model is of a *biga*; one of the horses is missing. Races consisted of up to 12 chariots running seven laps, a total of about 5 miles (8 km). There were frequent crashes, injuries, and deaths, but they just added to the excitement of the hardbitten racegoers. Chariots that had lost their drivers could still win a race if they crossed the line first.





**ONE MAN AND HIS HORSE**

This charioteer from the Blues team wears a leather harness to protect him in a fall. Successful charioteers often became very famous. And although mostly slaves, they sometimes made enough money to buy their freedom. Their racehorses had names like Candidus (Snowy), Rapax (Greedy), and Sagitta (Arrow).

Ram's head finial on top of chariot pole



Champion stallions were used for breeding during their racing years

**POLE END**  
This bronze finial, or chariot pole decoration, shows a figure of a Triton (merman). Chariots were built for looks as well as speed and could be splendidly decorated.

The Triton blows a seashell trumpet



**RECONSTRUCTED RACETRACK**

The greatest racetrack of all, the Circus Maximus in Rome, seated up to 250,000 people. The chariots erupted from the starting gates, set up on the long straight and thundered around in an counterclockwise direction. Seven laps later, the survivors crossed the finish-line opposite the imperial box, on the left.



# The theater



## MOSAIC MASKS

Roman actors were men (women could only appear in mimes), and they wore elaborate masks like these seen in a mosaic from Rome. These indicated the kinds of characters they were playing, both young and old, male and female, gods and heroes. The masks were quite light, but hot to wear.

**T**HE ROMANS largely copied theater from Greece, and the best actors of Roman plays were usually Greek. Stage shows were first put on as part of religious festivals, and were later paid for by the wealthy to gain popularity. Tickets were free—if you could get them. Although Romans of all classes enjoyed the plays, they thought the actors were a scandalous bunch. Women were not allowed to sit near the front in case they were tempted to run off with one of the performers! In writing comedies Roman playwrights like Plautus imitated Greek play scripts. The stories were about people like kidnapped heiresses, foolish old men, and cunning slaves, and usually had a happy ending. Roman audiences preferred comedies to tragedies. The Romans also invented their own types of performance, such as mime. Another Roman form, called pantomime, involved one actor dancing and miming a story from Greek legend to an accompaniment of singing and music.



## A COMIC ACTOR

The sneaky, scheming slave was one of the standard characters of Roman comedy. When his plans were found out he often ended up taking refuge in a temple, sitting on the altar, like the bronze figure above. Here he was safe from his pursuers until he moved!

## TRAGIC FACE

Theater masks were favorite themes in Roman art. On the left is a marble carving of a female tragic mask. Actual masks were probably made of shaped and stiffened linen. There was a gaping mouth for the actor to speak through, and holes for him to see through.



## A TROUPE OF PLAYERS

A mosaic, now in Naples, Italy, shows a group of actors wearing costumes and masks, dancing and playing musical instruments (p. 48). The piper is dressed as a woman, and is wearing the white mask of a female character.





**BEHIND THE SCENES**

A mosaic from Pompeii shows a group of Greek actors rehearsing a play. You can see two actors practicing dance steps, and another being helped into his costume. A musician plays the double pipes, and masks lie ready to be worn.



**A ROMAN THEATER**

Roman theaters were usually open to the sky. The one at Orange, France, could hold 9,000 people on the curving banks of seats. The massive wall at the back of the stage once had 76 decorative stone columns and many statues. It also had three doors through which the actors made their entrances.

Dagger

Bag of money

Lamp

Unlike Roman actors, mimes did not wear masks

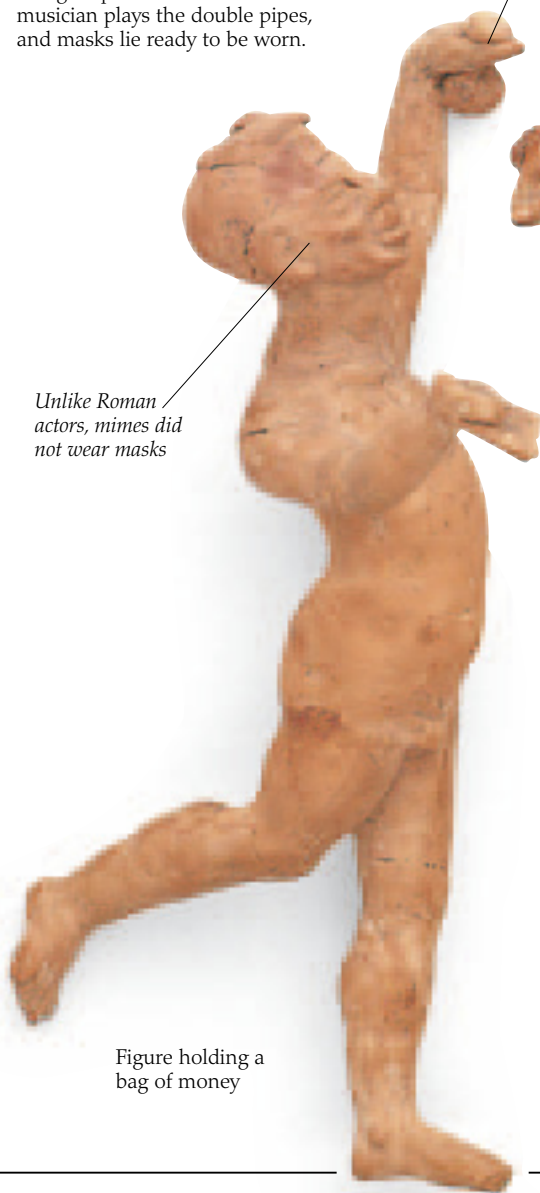


Figure holding a bag of money



The classic symbol of theater: tragic and comic masks



Figure holding a lamp

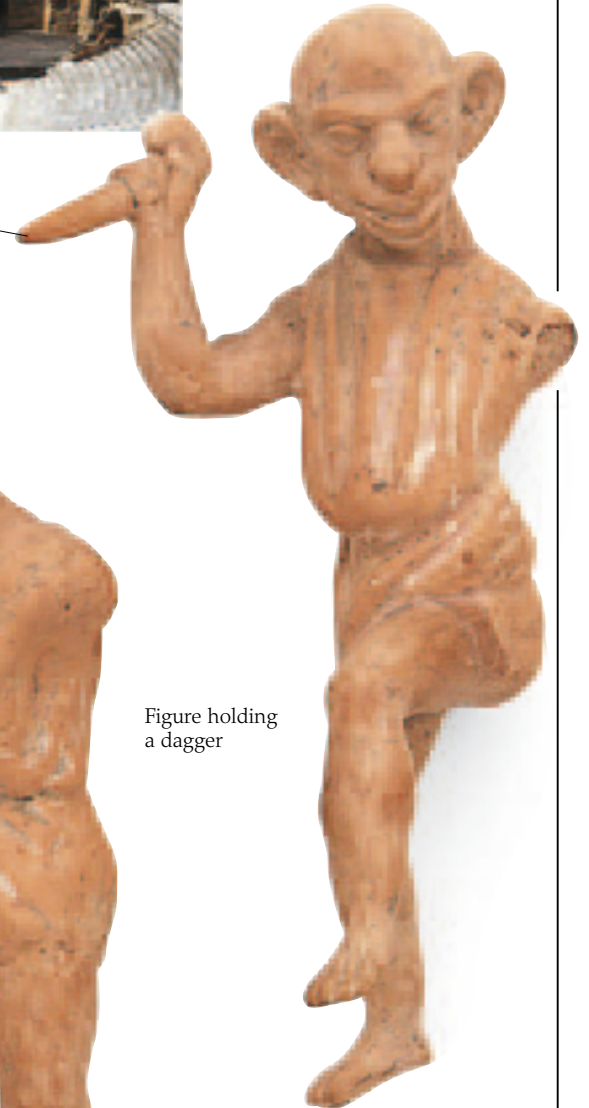


Figure holding a dagger

**THREE MIMES**

These terra-cotta figures show a group of mimes performing a play. The mime was a favorite of the ordinary townsfolk. It was a sort of crude comedy, and was very different from modern mime, because the actors spoke. It was also different from other Roman stage shows, because it was often performed on rough wooden stages set up in the streets, the actors did not wear masks, and women played female roles. Mime had regular characters like *Stupidus*, the fool. You can guess the sort of plot mimes had from the objects these clay figures hold. Perhaps this one was about hidden treasure and double-crossing!

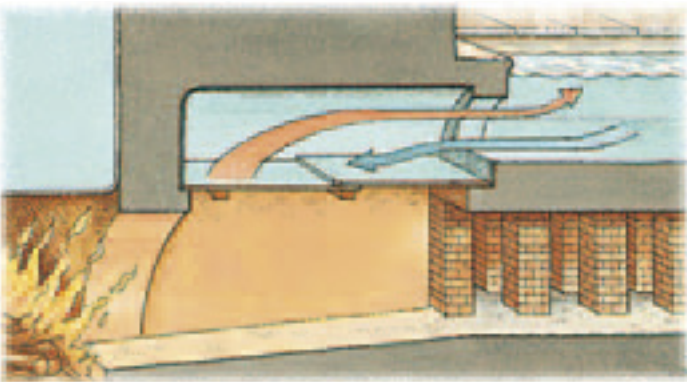


# A trip to the baths



**BATH HOUSE FOUNDATIONS**  
These foundations of a bath house were revealed in London, England, in 1989. The bottoms of the brick pillars which once supported the raised floor can be seen. Hot air circulating through this space heated the floor and the room above it (see below).

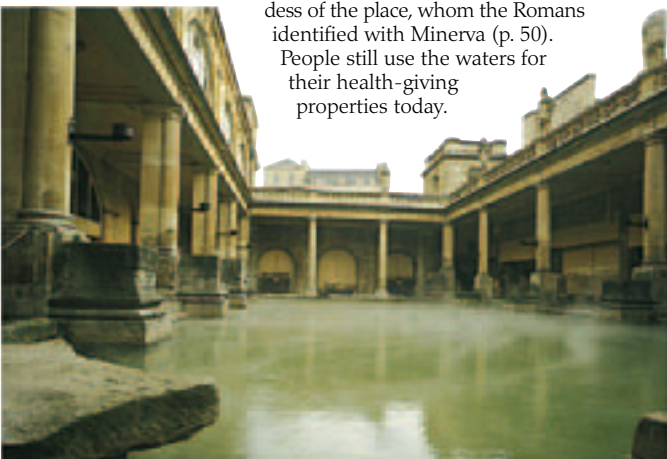
**F**EW ROMAN HOUSES had their own bathtubss; most people went to large public bathing establishments. These were not just places to get clean. Men went to the baths after a day's work to exercise, play games, meet friends, chat, and relax. Women either had their own separate baths, or went in the morning. Besides an exercise yard, or hall, there were the complicated bath buildings themselves. Changing rooms, where people left all their clothes on shelves, led to a series of progressively hotter chambers. The heat could be either dry (like a sauna) or steamy (like a Turkish bath), and the idea was to clean the pores of the skin by sweating. Soap was a foreign curiosity; olive oil was used instead. Afterward there were cold plunge baths or swimming pools to close the pores. This might be followed by a relaxing massage, before going home for dinner (p. 46).



**HEATING THE BATHS**  
Fires stoked by slaves from outside the bath building sent hot air under the floors and through hollow tiles in the walls to chimneys in the roof. The floors and walls became so hot that people inside had to wear wooden clogs to keep from burning their feet. The fires were also used to boil water in tanks and to heat pools, as the drawing on the left shows.

## THE BATHS AT BATH

The natural hot spring at Bath, England, was used by the Romans as the center of a medical bathing complex. Sick people came from all over the country to seek a cure by swimming in the waters and praying to Sulis, the Celtic goddess of the place, whom the Romans identified with Minerva (p. 50). People still use the waters for their health-giving properties today.



Ivory counters for a board game



The inscription on the above counter means "bad luck"



Ivory (above), bone (above right) and glass gaming counters



Agate dice



Rock crystal dice



Metal dice shaped like squatting men

## Games and gambling

People came to the baths to exercise and play in the yard, some perhaps training with weights, others playing ball games. These included catching games, which involved counting scores, and were played with colored balls of all sizes including heavy medicine balls. The less energetic bought drinks and snacks from vendors, or sat in the shade playing board games, or gambling with dice (a favorite pastime of Augustus). Such games were also played in taverns and at home, away from the noise and bustle of the bath house.



Colored glass gaming counters for a board game

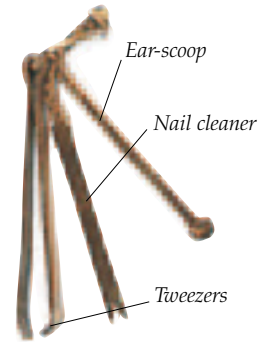






**SPONGES AND STRIGILS**

This 19th-century watercolor (above) by Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema depicts women cleaning themselves with sponges and strigils at the Roman baths.



**POCKET SIZED**  
Dating to the first or second century CE, this bronze pocket toilet set from London includes useful implements for personal hygiene.



Handle for hanging cleaning implements from

Detachable lid of oil flask

Slot for hanging or attaching to a carrying handle (above right)

**A COLD SPLASH**

Pouring dishes or *paterae* like the bronze example (left) were used for splashing cold water over the body to close the pores of the skin after the heat of the baths. Many people got attendants or their own slaves to do this for them.

Base of patera has corroded through over the centuries



**ALL SET FOR THE BATHS**

This set of utensils would leave you well equipped for a visit to the baths. The oil flask, and the pair of strigils (for scraping the oil, sweat, and dirt from the skin) are attached to a carrying handle. This was like a large key ring, allowing the implements to be easily removed.

Curved part of strigil was used for scraping off dirt

**OIL FLASK**  
Decorated with three African faces, perhaps slave bath attendants, this second-century oil flask may be the earliest depiction of black people to be found in Britain.

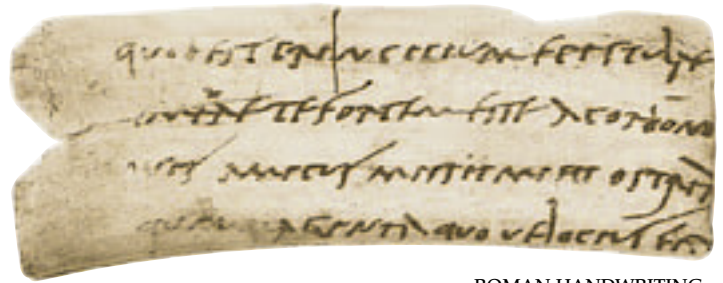






# Writing it all down

**DOZENS OF TONGUES** were spoken across the Roman Empire, but Latin in the west and Greek in the east were the languages spoken and written for international communication, government, and trade. The Romans introduced writing to northern Europe for the first time, and the Latin alphabet is still used there. There were only 22 letters in the alphabet (I and J were not distinguished, neither were U and V; W and Y did not exist). Millions of texts were written, from great stone inscriptions to private letters scrawled on wax tablets, and from elegant poems and histories carefully inked on papyrus scrolls to trade accounts scratched on broken pots. The tiny amount of texts which have survived are very precious because they contain information that ruined buildings and broken pots do not; writing is the only medium through which the Romans can still “speak” to us, about themselves and their world, about politics and what they thought and believed. But despite the importance of writing, most ordinary people were illiterate, because of lack of education (p. 20), and because, in a world without printing, books had to be copied by hand, and so were rare and expensive.



**ROMAN HANDWRITING**  
Normal handwriting was very different from the familiar capitals seen on inscriptions. This is a fragment of a Latin letter, written in ink on a wooden tablet, preserved in waterlogged ground at the fort of Vindolanda near Hadrian’s Wall. Addressed to a decurion (like a corporal) called Lucius, it is about a welcome gift of oysters from a friend of the writer.

### TRAJAN’S COLUMN

The inscription on the base of Trajan’s Column in Rome is a famous example of beautifully proportioned Roman capitals that were painted on walls as well as carved in stone like these. This example has served as a model for Roman-style typefaces for several hundred years.



### SOOTY INK

Fine soot was mixed with water and other ingredients to make ink. This was used for writing on papyrus, wood, or parchment.

### ROMAN NUMERALS

Unlike the Arabic numbers we use today, Roman numerals were written as strings of symbols to be added together, with I for 1, V for 5, X for 10, C for 100, and so on. Large numbers were quite clumsy and complicated, for example, 1,778 in Roman numerals is MDCCLXXVIII. This made arithmetic very difficult.



Roman numerals are still used on modern clocks and watches

The number four can be IV or IIII

### WAXING LYRICAL

Beeswax was melted and poured into shallow cavities in wooden tablets to form a reusable writing surface.



Vellum

### BLUE INKPOT

On the right is an inkpot dating to the first century CE, from Egypt. It is made of faience (a glassy material).







**A PAIR OF WRITERS**  
 These portraits from Pompeii show a woman with a wax tablet and stylus and a man with a papyrus scroll. The tablet has two leaves that folded together to protect the writing. Roman books consisted of one or more scrolls; books with pages were invented during late Roman times.



**INLAID INKPOTS**  
 Expensive inkpots to grace the desks of the wealthy were an opportunity for craftsmen to display their skills (p. 42). On the left is a bronze example with elegant silver inlay and a lid to stop the ink from drying up. Below is a pair of bronze inkpots, covered with black niello (silver or copper sulfide) and inlaid with silver and gold depicting mythological scenes.



Reed pen with split nib

Bronze pen

Bronze stylus from Athens

*Spatula end for smoothing the wax to erase writing*

Iron stylus with bronze cover

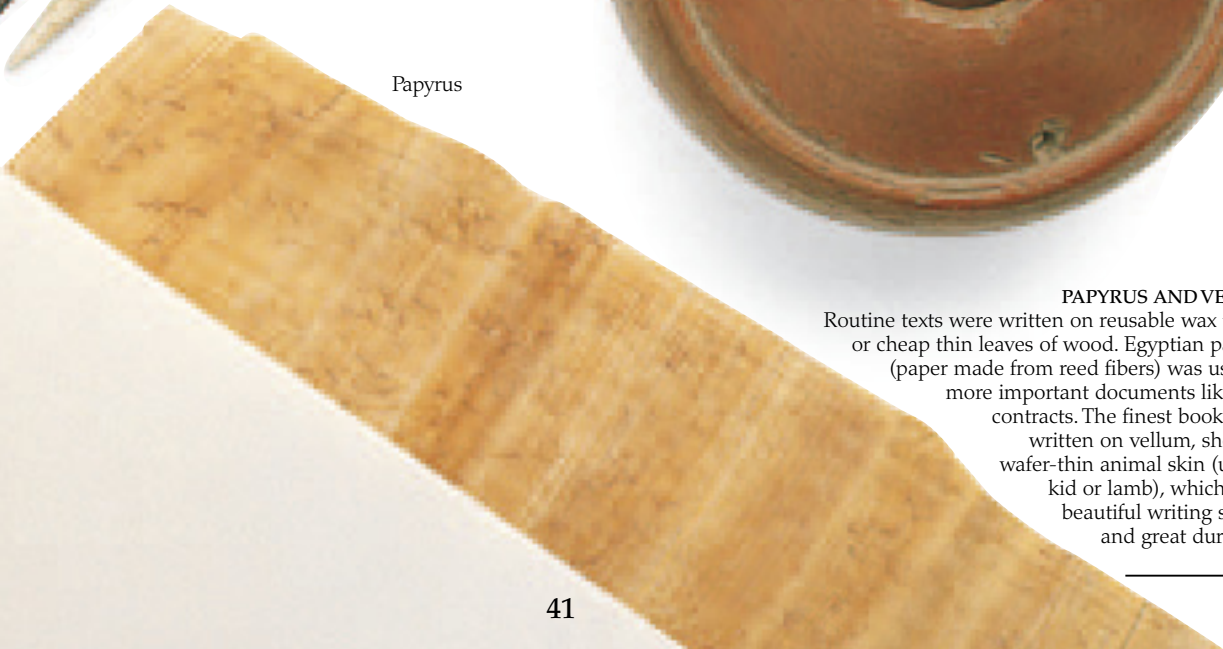
Ivory stylus

**PENS AND STYLI**  
 Split-nib pens of reed and metal were used with ink to write on vellum, papyrus, or wood. The pointed stylus was designed for writing on wax tablets.

Papyrus



**HANGING INKPOT**  
 This pottery inkpot has holes that once had cords attached. They were used to hang it up or to carry it.



**PAPYRUS AND VELLUM**  
 Routine texts were written on reusable wax tablets or cheap thin leaves of wood. Egyptian papyrus (paper made from reed fibers) was used for more important documents like legal contracts. The finest books were written on vellum, sheets of wafer-thin animal skin (usually kid or lamb), which had a beautiful writing surface and great durability.



# Craftsmen and technology

**ROMAN OBJECTS THAT SURVIVE TODAY** show that people were enormously skilled at working in all kinds of materials, from leather, textiles, and wood, to metal and glass. Pottery was a large-scale industry in some areas, where wine jars (p. 60) and red Samian pots (p. 47) were made by the million in large workshops. Many of the potters were slaves or freedmen, and surviving names show that they, and other craftsmen, were almost all men. Other crafts were on a much smaller scale, with individual artisans working from their own shops in towns like Pompeii. In those days, skills were learned by long experience and practice to see what worked. Sons learned from their fathers, slaves from their masters or foremen; there were no college courses. Particularly talented craftsmen, even if they were slaves, might hope to make their fortune with specially commissioned pieces for rich clients.

## BLUE RIBBED BOWL

Probably made by the older technique of pressing hot glass into a mold, this ribbed bowl is made of expensive blue glass. It may have been used as showy tableware at dinner parties (p. 46).



## PORTLAND VASE

A blown glass vessel, the Portland Vase is one of the most precious objects to survive from Roman times. A layer of white glass over the blue core was cut away with great skill to leave the elegant scenes of figures and foliage in white on a blue background. The task was probably performed by a jeweler, using the cameo technique developed to cut similar pictures from banded stone (p. 9). The procedure took many months. Such a famous work of art may well have belonged to the emperor—few others could have afforded it.

## FACE FLASK

This mass-produced flask was probably used for holding a cosmetic. It was made by blowing a bubble of glass into a mold.

Face on flask



Teardrop-shaped decoration on cup



## MOLDED CUP

Mold-blowing was the technique used to make this glass cup. The mold had the teardrop decoration on the inside.

## Glassworking

Glass had been made for centuries, but in the last century BCE someone discovered that it was possible to blow glass into bubbles that could be made quickly and cheaply into all kinds of useful vessels. Soon glass was being blown into molds, allowing mass production of bottles and highly decorated flasks. Glass was no longer just a luxury, but became a widely used material. Sometimes broken glass was collected for recycling, as it is today.

Glass jar



Lid of jar



Bands of gold running through the glass

## COLORFUL GLASS

Bands of colored glass and even gold were incorporated into some vessels, like this delicate little jar and lid. It was probably used for storing some costly cosmetic, and graced an elegant lady's dressing table (p. 18).



# Metalwork and jewelry

Gold, silver, lead, copper, iron, and other metals were widely used by the Romans. Mining and extracting metal from ore and melting it to pour into molds were also understood, although the Romans could not make furnaces hot enough to melt iron, so they hammered it into shape while it was hot (forging). Metals were mixed to make alloys such as bronze, a mixture of copper and tin. Roman bronze often had zinc in it as well, giving it a gold color.

## SILVER MIRROR

Mirror glass was not yet invented in Roman times, so polished metal was used instead. This polished silver mirror is attached to a separately made handle in the form of the club and lionskin of Hercules (the mythical Greek hero).



Outline of figure which was originally inlaid with gold foil

## BRONZE PLAQUE

This small sheet of bronze bears a delicate gold foil inlay set into its surface. Outlines of figures were made before the inlaying took place.

## SMITH'S TOOLS

The iron tongs were probably used by a smith to heat fairly small metal objects in a furnace.

## JEWELER'S HOARD

These silver objects are part of a large hoard of jewelry, coins, and scrap silver that was buried at Snettisham, England, in the second century CE. They represent the stock of materials and finished work of a silversmith.

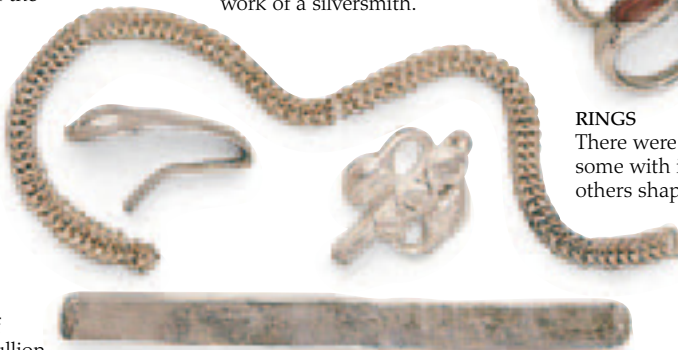


Another tool of the trade, this iron file has lost its wooden handle

## BITS AND PIECES

Fragments of old necklaces, bracelets, and rings were melted down to make new pieces.

Ingot of silver bullion



Curved blade of knife

## BONE-HANDLED KNIFE

Roman knives were often of this type, with a carved bone handle and a hanging loop.

Loop for hanging knife up



## BONE COMB

Most Roman combs were made like this example. The teeth were cut with a very fine saw.



## RINGS

There were 89 rings in the hoard, some with inset carved gems, others shaped like snakes.

# Boneworking

Bone was the plastic of the ancient world, used for making many everyday items such as knife handles, hairpins, and combs. It was also widely used for sword hilts. Fresh animal bone from the butcher's could be quite finely carved and was used for inlays on wooden boxes. Gaming counters and dice were frequently carved from bone (p. 38).

Woman's head on end of hairpin



## BONE PINS

Large needles and pins were among the most common objects made from bone.

These three are from Colchester, England. Hairpins were often necessary for the elaborate hairstyles worn by Roman women (p. 19).



Silver pendant for attaching to a necklace

This shaped stone found with the hoard is a polishing tool



# First, catch your dormouse

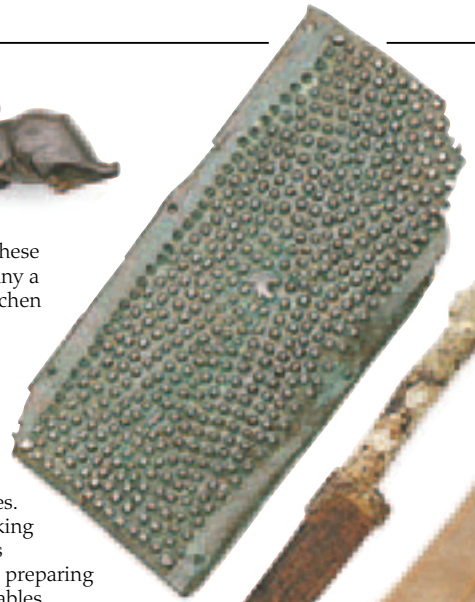
**ROMAN COOKING SEEMS STRANGE** to us today—for instance, one dish described by an ancient writer was dormice cooked in honey and poppyseed. The cooking also differed from ours because many of today's basic foods were not yet known. They had no potatoes or tomatoes—these came from the Americas. And pasta had not even been invented. The Romans have a reputation for eating vast quantities of ornate and elaborate dishes, but, in fact, most ordinary people ate simple fare. Few of the poor had access to a kitchen, but bought hot food from the many bars or *thermopolia* in the streets of the towns. Their diet probably centered on bread, beans, lentils, and a little meat. Even well-off Romans, including emperors like Augustus, normally ate very little during the day. The only large meal was dinner (p. 46). Big houses had trained cooks who applied great artistry to complicated dishes. Disguising the food was fashionable, and this was done by adding sauces, herbs, and spices and carving and serving it in novel ways. The look of food was as important as the taste.



Mice like these robbed many a Roman kitchen

## UP-TO-DATE GRATER

The design of graters has hardly changed since Roman times. This modern-looking bronze grater was probably used for preparing cheese and vegetables.



## COOK'S KNIFE

Serious cooks have always needed good sharp knives, especially to carve up meat.



## WOODEN SPOON

Wooden spoons would have been found in almost every Roman kitchen. This example from Egypt is well preserved, but most have long since rotted away.

Lip in *mortarium* for pouring out finished product



## MARKET FARE

This mosaic from Rome shows poultry, fish, and vegetables, probably freshly bought from the market stalls. Fresh fish was often very expensive, because of the difficulties of delivering it before it became rotten.

## MORTAR AND PESTLE

The *mortarium* or heavy grinding dish was the Romans' equivalent to our modern electric food processor. It was made of tough pottery with coarse grit in the surface, and was used with a pestle (seen inside the vessel) to grind foodstuffs into powders, pastes, or liquids. Using a *mortarium* was hard work, and as the surface became worn grit got into the food.



## REUSABLE BOTTLE

Neat glass bottles with handles were used to trade valuable liquids, but when empty they were often used to store food in the kitchen, as we reuse glass jars today.

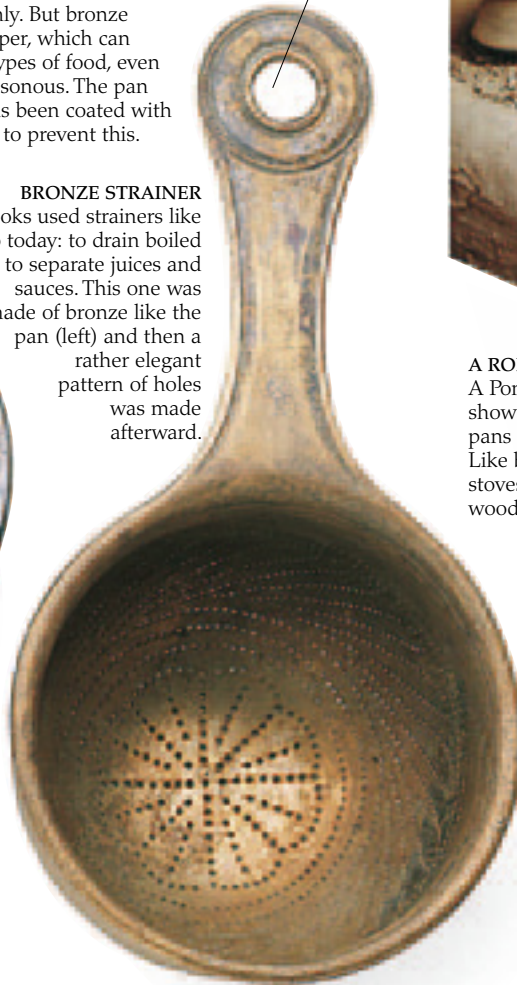






**BRONZE SAUCEPAN**  
Bronze was widely used to make kitchen utensils because it could be precisely worked and cooked the food evenly. But bronze is mostly copper, which can affect some types of food, even making it poisonous. The pan on the left has been coated with silver and tin to prevent this.

**BRONZE STRAINER**  
Roman cooks used strainers like cooks do today: to drain boiled food, and to separate juices and sauces. This one was made of bronze like the pan (left) and then a rather elegant pattern of holes was made afterward.



Utensil was hung up on kitchen wall by this hole



**A ROMAN KITCHEN**  
A Pompeii kitchen scene shows a stove, with bronze pans still on top (p. 57). Like barbecues, Roman stoves were fueled by wood or charcoal.

Celery was a popular green vegetable in Rome



Thyme

Juniper berries

Coriander seeds

Pepper

The Romans used a variety of herbs in cooking, easily grown in the warm Mediterranean climate

Rue

Oregano

**FISH SAUCE**

A popular ingredient in Roman cookery was *garum*, a strong-tasting sauce made from fish, salt, and other ingredients. *Garum*, like olive oil and wine, was traded in *amphorae* (p. 60). The powerful flavor probably helped to disguise the taste of fish or meat, which was often not very fresh!



A Mediterranean fish such as this one would have been used in *garum*



**A BUN PAN?**  
We do not know exactly what this interesting utensil was used for. Perhaps it had a variety of uses, such as baking buns, or poaching eggs.



# A dinner party

**AFTER A DAY'S WORK** which started at dawn, and a visit to the baths (p. 38), the well-to-do Roman went home for the main meal of the day, dinner (*cena*). This normally started at two or three in the afternoon and was taken at a leisurely pace over several hours. It was often more of a social event than just a meal, as there would frequently be guests and entertainments between courses, including clowns, dancers, or poetry readings, according to taste. People dressed for dinner in an elegant Greek robe called a *synthesis*, and ate reclining on large couches that held up to three people. Usually three couches were placed around the low dining table, to which servants brought the courses. The Romans did not use forks, so hands had to be washed frequently. Some dinner parties involved overeating, drunkenness, and reveling, but many were cultured occasions.

## ROMAN WINE

Romans drank many varieties of wine, both dry and sweet. They were described as black, red, white, or yellow. Most wines had to be consumed within three or four years of production, since they tended to go bad. Sometimes flavors were added, such as honey. Romans drank their wine mixed with water—to drink it neat was regarded as uncouth, although it was quite polite to belch. Some hosts served good wine to start with, but later substituted cheaper vintages, hoping everyone was too drunk to notice! Sadly, we will never know what Roman wines actually tasted like.



## A FEAST

This detail of a 19th-century painting by Edward A. Armitage gives some idea of the scene at an imperial banquet. The tables are laden with food and jugs of wine.

## WINE CUPS

Decorated with graceful floral scrolls, birds, and insects, these beautiful silver cups originally had stems and feet. Pottery or glass wine cups would have been more commonly used.

An 18th-century view of a Roman woman with grapes—perhaps a dancer at a dinner party



## GLASS BOWL

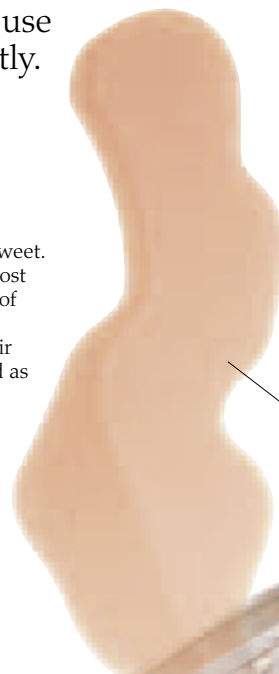
The finest glassware adorned the tables of the rich. Besides being beautiful, glass was popular because it was easier to clean than most pottery (which was rarely glazed), and unlike bronze it did not taint certain foods (p. 45).



Roman wine was usually mixed with water, so was probably light in color

White swirling design in glass

Delicate patterns on side of cup



**BRONZE JUG**  
Jugs for serving wine and water were made from pottery, glass, bronze, or silver, depending on how much the owner could afford.

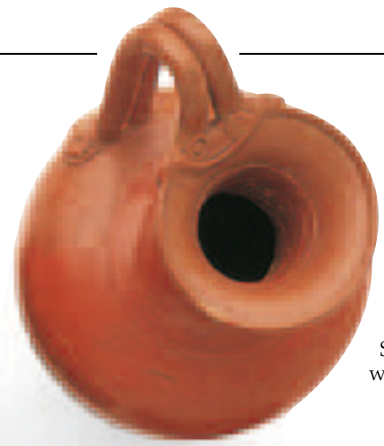
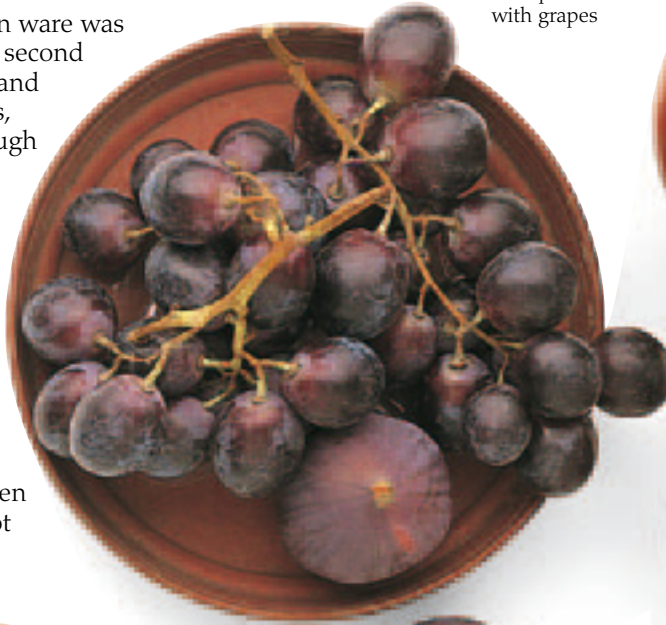




# Samian pottery

Glossy red pottery called Samian ware was very fashionable in the first and second centuries CE. A range of shapes and sizes were made, mostly platters, bowls, and drinking cups, although exactly what people used each type for is not known. Made on a large scale at factories in Italy and Gaul, these vessels were shipped in millions all over the empire and beyond. They were elegant, quite easy to keep clean, and mostly designed to stack for easy transport and storage. A crate of Samian ware has been found at Pompeii (p. 57). It had just been delivered from Gaul and had not even been unpacked.

Samian platter with grapes



Samian wine jug



Samian cup



The Romans usually had fresh fruit for dessert, including figs

The dish is modern



Olives, widely grown in the Mediterranean regions, were probably eaten as appetizers, just as they are today



Asparagus tips for decoration



## SONGBIRD SURPRISE

On the right is a recreation of an actual Roman dish from a surviving recipe. It consists of small songbirds served with an asparagus sauce and quail's eggs. The birds (in this case quails) would probably have been carefully arranged on a platter like this to delight and amaze the guests as they were brought in. There could not have been very much meat on such tiny birds, but this would have been one of many dishes, whose number and expense were a way in which a host might impress guests. The platter is modern.



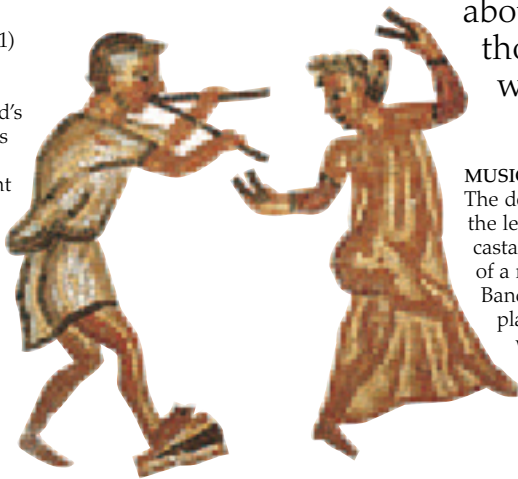
# Making music



**PAN WITH PIPES**  
The bronze statuette above shows the rural god Pan (p. 51) holding a set of pan pipes. This traditional shepherd's instrument consists of a row of cane whistles of different lengths, each of which produce different notes.

THE ROMAN NOBILITY thought most music and musicians were rather vulgar, but music, song, and dance were popular with the people. Music was played in the theater and at private parties. It also accompanied religious ceremonies and other public events like gladiatorial shows. Many Roman instruments were of Greek origin, like the lyre (far right). Wind instruments were probably the most common types, from reed pipes to bronze horns. These produced loud notes suitable for outside events. The most complicated instrument used was the water organ, invented by a Greek in the third century BCE. This used a pump to force water into a closed chamber, thus compressing the air inside. A system of hand-operated valves then released bursts of this compressed air into a set of musical pipes, producing notes or chords like a modern organ. Unfortunately, even though we know so much

about music, instruments, dance, and what people thought about them, we shall never know exactly what ancient music actually sounded like.

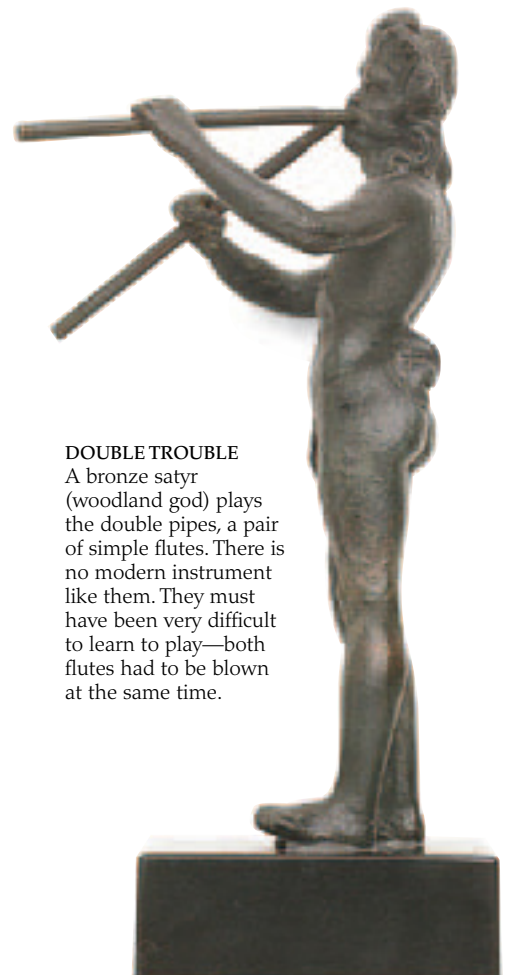


**MUSIC AND DANCE**  
The detail from a mosaic on the left shows a woman with castanets dancing to the music of a man playing double pipes. Bands of such performers played in the streets or were hired to appear at dinner parties.



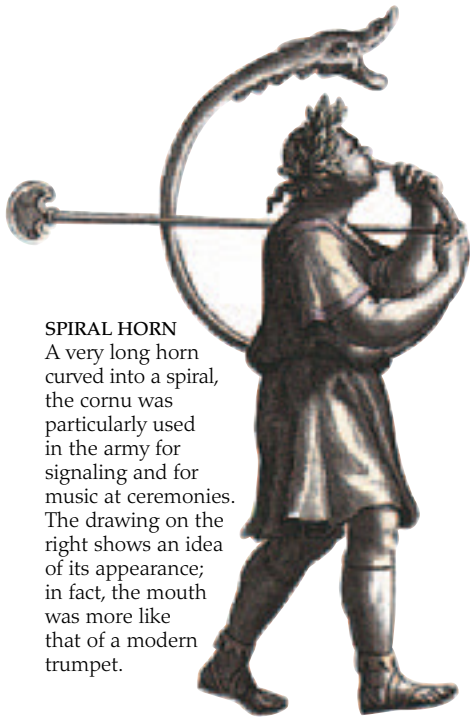
**FRENZIED DANCE**  
Music and dance were important parts of worship in some cults, and they could help worshipers achieve a state of ecstasy. The dancers seen on the stone relief above are probably followers of the goddess Isis (p. 50). They are working themselves into a state of frenzied joy or mystical trance by rhythmic movements.

**RODENT RHYTHM**  
A caricature of a simple straight bronze horn is seen in this comic figurine of a musical rat or mouse.



**DOUBLE TROUBLE**  
A bronze satyr (woodland god) plays the double pipes, a pair of simple flutes. There is no modern instrument like them. They must have been very difficult to learn to play—both flutes had to be blown at the same time.





**SPIRAL HORN**

A very long horn curved into a spiral, the cornu was particularly used in the army for signaling and for music at ceremonies. The drawing on the right shows an idea of its appearance; in fact, the mouth was more like that of a modern trumpet.

Bronze figure decorates mouthpiece



**MUSICAL GOD**

This fragment from a fresco shows Apollo holding a lyre. The Sun god, he was also the patron of music and poetry. Apollo was a favorite of the emperor Augustus (p. 8).

**FLUTE**

Like a modern flute, this Roman example was played by blowing across a hole. It has been restored from corroded fragments, probably incorrectly, and cannot now be played.

Finger holes, covered to achieve different notes



**BRONZE CYMBALS**

Found at Praeneste in Italy, these bronze cymbals have holes where there were once leather or cord straps for holding them. The Romans played only a limited range of percussion instruments, which include the *sistrum* (a metal rattle mainly used for religious purposes) and simple tambourinelike drums.



# A world of many gods



**ACROSS THE ROMAN EMPIRE** people worshiped hundreds of different gods and goddesses, demigods, and spirits. Some were depicted as large human forms, like the Greek gods. Everyone was expected to offer sacrifices to the important gods of the Roman state such as Jupiter, and to the guardian spirit of the emperor. Many worshiped at the shrine of their local deity, or chose foreign gods who offered comfort and hope for the afterlife, for example, Mithras or Isis. There were gods to protect the house (p. 23), gods of healing, in fact, gods of all aspects of life. Generally everyone tolerated the beliefs of others. However, the Christians were an important exception. Their beliefs prevented them from sacrificing to the Roman gods, and so they were thought to be dangerous unbelievers who imperiled Rome by offending the gods. As a result, the Christians were persecuted from time to time by the Romans (p. 32).



## GOD OF THUNDER

The king of the Roman gods was Jupiter, known as Best and Greatest, a sky god whose symbols were the eagle and the thunderbolt. Jupiter was very like the Greek god Zeus. His main home was the great temple on the Capitoline Hill in Rome.



## WOMEN'S GODDESS

The wife of Jupiter, Juno was the patron goddess of women. The clay figurine of her above shows her enthroned with a peacock, her symbol.



## TEMPLE OF AUGUSTUS AND LIVIA

Most emperors were declared gods after their deaths, and temples were built to worship them. Augustus and his wife Livia (p. 9) were both made into gods. The well-preserved temple that still stands in Vienne, France, was built in their honor. Many Roman temples looked like this. Each temple was thought of as the home of the god or goddess it was dedicated to. Offerings were made at an altar in front of the building (p. 52).



## WARLIKE BUT WISE GODDESS

Minerva was the goddess of war—here shown with her helmet and armor. She is often depicted on soldiers' armor and was very much like the famous Greek goddess Athena. Minerva was also the goddess of handicrafts and wisdom.



## EGYPTIAN GODS

Some Romans worshiped mysterious foreign gods, as well as their own traditional ones. The Egyptian goddess Isis (left) was one of the most popular of these, and was worshiped with the god Serapis (above). Their religion was about the cycle of life, death, and rebirth, and its secret ceremonies gave worshipers a sense of belonging and hope for the next world.





**MARS AND VENUS**

Mars, the god of war, is still remembered in the name of the month, March. Gauls and Britons came to worship many of their own gods as versions of similar Roman ones, usually Mars or Mercury, the messenger of the gods (p. 53). The silver plaque from Britain on the right is dedicated to a Romano-British "mixed" god called Mars Alator. Venus, the Roman goddess of love, beauty, and fertility was said to be the divine ancestor of the family of Julius Caesar.

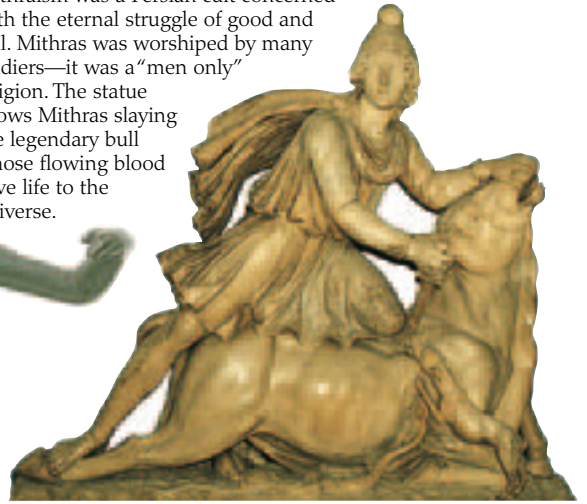


Gilded silver plaque was a temple offering

*Inscription says that the plaque was given to fulfill a promise to the god*

**GOD OF LIGHT**

Mithraism was a Persian cult concerned with the eternal struggle of good and evil. Mithras was worshiped by many soldiers—it was a "men only" religion. The statue shows Mithras slaying the legendary bull whose flowing blood gave life to the universe.



Julius Caesar claimed to be a descendant of Venus and built a temple to her in Rome



**A RIOTOUS GOD**

Bacchus was the Roman name for the Greek god Dionysus, who promised rebirth to his followers. He was also the god of wine, so not surprisingly his festivals could be riotous! Theater started as part of his worship.



*Bacchus holds bunches of grapes as a symbol of wine*

**THE CULT OF CYBELE**

Cybele was a mother goddess from Turkey. Her religion was also about fertility and the cycle of death and rebirth. It was a very emotional religion, and sometimes her priests would work themselves into a frenzy and castrate themselves for her. These bronze clamps may have been used for this gruesome ritual.



*Busts of the gods decorate the clamp*

**GOAT GOD**

One of many Greek gods adopted by Rome, Pan was a son of Hermes (Mercury). Half-man, half-goat, he was a god of mountains and lonely places and of flocks and shepherds, and he played pan pipes (p. 48). He could cause herds of animals to "panic" and stampede.



**CELTIC GOD**

The Britons and Gauls believed in some grim gods like this monster and sacrificed people to them.



*The monster is eating a man*



# Worship and sacrifice

PEOPLE FEARED THE GODS and sought to win their favor or ask for their help. People would pray and make offerings at temples to ask for divine favors or to give thanks. Offerings came in all shapes and sizes, from coins and brooches left by the poor, to silver statues donated by the rich. Augustus promised Mars a new temple if the god helped him to avenge the death of Caesar, and today the remains of the Temple of Mars the Avenger can still be seen in Rome. People also sacrificed food and drink, and burned incense on altars. Animal sacrifices were common, ranging from a single bird to a whole herd of cattle. There were few full-time priests or priestesses, except for the Vestal Virgins who guarded the holy flame of the goddess Vesta in Rome. Most priests were important people in public life for whom a priesthood was one of many duties. The emperor himself was chief priest of Rome. The title was *Pontifex Maximus*, or chief bridge builder, because he bridged the space between the people and the gods.

## PRIESTESS SACRIFICING

A priestess pours a libation (probably milk, oil, or wine) onto an altar as an offering to a goddess or god. In a number of religions women were the only or the main worshipers. The cults of Vesta, Isis, and Cybele were particularly associated with women.



## LIBATION PITCHER

A bronze pitcher such as this was used for holding liquids to pour in sacrifices. The pitcher, bowl, and knife are often shown in religious scenes with other priestly gear.

Lion-headed handle



## UNDER THE KNIFE

Animals were sacrificed in various ways; larger beasts like cattle were felled with an ax. Then a knife was used to cut the animal's throat and to slice it open. Its inner organs were removed for the priests to study (see opposite page).

## LIBATION BOWL

A libation bowl was used to pour liquids into the fire on top of the altar. The smoke from this and from the burned flesh would ascend to the heavens to please the god.







**CURSE TABLET**

One way to seek revenge on enemies was to place a curse on them at the local temple. This lead plaque from the temple at Uley in Gloucestershire, England, asks Mercury to make the thieves who stole a valuable animal become sick until they return it.



**THE BARE BONES**

Certain animals were chosen to be sacrificed to certain gods. Mercury's "holy animals" were the rooster and the ram, and the many thousands of bones found at Uley show that people sacrificed sheep and chickens in his honor there. Above are some of the chicken bones.



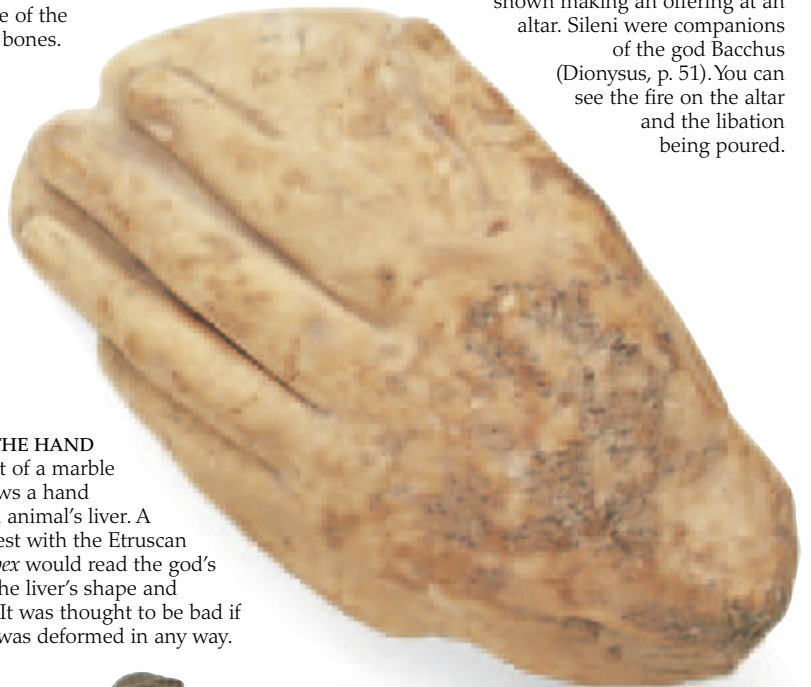
**DIVINE MESSENGER**

Above is a little bronze statue of Mercury, messenger of the gods, which was left as an offering at his temple at Uley. Perhaps it was a thank you offering for a favor granted, or a gift and reminder of a request not yet fulfilled.



**OFFERING A SACRIFICE**

On this relief from Italy, a Silenus, or Greek woodland spirit, is shown making an offering at an altar. Sileni were companions of the god Bacchus (Dionysus, p. 51). You can see the fire on the altar and the libation being poured.



**LIVER IN THE HAND**

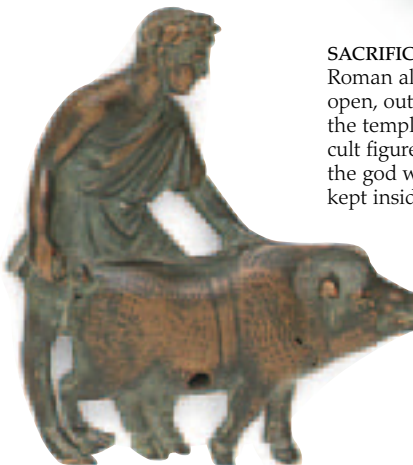
A fragment of a marble statue shows a hand holding an animal's liver. A special priest with the Etruscan title *haruspex* would read the god's will from the liver's shape and condition. It was thought to be bad if the organ was deformed in any way.



The way that the sacred chickens ate showed whether or not the gods approved of a plan

**BOAR TO THE SLAUGHTER**

An attendant leads a boar to the altar for sacrifice. Its inner organs would be burned on the altar as offerings to the gods, while the good meat was cooked for the faithful in a sacrificial meal. Roman religion could be very practical!



**SACRIFICIAL ALTAR**

Roman altars stood in the open, outside the front of the temple. The cult figure of the god was kept inside.





# Healing the sick

**MEDICAL SCIENCE** was still in its infancy during Roman times, and causes of disease were not well understood. Most Romans believed that illness could be caused by the gods, witchcraft, and curses. Many sought supernatural cures for ailments, and traveled to distant healing shrines or spas such as Bath, England (p. 38). Doctors, almost all men and mainly Greek, were expensive and some were frauds. Even skilled physicians could not save people from afflictions that today can be cured by a course of antibiotics or a few days in that hospital. Appendicitis, for example, today remedied by a routine operation, was always fatal. Romans had some very effective drugs, but with no real anesthetics, surgery was terrifying, agonizing, and dangerous.

Despite the efforts of the best doctors, it is not surprising that people sought miracle cures from the gods!



**SIGNET RINGS**  
The rings above depict Asklepios (see opposite), and Hygeia, an angellike figure symbolizing health. The rings were probably worn to ward off illness.



**VOTIVE EAR**  
When visiting a temple to ask the god for a cure, people often left votive offerings of the afflicted part (in this case a model of the right ear) to remind the god of the requested cure.



**VOTIVE LEG**  
The bronze model leg above was dedicated to a god by a man called Caledus, probably in gratitude for a cured leg injury or infection.

**PHYSICIAN AND CHILD**  
This marble tombstone (left) shows a Greek doctor examining a child. On the ground can be seen an outside "cupping vessel" used for extracting blood, and, it was believed, the "vicious humor" that caused the disease.



Fenugreek was used for treating pneumonia

**HEALING HERBS**  
Many plant materials were known to have medicinal properties and were used to make drugs and ointments.

Fennel was thought to have calming properties

Elecampane was used to help the digestion

Sage, a powerful healer, was sacred to the Romans

Rosemary was widely used in Roman medicine



The Roman writer Pliny listed 40 remedies with mustard as the main ingredient



Roman soldiers were fed a daily ration of garlic for health





**INSULA TIBERINA**

After a plague in the third century BCE, a temple to Aesculapius, (the Greek Asklepios), god of healing, was established at Rome. It was sited on this small island in the Tiber River, which remained a center of healing right into medieval times.

The saw has lost its handle



**MEDICAL INSTRUMENTS**  
On this page is a range of surgical and other instruments used by Roman doctors, mostly made in durable, well-finished bronze. Sets of doctor's equipment have been found in graves.

A spoon for giving liquid medicines



End of bronze catheter

**SAW AND FORCEPS**  
The very fine-toothed saw above was used for cutting bone during amputations. Tweezerlike forceps (left) were used to extract splinters or fragments of tissue.

Scalpel (the iron blade has rusted away)



**THIS IS GOING TO HURT...**  
The Roman wall-painting below shows the legendary hero Aeneas having an arrow-head removed from his thigh with pincerlike forceps. The Roman army had doctors skilled in the treatment of such wounds.

Folding knife



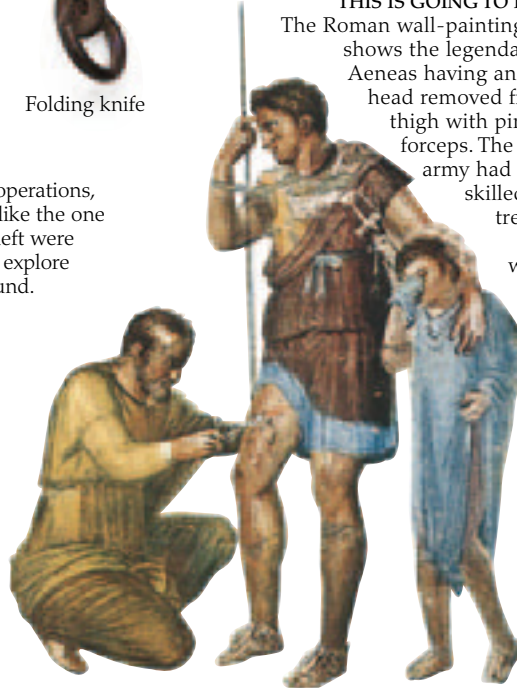
**PROBE**  
Before operations, probes like the one on the left were used to explore the wound.

Decorative handle of probe



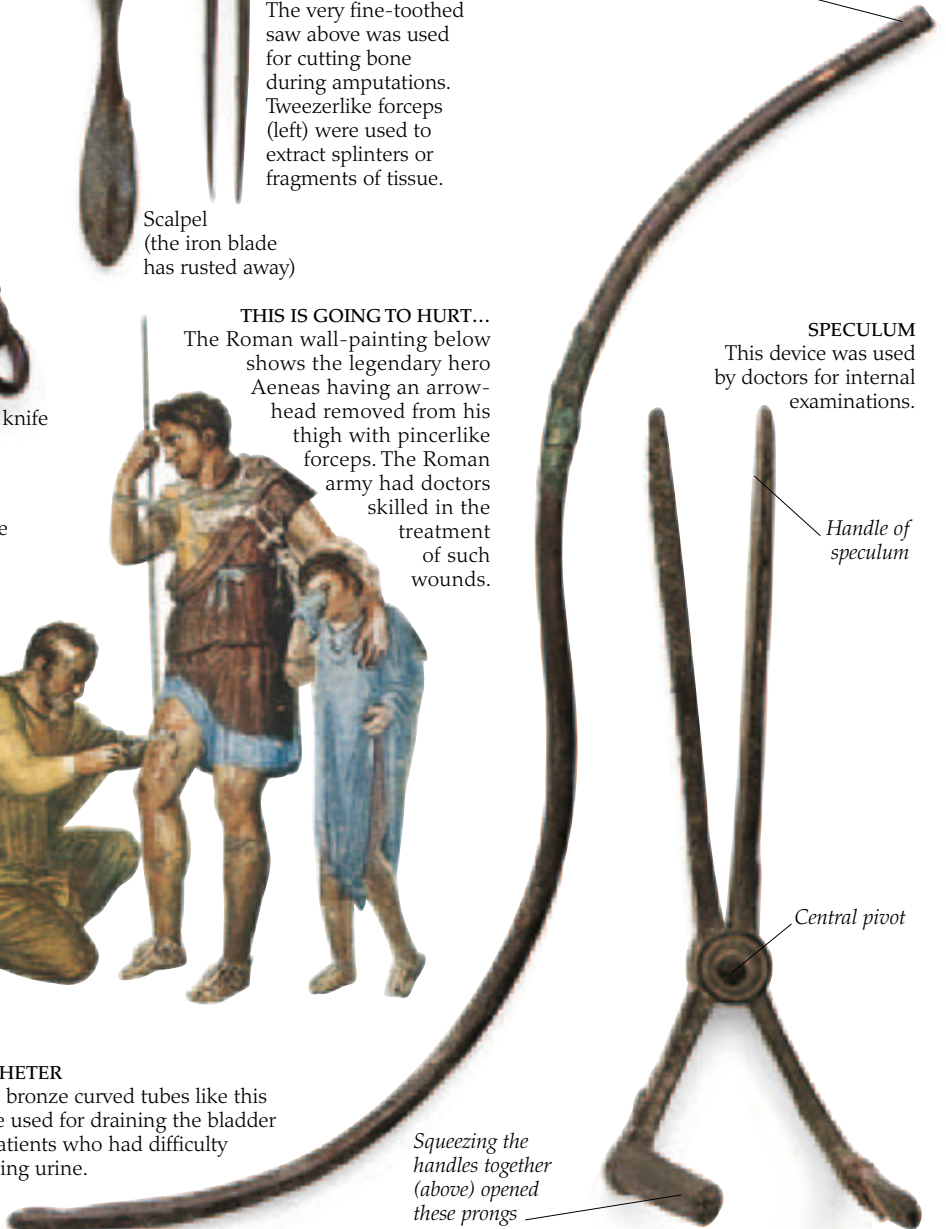
**SPECULUM**  
This device was used by doctors for internal examinations.

Handle of speculum



**CATHETER**  
Fine bronze curved tubes like this were used for draining the bladder of patients who had difficulty passing urine.

Squeezing the handles together (above) opened these prongs



**HOOKS**  
Above is a double-ended traction hook for holding sinews and blood vessels out of the way during operations. On the left is a smaller hook to hold the incision open.

Spatula for mixing and applying ointments





# Death and burial

**T**HE ROMANS LIVED CLOSER TO DEATH than we do today—their life expectancy was generally short, and disease was common. This was because of a combination of poor diet, lack of medical care, and hard living conditions. Children were particularly at risk, with perhaps one in three dying in infancy. There were many hazards even for adults; women were especially vulnerable to the risks of childbirth. It is unlikely that more than half of the population survived to be fifty, although a few lived to their eighties and beyond. Not surprisingly, death was commonplace in Roman communities, and there were many rites surrounding it. Funeral fashions changed, from a favoring of cremation (burning) to burying the body intact (inhumation) in later times. Today, study of these burials and the remains of the people themselves can reveal many details about them.

## MARBLE URN

The ashes of the cremated dead were put in containers and deposited in family tombs or in larger cemeteries. The inscription on this beautifully carved marble burial urn tells that it contains the remains of a woman called Bovia Procula, a “most unfortunate mother.” Perhaps she died in childbirth. The ivy leaves carved on it were sacred to Bacchus, and probably symbolize hope of rebirth.



## REMEMBERING AVITA

Many Roman tombstones echo their sadness across the centuries. The tombstone above is that of a 10-year-old girl named Avita, shown as her parents wanted to remember her, with her books and her pet dog.

## IN THE CATACOMBS

In Rome, Christians buried their dead in catacombs—a series of underground tunnels and chambers with niches in the walls for coffins. The underground chapels were there for holding funeral services rather than hiding from persecution (p. 51); the catacombs were not secret.







**ACROSS THE RIVER STYX**

A child lies on her deathbed, surrounded by her grieving parents and other mourners. The Romans followed the Greek belief that the dead were ferried across the River Styx to Hades (the Underworld), and so they often put a coin in the mouth of the body with which the soul could pay the ferryman. The funeral would consist of a solemn procession to the cemetery for burial, or to the place of cremation. After burning, the ashes were collected and put into an urn (below).

**STREET OF TOMBS**

Roman religious law forbade burials within towns, a rule that also reduced the risk of disease. Cemeteries grew up outside the gates. The best spots were next to the road, where passers-by would see the graves and remember the people buried there, so giving them a kind of immortality. Remembering the dead, especially the family ancestors, was very important to Romans.



**Buried under ash**

Perhaps the most famous "burial" of all is the burial of towns around the base of Mount Vesuvius, Italy, in 79 CE. This volcano exploded with violent intensity one summer's afternoon, and cast a rain of burning pumice and ashes all over the towns and countryside around it, burying everything up to 13 ft (4 m) deep. Pompeii is the most famous of these buried cities, which were frozen in time by the deep blanket of pumice and dust. Life ended so suddenly in Pompeii that we are able to learn a lot about the lives of the people there, and many bodies of people who failed to leave in time have been found. It is not just the bones which survive. The ashes hardened around the bodies, so that although the flesh has long since gone, hollow "molds" of their original shapes are still to be found.

**GLASS URN**

The ashes of the dead were also put into pots and glass vessels like this urn. There is no inscription giving the name of the dead person, but the fragments of bone might be enough to say if it was a man or a woman.



**VICTIM OF VESUVIUS**

Above is the plaster cast of the "mold" of the body of a man caught in Pompeii by the eruption. Often the shape of clothes and shoes can be made out. The shapes of animals, including a dog, have been preserved in the same way. These figures speak for themselves of the horror experienced—frozen in struggling poses, or desperately trying to shield themselves from the ashes and fumes.



Fragments of burned bone from the urn



# Country life



**PLOWING THE LAND**  
The bronze model above shows a British plowman at work with his team of cattle, preparing the ground for sowing grain. He is well wrapped up and hooded against the cold.

ALTHOUGH ROMAN LIFE WAS CENTERED IN CITIES, most people lived in the countryside, working the land, growing crops, tending vines and flocks, or managing olive groves and woodlands. The farmworkers produced the food, materials, and fuel on which the splendid cities depended. It was a backbreaking life of endless toil for men, women, and children, many of whom were slaves. Much of Italy was divided into huge estates owned by very rich people whose main interests were in town, but whose wealth mostly came from their farmlands. The rich liked to escape the heat of town in the summer, and retreated to their estates where they could enjoy the countryside. They built themselves fine houses (villas) on their estates or by the sea, with all the luxuries, such as baths (p. 38).



**REAPING HOOK**  
Sickles like this were used for cutting grain. Bending down all day to use such a short-handled tool must have caused back pain.

**EMMER WHEAT**  
A range of cereals was grown in Roman times, including emmer, an ancient variety of wheat, seen here both as ripened ears and as threshed grain ready to make into bread and other foods. Emmer has twice as much protein as modern breadwheats, and so is a good food. Bringing the grain in from the fields, threshing, winnowing, and storing it, were jobs as toilsome as cutting it.



**BOAR HUNT**  
Animals were hunted both on foot and on horseback, with the hunters armed with spears and dogs to find and flush out the victim. It could be very dangerous, as this mosaic from Sicily shows.



**THE THRILL OF THE CHASE**  
Roman huntsmen enjoyed the thrill of chasing the wild boar with its great speed and razor-sharp tusks. Its ferocity is well captured in the bronze statuette above.





**A ROMAN VILLA**  
This finely preserved wall painting is from the villa of the empress Livia (p. 9). It reveals the elegance and magnificence of the very richest Roman country houses, with imposing and shady colonnaded corridors, gardens, and pools.



**BRONZE BULL**  
Keeping livestock for eating, dairy produce, and leather was a major part of Roman farming. Some areas of Italy were turned into huge slave-run cattle ranches, where bulls like this splendid beast were kept for breeding.

**SHEEP SHEARS**  
Iron shears like these have been used for sheep shearing and cloth manufacture ever since Roman times.



Above, a modern drawing of a Roman relief shows Cupids picking grapes, treading them, and (left) sacrificing to the gods

## Winemaking

Vine-growing, and also the cultivation of olive trees, were (and still are) very important in sunny Mediterranean lands like Italy. Olives and grapes were of course eaten, but the olive oil and grape juice were perhaps more important. Fermenting alcohol from grape juice to make wine was already an ancient art in Roman times, and in a world without coffee or tea, wine was even more widely consumed than it is today (p. 46).



Glass "grape" flask

**SHEPHERD BOY**  
The wealthy Roman who owned this lovely silver figurine of a shepherd boy must have had a very romantic view of country life, a far cry from the hard reality.



Lamb peeping out of shepherd's shoulder bag



**NILE LANDSCAPE**  
A mosaic from Pompeii depicts the wildlife of the Nile. Fishing and catching fowl were a way of life for many. The Romans exploited the natural resources of the lands they ruled in many ways.



**BRONZE GOAT**  
Goats were kept by farmers for their milk, cheese, and meat.



# Transportation, travel, and trade



## DONKEY AND PANNIERS

Animals were put to use in transporting goods. They pulled carts and wagons, or carried loads on their backs. This bronze statuette shows that Roman donkeys were as stubborn as modern ones!

PERHAPS THE GREATEST GIFT Rome gave the ancient world was the Roman Peace. For the only time in history, the whole Mediterranean and the lands around were at peace, and under one government. The Roman navy suppressed pirates, and the army built the famous network of great highways. These were built with military needs in mind, but they helped to open up the Empire, and with the open seaways helped to tie the many peoples and provinces together. Trade and prosperity grew. Merchant ships carried the wines of Italy and Spain to Gaul and Britain, while huge freighters, the supertankers of their day, bore the grain harvest of North Africa to feed the people of the city of Rome. Wild animals for the amphitheater were collected from many countries (p. 32). Soldiers, politicians, traders, and even some tourists traveled across the Empire, and with them spread new fashions and ideas. For instance, the Roman Peace helped Christianity to spread from its eastern homeland, along the roads and seaways, to the cities of the west.



## STORAGE VESSELS

These pottery jars, called *amphorae*, held Italian wine, mostly for selling to other countries. Their shape allowed them to be tightly packed together in the holds of merchant ships. Other shapes of amphora were used to carry olive oil or fish sauce for cooking (p. 44).

*Dupondius*,  
worth  
two asses



*As*



*Aureus*, worth  
100 asses

*Sestertius*,  
worth four  
asses



*Denarius*,  
worth 16 asses

## READY MONEY

Coins were minted by the emperor mainly to pay the soldiers and to collect taxes. Almost everyone across the Empire used this common money, which made trading simpler. Well-preserved silver *denarii* can be found today as far away as India.

## A MERCHANT SHIP

A stone relief from Carthage shows a small coaster and its steersman. Laden freighters sailed the seas in the summer months, as far as Britain and India. Lacking compasses, they hugged the coast, but feared to get too close in case the wind wrecked them on the shore. Sailing was dangerous, and almost stopped during the winter months.





*This weight allowed the balance to work like a steelyard*

*A steelyard for weighing the meat*

*The chains are, modern replacements*



**BRONZE SCALES**  
There were two common types of scales that Roman traders used for weighing everything from vegetables to gold: simple bronze balances like this, and another type called a steelyard (below). Both types are still used in many countries.

**AT THE BUTCHER'S**  
A stone relief shows a butcher at work with a cleaver. Joints of meat hang from the rail above. The seated woman is probably a customer, holding a shopping list on her lap and waiting for her order.

*The pans could be lifted off the hooks and bags used instead*



*Hook for weighing bags*

*The weight is shaped like an acorn*

**BRONZE STEELYARD**  
The steelyard was hung up by the upper hook. The item to be weighed was attached to the lower hook on the left, and the weight on the right was moved along until the arm balanced horizontally. The weight could then be read off from a scale inscribed along the arm.

**OFFICIAL WEIGHT**  
This bronze weight from Turkey is decorated with a bust of Hercules. It bears the names of two local officials. Weights were checked by officials to stop traders from cheating with false measures.





# The twilight of Rome



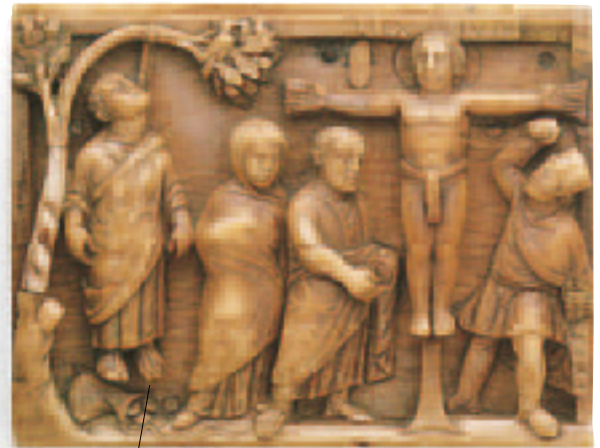
**A CHRISTIAN FAMILY**  
This fragment of gold glass depicts a family with the early Christian *chi (X)-rho (P)* symbol (made from the first two letters of Christ's name in Greek).

**GREAT CHANGES OVERCAME** the Roman Empire after 200 CE. There were constant clashes with the “barbarians” to the north and the warlike Persians in the east. There was economic chaos, and frequent civil wars, as generals once more struggled for power. Eventually Diocletian and his three coemperors managed to restore peace, but at a price; the Empire groaned under the weight of a growing and corrupt administrative system and an increasingly powerless army. One of Diocletian’s successors, Constantine, believed that he came to power with the help of the Christian god, and by his death in 337 CE, Christianity had not only emerged from the shadows but had become the state religion. By 400 CE, paganism was declining and being repressed. In 395 CE the Empire was finally divided into two states, east and west. They were to have very different fates.

**THE LATIN WEST...**  
Below is a silver statuette representing Rome, the old, pagan, western capital. Both figures come from the fourth-century Esquiline treasure found in Rome.



**...AND THE GREEK EAST**  
Above is a personification of Constantinople, the new eastern capital and Christian city founded by Constantine. Today it is called Istanbul.



*The 30 pieces of silver paid to Judas for his betrayal*

**CHRIST ON THE CROSS**  
A detailed design on an ivory box depicts the crucifixion of Christ, and, on the left, Judas hanging himself. It dates to about 420 CE. Christ was often shown without a beard in Roman times.

Below is a fanciful view of the baptism of Constantine, the first Christian emperor



## The decline of the west

As Christianity triumphed, the western Empire was beginning to break up under the strain of military defeat and economic crisis. The Rhine frontier was overrun in 406 CE, and the German peoples poured into the Empire. In 410 CE Rome itself was sacked, and in 476 CE the last western emperor lost his power. Rome itself had fallen, but the eastern Empire lived on.





**RADIATE BROOCHES**  
The Germans were not all the rough warriors the Romans thought them to be. Some were skilled craftsmen, and made spectacular jewelry like the brooches on the left. These were made by the Ostrogoths in about 500 CE, from silver, gold, green glass and red garnet.

*Red garnet inlaid in the gold*

Two iron arrowheads

Iron spearhead

## The barbarians

Rome feared the Germans and other "barbarian" peoples to the north, who were becoming very powerful in the fourth century. When they finally burst into the western Empire they settled in the newly conquered lands and founded many of the states of modern Europe; the Franks turned Gaul into France, while the Angles and Saxons turned Roman Britain into Saxon England.



### ATTILA AND THE POPE

The Huns from central Asia were the most feared invaders of all, and devastated fifth-century Europe. This medieval drawing shows the Pope negotiating with their leader Attila in 452 CE. It was believed that this saved the city of Rome from further destruction.

### WEAPONS OF WAR

These arms, an iron spearhead and two arrowheads, come from the grave of one of the Frankish conquerors of Gaul. By the time these were buried during the sixth century the new Frankish kingdom was established. During these centuries the barbarians were also gradually converted to Christianity.

## The east survives

The heavily populated and wealthy east also experienced wars, but it survived, more and more precariously, until 1453. It still called itself "Roman," but this Greek-speaking Christian state was very different from old Rome, and is today called the Byzantine Empire.



*Artemis, the Greek goddess of hunting*

**BYZANTINE EMPEROR**  
The bronze steelyard weight (p. 61) on the right depicts a seventh-century emperor. He looks more like a medieval king than a Roman emperor, and the style of art is also very different from earlier times; Byzantium was a medieval state.

### MEDALLION


The Christian Byzantines preserved the heritage of their Greek and Roman ancestors in their libraries and treasuries, and their artists still sometimes used pagan images, such as the figure on this sixth-century gold medallion.






# Did you know?

## FASCINATING FACTS


 The names of all our months have Roman origins: August, for example, honors Emperor Augustus, while March gets its name from Mars, god of war.


 The Romans believed that a goddess of chance, called Fortuna, controlled their lives. Since she was permanently blindfolded and so unable to see them, her decisions were randomly made.





The goddess Fortuna


Fontana della Fortuna in Fano, Italy


 On his journey over the Alps to invade Rome, in 218 BCE, the Carthaginian general Hannibal lost 14,000 men and 25 elephants. Nevertheless, it took Roman soldiers 17 years to defeat him.


 The Romans invented an early form of concrete, which they made from lime mixed with volcanic soil.


 At the Colosseum in ancient Rome, up to 5,000 pairs of gladiators fought and 5,000 animals could be slaughtered during a single event.


 Medical quacks sometimes recommended gladiators' blood as an aid to fertility.


 To construct just the outside walls of the Colosseum, it took 292,000 cartloads of travertine stone, carried along a specially built road from Tivoli, in the hills outside Rome.

 After the advent of Christianity, the events at the Colosseum declined in popularity, and large sections of the building were removed to provide construction materials for other projects. This was still happening in the Middle Ages.

 If rebel Roman slaves were caught, they were crucified—nailed to a cross and left until they died. In the revolt led by Spartacus the gladiator in 73 BCE, 6,000 slaves were crucified.

 One Emperor, the mad Caligula (37–41 CE), tried to have his horse appointed as a senator. He also claimed to be a god, and had statues of himself placed inside the temples.


 Many skilled artists, craftspeople, musicians, dancers, actors, and teachers in ancient Rome were slaves.


 In a Roman household, the father had absolute power: he could even condemn his wife, his children, and any of their servants and slaves to death if he felt they deserved it.

Ornamental bust of Hercules




Gladiator's bronze helmet


 Romans washed their dishes by rubbing them with sand, then rinsing them in clean water.


 When Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 CE, it buried the seaside town of Herculaneum under 65 ft (20 m) of ash and debris.




Mount Vesuvius erupting

 In addition to military training, legionaries in the Roman army were given instruction in surveying, engineering, and building so they could construct camps, forts, and defensive walls.

 The Roman culture and civilization owed a great deal to those of ancient Greece, which preceded it. The Romans worshiped many of the same gods as the Greeks, they developed their alphabet from the Greek one, they fashioned their coins on Greek prototypes, and much of their art and theater was based on Greek models.

 The language of ancient Rome was Latin, but many of the people the Romans ruled had their own languages or dialects. The Oscans, for example, who lived in Campania (the area around Naples), had their own distinctive script.

 The works of Roman writers and philosophers are part of the foundation of western culture, and many of them are still read today. If it were not for the teams of medieval monks who painstakingly copied out and illustrated them, however, many of these texts would have been lost forever.



# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Q** How do we know so much about ancient Rome?

**A** Experts have been able to learn a great deal from the huge variety of ancient buildings and artifacts that still exist. Information about politics, history, religion, and culture comes largely from Roman documents; their writing was very sophisticated, with an alphabet much like ours. Roman art—in the form of mosaics, sculpture, and painting—show us clearly how people and everyday objects looked and what life in ancient Rome was like.

**Q** How different were Roman homes from modern ones?

**A** Roman houses had less furniture in them than modern homes, and more decoration on the walls and floors, in the form of intricate mosaics, wall-paintings, and architectural details such as molding and paneling. Couches (like sofas with arms but no back) were used not only for sleeping, but also for relaxing and even while eating; meals were often served on small, individual tables and consumed in a reclining position. Much less primitive than you might imagine, the homes of very wealthy citizens even had running water, flushing toilets, and central heating.

**Q** Did the ancient Romans eat the same foods we eat?

**A** Many of the things they ate and drank would be familiar to us: bread, for example, eggs, fruit (such as apples, pears, figs, dates, plums, and grapes), vegetables (celery, carrots, cabbage, beans, and asparagus), and wine (usually diluted with water). There was less meat in the Roman diet than modern people eat, but lamb and pork were popular and fresh fish, together with exotic birds like cranes, parrots, flamingoes, and peacocks, provided special-occasion treats for the very rich.



Songbirds for supper



Roman mosaic

**Q** What was life like for women in ancient Rome?

**A** Most Roman women were poorly educated. They could not vote or hold office, and few occupations, aside from priestess, were considered suitable for them. A woman's status in society reflected her husband's position, but she could also exert considerable power through him: Livia, for example, the wife of Emperor Augustus, had no official role, yet it was widely accepted that she ruled alongside him, governed in his absence, and even held a duplicate of his state seal.



Roman woman portrayed in an eighteenth-century engraving

## Record Breakers

### ARCHITECTURAL TRIUMPH

The still-standing Roman temple the Pantheon (completed in 24 CE) has a huge dome that was the largest in existence until the 19th century.

Julius Caesar

### HEAD ON A COIN

The first living Roman to appear on a coin was Julius Caesar, after he seized power in 49 BCE.

### THRIVING METROPOLIS

Rome was not only the capital of the Empire, it was by far the largest city, with a population of more than 1,000,000 in 1 CE.

### RETAIL HEAVEN

The first-ever shopping mall was built by Emperor Trajan in Rome. Arranged over several levels, it contained more than 150 outlets selling everything from foods to luxury silks and spices.

### ROADS TO ROME

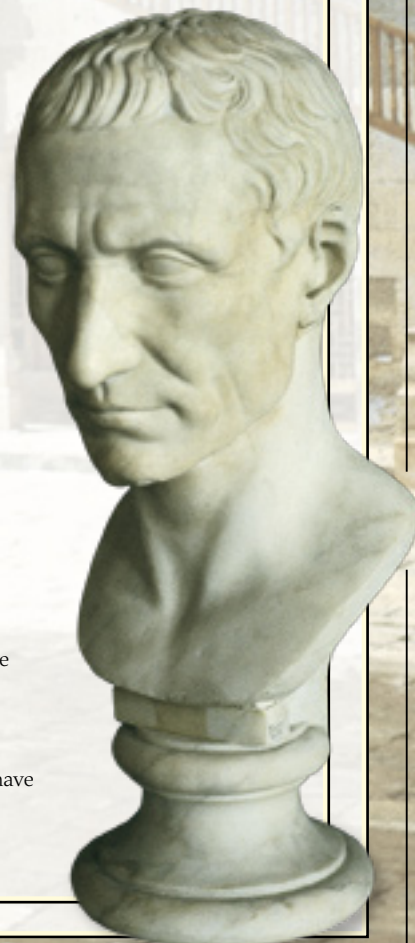
The Via Appia was the first road in a sophisticated network that eventually covered 60,000 miles (96,500 km) and connected Rome with all the important towns of the Empire.

### GALLOPING INFLATION

When the Roman Empire faced crisis in the 3rd century CE, prices spiraled out of control. Between 200–280 CE, the cost of a bale of wheat in Egypt rose from 16 to 120,000 drachmas.

### DETAILED HISTORY

The scholar Titus Livius (known as Livy) wrote a history of Rome that filled 142 books, 35 of which have survived. This comprehensive work was used as a textbook in Roman schools.





# The emperors

**A**FTER 500 YEARS, civil war brought the period in Roman history known as the Republic to an end, and Julius Caesar's adopted son Octavian won the struggle for power, becoming Rome's first emperor. He restored civil government in 27 BCE and was given the name Imperator Caesar Augustus. *Imperator* meant "victor in battle" and is the origin of the word "emperor." *Augustus* means "majestic" or "venerable."



**AUGUSTUS CAESAR**  
Great nephew and adopted son of Julius Caesar, Augustus was not only the first Roman emperor; he was also a great leader and administrator and an enlightened patron of literature and the arts. The period of his rule is known as the Augustan Age.

## GALLIC REBEL STATES

POSTUMUS	260–269
VICTORINUS	269–271
TETRICUS	271–274

**TEMPORARY REBELLION**  
A period of foreign invasions and civil wars allowed the growth of rebel states: the kingdom of Palmyra in the east and the "Gallic Empire" of Gaul (France), Britain, and Spain. They were finally defeated by the soldier-emperor Aurelian.

## EASTERN REBEL STATE OF PALMYRA

ZENOBIAS	266–272
(JOINT RULER WITH HER SON VABALLATH)	

Gallienus



## ROMAN EMPERORS

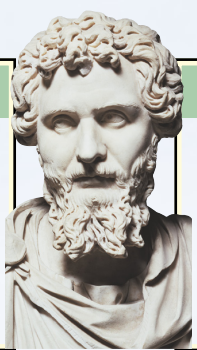
AUGUSTUS	27 BCE–14 CE
TIBERIUS	14–37 CE
CALIGULA (GAIUS)	37–41
CLAUDIUS	41–54
NERO	54–68
GALBA	68–69
OTHO	69
VITELLIUS	69
VESPASIAN	69–79
TITUS	79–81
DOMITIAN	81–96
NERVA	96–98
TRAJAN	98–117
HADRIAN	117–138
ANTONINUS PIUS	138–161
MARCUS AURELIUS	161–180
LUCIUS VERUS (CO-EMPEROR)	161–169
COMMODUS	177–192
PERTINAX	193
DIDIUS JULIANUS	193
SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS	193–211
CARACALLA	198–217
GETA	209–212
MACRINUS	217–218
ELAGABALUS	218–222
SEVERUS ALEXANDER	222–235
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PUPIENUS	238
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PHILIP	244–249
DECIUS	249–251
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GALLUS	251–253
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VALERIAN	253–260
GALLIENUS	253–268
CLAUDIUS II GOTHICUS	268–270
QUINTILLUS	269–270
AURELIAN	270–275
TACITUS	275–276
FLORIAN	276
PROBUS	276–282
CARUS	282–283
CARINUS	283–285
NUMERIAN (CO-EMPEROR)	283–284
DIOCLETIAN	285–286



Claudius



WESTERN EMPIRE		EASTERN EMPIRE	
MAXIMIAN	286–305	DIOCLETIAN	286–305
CONSTANTIUS I	305–306	GALERIUS	305–311
SEVERUS	305–307	MAXIMINUS II	310–313
MAXENTIUS (USURPER)	307–312	LICINIUS	308–324
CONSTANTINE I	307–324		



Septimius Severus

CONSTANTINE I (SOLE EMPEROR) 324–337

CONSTANTINE II 337–340  
CONSTANS 337–350  
MAGNENTIUS 350–353



Constantine II

CONSTANTIUS II 337–361  
(SOLE EMPEROR AFTER DEFEATING MAGNENTIUS IN 353—AGAIN, THE EMPIRE WAS BRIEFLY REUNITED)

JULIAN 361–363  
JOVIAN 363–364



Constantine II coin

VALENTINIAN I 364–375  
GRATIAN 375–383  
VALENTINIAN II 375–392  
HONORIUS 395–423  
JOHANNES 423–425  
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MAJORIAN 457–461  
LIBIUS SEVERUS 461–467  
ANTHEMIUS 467–472  
OLYBRIUS 472  
GLYCERIUS 473–474  
JULIUS NEPOS 474–475  
ROMULUS AUGUSTUS 475–476

VALENS 364–378  
PROCOPIUS 365–366  
THEODOSIUS I 379–395  
ARCADIUS 395–408  
THEODOSIUS II 408–450  
MARCIAN 450–457  
LEO I 457–474  
LEO II 474  
ZENO 474–491

**VICTORIOUS BARBARIANS**  
This engraving shows Romulus Augustus surrendering to Odoacer, leader of the Barbarians in 476 CE.



**THE EAST SURVIVES**  
In 476 CE, the last western emperor lost his power, but the eastern (or Byzantine) empire survived until 1453.



# Find out more



## BENEATH VESUVIUS

The ruins of Herculaneum and Pompeii are open to visitors, who can glimpse life in the first-century Roman Empire by wandering through the ruined streets and markets, and touring the partly reconstructed villas. Taken at the site, these plaster casts of a mother and child buried by the volcano (right) are on display at the Museo Archeologico in Naples.



**THE ROMAN EMPIRE** was extraordinarily rich in archeological treasures, so most general museums have a Roman antiquities collection that is worth investigating. The internet also offers a wide range of Web sites devoted to ancient Rome generally, to specific aspects of the culture such as costume or religion, and to individual collections or visitor attractions.

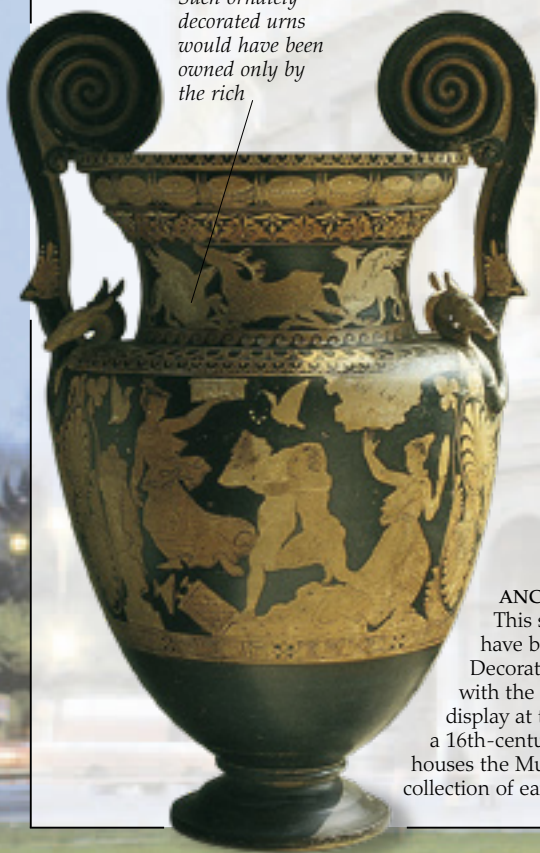
A great many objects—and a significant amount of our knowledge about the culture of ancient Rome—come from the extensive excavations undertaken over the last 250 years at Pompeii and Herculaneum, two towns at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, near Naples. The towns were completely devastated by the volcano in 79 CE. The blanket of volcanic fallout that killed thousands of people and buried their homes also preserved buildings, rooms, and possessions virtually intact, enabling archeologists to put together an illuminating picture of how the ancient Romans lived.

## HADRIAN'S VILLA

This country retreat was once the hub of an estate that was one of the most splendid in the whole Roman Empire (it covered an area greater than that of Imperial Rome itself). The grounds of the imperial palace include a number of smaller buildings that were inspired by Emperor Hadrian's travels around Egypt and Greece. Open to visitors, the villa is situated west of the hilltop town of Tivoli, just outside Rome.



*Such ornately decorated urns would have been owned only by the rich*



## ANCIENT ARTIFACTS

This spiral-handled urn would have been used to hold oil or wine. Decorated in the free style associated with the fourth century BCE, it is on display at the Villa Giulia outside Rome, a 16th-century country retreat that now houses the Museo Nazionale Etrusco, a collection of early antiquities.

*Double-edged sword called a gladius*



## ARMS AND ARMOR

Many museum collections include Roman weapons and armory. Some also display reconstructions like this short double-edged sword, which was very effective for stabbing. It has its own ornate scabbard made from thin wood covered in leather and decorated with bronze.





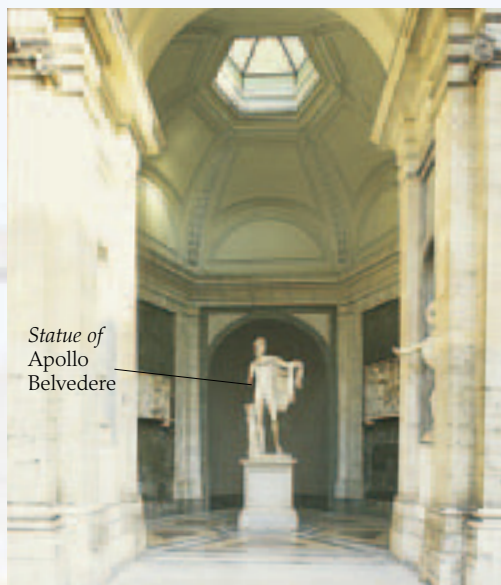
#### CITY OF BATH

The finest Roman remains in Britain are in the city of Bath, named after its original public baths. The Romans called the city *Aquae Sulis* (waters of Sulis, a local British goddess) because of its natural hot springs, which reach temperatures of around 93°F (37°C).



Gladius handles were made of wood or bone

Shoulder belt, or baldric



Statue of Apollo Belvedere

#### VATICAN MUSEUMS

The Vatican Museums are located in a number of different buildings, one of which is this 18th-century extension, built especially for their collection of classical statuary. Called the Museo Pio Clementini after the popes Pius VI and Clemente XIV, it houses the famous statue *Apollo Belvedere*.

#### USEFUL WEB SITES

- For numerous articles and galleries on all aspects of Roman life:  
[www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans)
- Online encyclopedia of Roman emperors:  
[www.roman-emperors.org](http://www.roman-emperors.org)
- Main British Museum Web site with a link to ancient Rome:  
[www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/world/rome/rome.html](http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/world/rome/rome.html)
- Main Hermitage Museum Web site with a link to ancient Rome:  
[www.hermitagemuseum.org/html](http://www.hermitagemuseum.org/html)
- Interactive site linked to an exhibition on Pompeii at the Chicago Field Museum:  
[www.fieldmuseum.org/pompeii](http://www.fieldmuseum.org/pompeii)

## Places to visit

#### POMPEII AND HERCULANEUM, ITALY

These ruins were first exposed in 1748, and excavations are still going on. Worth seeing are:

- the House of the Faun and the House of the Vettii, villas in western Pompeii
- Pompeii's marketplace, the Macellum.

#### MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO NAZIONALE, NAPLES, ITALY

This historical museum, remodeled in 1790, has on display:

- exquisite frescos and mosaics removed from ruined buildings near Vesuvius
- domestic furnishings and equipment that provide glimpses of life in ancient Rome.

#### ROME, ITALY

In the midst of a modern city are monuments that have survived since Rome's heyday:

- the Colosseum, now in ruins, yet still a potent symbol of ancient Rome
- the Forum, with its temples, towers, and basilicas
- Trajan's Forum, containing the 100 ft (30 m) Trajan's column and the remains of his extensive market complex
- The Pantheon, with its breathtaking dome.

#### ROMAN BRITAIN

The Roman occupation of Britain left behind a number of well-preserved sites, including:

- the Roman baths in the city of Bath
- the Roman Palace and Museum at Fishbourne in West Sussex
- Hadrian's Wall, ancient boundary between England and Scotland.

#### ROMAN FRANCE (GAUL)

Southern France is particularly rich in remains such as:

- the ruins of Roman cities at both Arles and Nîmes, each with an amphitheater
- the Pont du Gard, a Roman aqueduct also near Nîmes.

#### THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK, YORK

The Roman collection at this museum is among the most comprehensive in North America.

Highlights of the collection include:

- marble and bronze Roman portrait busts and beautiful wall paintings from two villas on the slopes of Mt. Vesuvius
- artifacts representing the political expansion of Rome
- pre-Roman art of Italy.

#### VATICAN MUSEUMS, ROME, ITALY

Housed in palaces built for Renaissance popes, the Vatican Museums have an important collection of Roman artifacts, such as:

- a first-century BCE bust of Augustus
- a charming fresco depicting a bride preparing for her wedding.

#### HERMITAGE MUSEUM, MOSCOW, RUSSIAN FEDERATION

This collection spans the era from the late Republic (first century BCE) to the late empire (fourth century CE). Of particular interest are:

- the important sculptural portraits of emperors, statesmen, ordinary men, women, and children
- the remarkable display of bronzes, glassware, ceramics, and mosaics.



# Glossary

**AMPHITHEATRE** Oval-shaped arena, open to the sky, where gladiatorial contests were held.

**AMPHORA** Two-handled jar with a narrow neck and often a tapered base, designed for wine, olive oil, or other liquid.



Aqueduct

**AQUEDUCT** Specially built channel (underground or raised) through which water was brought into Roman towns.

**ATRIUM** The central hall of a Roman house onto which most of its rooms opened.

**BALDRIC** Belt hung from the shoulder, across the body, to the opposite hip to hold a dagger or a sword.

**BALTEUS** Belt hung with decorated leather strips that was an important part of the Roman soldier's uniform.

**BARBARIAN** Originally a Greek term, later used in Rome for unfamiliar people living outside the Empire, whom they considered to be coarse and uncultured.

**BASILICA** Imposing public building, often located in the forum where legal business and ceremonial events took place.

**CALIGAE** Sturdy military sandals with hobnail soles for reinforcement, designed for frequent long marches.

**CATAPULT** Military machine used by the Roman army during siege warfare for hurling stones and darts over enemy walls.

**CAVALRY** Mounted soldiers who were skilled at both scouting and fighting on horseback.

**CENSOR** Government official who kept a record of all Roman citizens, awarded contracts for government projects, such as roads and temples, and revised the membership of the Senate. (see also SENATE)

**CENTURY** Company of 80 men in the Roman army. The officer who commanded each century was called a centurion. (see also COHORT, LEGION)

**CHALCEDONY** Type of colored quartz used for making jewelry and for carving into small portrait busts.

**CHARIOT** Wheeled vehicle originally used in war, then in Roman races. Chariots pulled by two horses were called *bigae*, and those that were pulled by four horses were called *quadrigae*.

**CIRCUS** Long stadium with tiered seating where chariot races were held. (see also CHARIOT)

**CITIZEN** Free man (as opposed to slave), with a respected status and numerous rights and privileges, such as the right to vote.

**CITY-STATE** A conventional city that, with its surrounding territory, is also an independent political state.

**COHORT** Subdivision of the Roman army. Each cohort was divided into six centuries. (see also LEGION, CENTURY)

**CONSUL** One of two elected officials who shared the highest position in the Roman Republic.

**COUCH** Backless seat, sometimes with ornate ends, on which Romans relaxed and reclined to eat formal meals.

**DEMOCRACY** A system of government in which all the people being governed have a voice, usually through elected representatives.



Catapult

Stone to be thrown went in here

**DIKTATOR** A special Roman magistrate appointed with absolute power during state emergencies.



Chariot race illustrated in mosaic

**DISTAFF** Tool used to hold raw linen or wool fibers ready to be spun. Since only women were involved in spinning, this word now has the secondary meaning of "female", especially in genealogy.

**DOMUS** Private townhouse, often with a colonnaded back garden.

**EMPEROR** Absolute ruler of an empire, making "emperor" a higher rank than "king." Augustus Caesar became the first Roman emperor in 27 BCE.

**EQUESTRIAN** Originally a member of the Roman cavalry, equestrians had to be wealthy enough to afford the upkeep of a horse, and the term later came to mean a rich soldier or administrator whose rank was second only to that of a senator.



A wealthy Roman

**FASCES** Ceremonial bundle of rods with a projecting ax, which symbolized legal authority.

**FIBULA** Decorative brooch used to fasten cloaks and other items of clothing.

**FORUM** Market square surrounded by public buildings in a Roman town. Public business and trade were carried out there.

**GALLEY** Ancient Roman or Greek warship powered by one or more rows of oars.

**GARUM** Strong-tasting sauce made from fish, salt, and flavorings.



**GENIUS** The personal protective spirit of a man (ancient Roman meaning).

**GLADIATOR** Trained fighter who battled other gladiators in public contests, sometimes to death.

**GLADIUS** Short, comparatively light, sword worn by Roman soldiers on their right-hand side.

**GOVERNOR** Top-ranking official, usually a senator, who administered a Roman province.

**HYPOCAUST** Central heating system installed in grand Roman houses that worked by circulating warm air from a fire under the floor and through cavities in the walls.

**INSULA** Sizeable accommodation block made up of multiple rented units.

**JUNO** The personal protective spirit of a woman.

**LAR** Household deity; spirit of a family's ancestors.

**LARARIUM** Shrine dedicated to household gods (lares), which was found in every Roman home.

**LAUREL** Leaves from the bay plant woven into a cirlet or wreath and worn on the head to symbolize power.

**LEGION** Main division of the Roman army containing 3,000–6,000 men (legionaries), organized into 10 smaller units called cohorts. (see also COHORT, CENTURY)

**MORTARIUM** Heavy dish made from stone or pottery and used with a handheld pestle for grinding food. Today we use the term "mortar and pestle" for this tool.

**MOSAIC** Floor or wall decoration made from small pieces of glass, stone, or tile cemented into position to make a picture or a pattern.

**MUREX** Type of mollusk from which precious purple dye was distilled.

**ORATOR** Skilled and commanding public speaker.

**PAPYRUS** Egyptian water reed whose stem was pressed to make the paperlike sheets on which Roman documents were written.

**PATERFAMILIAS** Male head of the family and household, who had absolute power over his wife, children, and servants.

**PERISTYLE** Colonnaded garden, usually at the back of a Roman house.

**PILIUM** Heavy, pointed javelin designed to pierce the enemy's shield and armor.

**PLAQUE** Small slab made of clay, porcelain, or metal and decorated with either an engraving or a raised motif.

**PLEBIAN** Roman citizen outside the old aristocracy (the patricians).

**PRAETOR** High-ranking Roman magistrate, elected annually.

**PRAETORIAN GUARD** Division of elite soldiers founded by Emperor Augustus and responsible for guarding a Roman general or emperor.

**PROCURATOR** Official responsible for collecting taxes and paying the army and civil service in Roman provinces.

**PROVINCE** Roman territory that lay outside Italy. Native residents of the provinces were called "provincials".

**PUGIO** Double-edged dagger worn by Roman soldiers on their left-hand side.

**QUAESTOR** Elected government official responsible for the finances of the state.

**RAISED RELIEF** Carved or molded image that stands out from its background.

**REPUBLIC** A state where power is held by the people or their representatives, rather than by an emperor, monarch, or tyrant.



Mosaic

**SCABBARD** The sheath that holds and protects a sword. An officer in the Roman army might wear a highly decorated sword and scabbard as a symbol of his position.

**SENATE** Council of rich noblemen who advised the Roman consuls on matters of law, government, and administration. Members of this council were called senators.

**SLAVE** Man, woman, or child who is owned by another person as their property, to do work of some kind.

**STANDARD** Distinctive flag or statuette, especially of a military unit.

**THERMAE** Roman public bath.

**THERMOPOLIUM** Stall selling hot food on the street in a Roman city or town.

**TOGA** Formal garment worn by male Roman citizens, which consisted of a length of fabric wrapped around the body and draped over one shoulder. Togas were usually white; those worn by senators had wide purple borders.

**TRIBUNE** A representative in government, elected by the plebeians to protect their interests, (see also PLEBEIAN)

**TRIUMPH** Procession of honor into Rome by a victorious general and his soldiers, along with their prisoners and plundered treasure.

**TUNIC** Simple sleeveless shirt, tied at the waist and reaching to the knees, worn by Roman men.

**VILLA** Luxurious country home belonging to a wealthy Roman family.

Mosaics are made from thousands of tiny pieces of colored stone



Senator's toga



Laurel wreath



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# Acknowledgments

Dorling Kindersley would like to thank:  
The Department of Greek and Roman  
Antiquities, The British Museum, for  
providing ancient artefacts for photography;  
Emma Cox; Celia Clear, British Museum  
Publications; Mr. B. Cook & Mr. D. Bailey,  
The Department of Greek and Roman  
Antiquities; Dr. T.W. Potter & Miss C. Johns,  
The Department of Prehistoric and  
Romano-British Antiquities; Mr. D. Kidd &  
Mr. D. Buckton, The Department of  
Medieval and Later Antiquities; Peter  
Connolly for his model of the Colosseum  
on pp.28-29; Brian Lancaster, Thomas  
Keenes, Louise Pritchard, Jane Coney &  
Lester Cheeseman for their assistance;  
Ermine Street Guard pp. 10-11; Kathy  
Lockley for additional picture research;

Julie Ferris for proof-reading; Jane Parker for  
the index; David Ekholm-JAlbum, Sunita  
Gahir, Nigel Ritchie, Susan St. Louis, Lisa  
Stock, & Bulent Yusef for the clip art; Neville  
Graham, Sue Nicholson, & Susan St. Louis  
for the wall chart; Margaret Parrish for  
Americanization.

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**Illustrations:** Peter Bill, p. 27; p.38; Eugene  
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SIMON JAMES

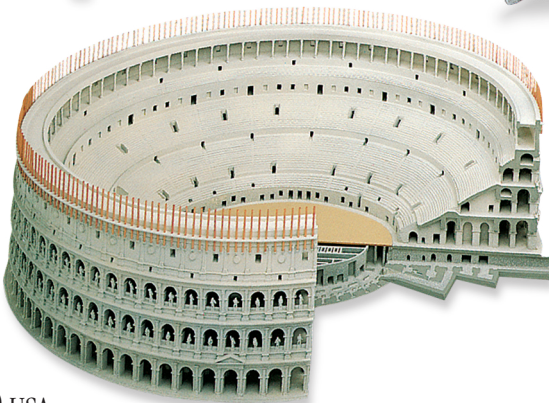
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ISBN 978-0-7566-3766-8

Printed in China

5 15 99



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