Life in Ancient Rome

What’s the Connection?
You have already learned about Rome’s rise to power. Life in Rome was not easy, but as the empire grew, its people accomplished many things in art, science, and engineering.

Focusing on the Main Ideas
• In addition to their own developments in science and engineering, Roman artists and writers borrowed many ideas from the Greeks. (page 303)
• The rich and poor had very different lives in the Roman Empire, as did men and women. (page 306)

Meeting People
Virgil (VUHR•juhl)
Horace (HAWR•uhs)
Galen (GAY•luhn)
Ptolemy (TAH•luh•mee)
Spartacus (SPAHR•tuh•kuhs)

Building Your Vocabulary
vault (VAWLT)
satire (SA•TYR)
ode (OHD)
anatomy (uh•NA•tuh•mee)
Forum (FOHR•uhm)
gladiator (GLA•dee•AY•tuhr)
paterfamilias (PA•tuhr•fuh•MIH•lee•uhs)
rhetoric (REH•tuh•rhk)

Reading Strategy
Compare and Contrast Use a Venn diagram like the one below to show similarities and differences between the rich and the poor in Rome.

Roman Rich
Roman Poor

When & Where?

BRITAIN
GAUL
SPAIN
ITALY
Constantinople
PALESTINE
EGYPT

100 B.C.
73 B.C.
Spartacus leads revolt of enslaved people
A.D. 1
C. 10 B.C.
Livy writes his History of Rome
A.D. 100
C. A.D. 80
Colosseum completed
Roman Culture

In addition to their own developments in science and engineering, Roman artists and writers borrowed many ideas from the Greeks.

Reading Focus Are there people in your life that you admire? What have you learned from them? Read to find out what the Romans learned from the Greeks.

The Romans admired and studied Greek statues, buildings, and ideas. They copied the Greeks in many ways. However, they changed what they borrowed to suit their own needs. In one important way, the Romans were very different from the Greeks. The Greeks loved to talk about ideas. To the Romans, ideas were only important if they could solve everyday problems.

What Was Roman Art Like? The Romans admired Greek art and architecture. They placed Greek-style statues in their homes and public buildings. Roman artists, however, carved statues that looked different from those of the Greeks. Greek statues were made to look perfect. People were shown young, healthy, and with beautiful bodies. Roman statues were more realistic and included wrinkles, warts, and other less attractive features.

In building, the Romans also turned to the Greeks for ideas. They used Greek-style porches and rows of columns called colonnades. But they also added their own features, such as arches and domes. Roman builders were the first to make full use of the arch. Arches supported bridges, aqueducts, and buildings. Rows of arches were often built against one another to form a vault (VAWLt), or curved ceiling. Using this technique, the Romans were able to build domes from many rings of shaped stone.

The Romans were the first people to invent and use concrete, a mixture of volcanic ash, lime, and water. When it dried, this mix was as hard as rock. Concrete made buildings sturdier and allowed them to be built taller.

Rome’s concrete buildings were so well built that many still stand today. One of the most famous is the Colosseum, completed about A.D. 80. It was a huge arena that could seat about 60,000 people. Another famous building is the Pantheon, a temple built to honor Rome’s gods. The Pantheon’s domed roof was the largest of its time.
Roman Literature  Roman authors based much of their writing on Greek works. For example, the Roman writer Virgil (VUHR•juhl) drew some of his ideas from Homer’s Odyssey. Virgil’s epic poem, the Aeneid (uh•NEE•uhd), describes the adventures of the Trojan prince Aeneas and how he came to Italy. Virgil presents Aeneas as the ideal Roman—brave, self-controlled, and loyal to the gods.

Rome’s other famous writers also looked to the Greeks for inspiration. Using Greek models, the poet Horace (HAWR•uhhs) wrote satires (SA•ty-rz). These works poked fun at human weaknesses. Horace also composed odes (OH-DZ), or poems that express strong emotions about life. The Roman writer Ovid wrote works that were based on the Greek myths. The poet Catullus also admired Greek writings. He wrote short poems about love, sadness, and envy.

Like the Greeks, Rome’s historians recorded the events of their civilization. One of Rome’s most famous historians was Livy. He wrote his History of Rome about 10 B.C. In this book, Livy describes Rome’s rise to power. Livy greatly admired the deeds of the early Romans, and he believed that history had important moral lessons to teach people.

Livy celebrated Rome’s greatness, but the Roman historian Tacitus took a darker view. He believed that Rome’s emperors had taken people’s freedom. Tacitus also thought Romans were losing the values that made them strong. He accused them of wasting time on sports and other pleasures.

Also like the Greeks, the Romans enjoyed plays. Roman plays were often based on Greek tragedies and comedies. Playwrights such as the tragedy writer Seneca and the comedy writers Plautus and Terence wrote plays for religious festivals. Romans especially liked plays with humor.

Roman authors influenced later writers in Europe and America, but the language of the Romans, Latin, had an even bigger impact on future generations. Latin became Europe’s language for government, trade, and learning until about A.D. 1500. Latin became the basis of many modern European languages, such as Italian, French, and Spanish, and shaped many others. Many of the English words we use today come from Latin as well.

Roman Science and Engineering The Romans also learned from Greek science. A Greek doctor named Galen (GAY•luhn)
The Colosseum in Rome could hold some 60,000 people. The arena even had a removable canvas awning to protect spectators from the hot Roman sun. **What was concrete made from?**

Brought many medical ideas to Rome. For example, he emphasized the importance of **anatomy** (uh•NA•tuh•mee), the study of body structure. To learn about inner organs, Galen cut open dead animals and recorded his findings. Doctors in the West studied Galen’s books and drawings for more than 1,500 years.

Another important scientist of the Roman Empire was **Ptolemy** (TAH•luh•mee). Ptolemy lived in Alexandria, in Egypt. He studied the sky and carefully mapped over 1,000 different stars. He also studied the motion of planets and stars and created rules explaining their movements. Even though Ptolemy incorrectly placed Earth at the center of the universe, educated people in Europe accepted his ideas for centuries.

While Roman scientists tried to understand how the world worked, Roman engineers built an astonishing system of roads and bridges to connect the empire. Have you ever heard the saying “All roads lead to Rome”? Roman engineers built roads from Rome to every part of the empire. These roads were well built, and some have survived to this day.

The Romans also used advanced engineering to supply their cities with fresh water. Engineers built aqueducts to bring water from the hills into the cities. Aqueducts were long troughs supported by rows of arches. They carried water over long distances. At one time, 11 great aqueducts fed Rome’s homes, bathhouses, fountains, and public bathrooms. Roman cities also had sewers to remove waste.

**Reading Check** Explain How was the character Aeneas an ideal Roman?
Daily Life in Rome

Main Idea The rich and poor had very different lives in Rome, as did men and women.

Reading Focus Do you think there is a big difference in the lives of boys and girls you know today? Why or why not? Read to learn how the lives of Roman boys and girls were very different from each other.

What was it like to live in Rome over 2,000 years ago? Rome was one of the largest cities in the ancient world. By the time of Augustus, over a million people lived there. Rome was carefully planned, as were many Roman cities. It was laid out in a square with the main roads crossing at right angles. At its center was the Forum (FOHR•um). This was an open space that served as a marketplace and public square. Temples and public buildings were built around it.

Wealthy Romans lived in large, comfortable houses. Each home had large rooms, fine furniture, and beautiful gardens. In the center was an inner court called an atrium. Wealthy Romans also had homes called villas on their country estates.

The city of Rome was crowded, noisy, and dirty. People tossed garbage into the streets from their apartments, and thieves prowled the streets at night. Most people in Rome were poor. They lived in apartment buildings made of stone and wood. High rent forced families to live in one room.

Roman apartments were up to six stories high. They often collapsed because they were so poorly built. Fire was a constant danger because people used torches and lamps for lighting and cooked with oil. Once started, a fire could destroy entire blocks of apartments.

To keep the people from rioting, the Roman government provided “bread and circuses,” or free grain and shows. Romans of all classes flocked to the chariot races and gladiator contests. Gladiators (GLA•dee•AY•tuhrz)

Sports & Contests

Ancient Roman Sports Sports were important to the Romans. Paintings on vases, frescoes [moist plaster], and stone show Romans playing ball, including a version of soccer. Roman girls are shown exercising with handheld weights and throwing an egg-shaped ball. Balls were made of different materials such as wool, hair, linen, sponges, and pig bladders wrapped in string.

Some Roman sporting events took place in the Colosseum, amphitheaters, and the Circus Maximus. Wild beast fights, battles between ships, and gladiator contests attracted Roman spectators by the thousands. Chariot racing was held in the Circus Maximus, and the drivers wore team colors of red, white, green, and blue.

Connecting to the Past

1. How do we know sports were important to the Romans?
2. How are today’s sports different from Roman sports? How are they similar?

Scene showing gladiators in battle
fought animals and each other. Most gladiators were enslaved people, criminals, or poor people. Gladiators were admired, much like sports heroes are today.

**What Was Family Life Like?** Family life was important to the Romans. Their families were large. They included not only parents and young children but also married children and their families, other relatives, and enslaved servants. The father was the head of the household. Called the *paterfamilias* (*PA•tuhr•fuh•MIH•lee•uhsh*), or “father of the family,” he had complete control over family members. For example, he punished children severely if they disobeyed. He also arranged their marriages.

In some cases, the paterfamilias made sure his children were educated. Poor Romans could not afford to send their children to school. Wealthy Romans, however, hired tutors to teach their young children at home. Some older boys did go to schools, where they learned reading, writing, and rhetoric (*REH•tuhr•rihk*), or public speaking.

Older girls did not go to school. Instead, they studied reading and writing at home. They also learned household duties.

Between the ages of 14 and 16, a Roman boy celebrated becoming a man. He would burn his toys as offerings to the household gods. Then he would put on a toga, a loose-fitting robe that Roman men wore. Once he came of age, a man might join his family’s business, become a soldier, or begin a career.
in the government. Roman women did not become adults until they married. A woman usually wore a long flowing robe with a cloak called a *palla*.

**Women in Rome**  Women in early Rome had some rights, but they were not full citizens. The paterfamilias looked after his wife and controlled her affairs. However, he often sought her advice in private. Women had a strong influence on their families, and some wives of famous men, including emperors, became well-known themselves. For example, the empress Livia (LIHV•ee•uh), wife of Augustus, had a say in Rome’s politics. She was later honored as a goddess.

The freedoms a Roman woman enjoyed depended on her husband’s wealth and standing. Wealthy women had a great deal of independence. They could own land, run businesses, and sell property. They managed the household and had enslaved people do the housework. This left the women free to study literature, art, and fashion. Outside the home, they could go to the theater or the amphitheater, but in both places they had to sit in areas separate from men.

Women with less money had less freedom. They spent most of their time working in their houses or helping their husbands in family-run shops. They were allowed to leave home to shop, visit friends, worship at temples, or go to the baths. A few women did work independently outside the home. Some served as priestesses, while others worked as hairdressers and even doctors.

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**A Roman House**

![A Roman House diagram](image)

- Wealthy Romans often lived in spacious houses with central courtyards. The houses had high brick walls without windows. Many of the rooms opened into the courtyard to allow in light and fresh air. *How is a Roman home similar to homes in your neighborhood? How is it different?*

- Rainwater from the gutters collected in the pool below.

- Some homes had shops or workshops that opened onto the street.

- In the dining room, family members ate while reclining on couches.

- Guests and business associates were entertained in the living room/study.

- A Roman couple

- Courtyard

- Kitchen

- Library

- Bedrooms

- Scala/Art Resource, NY
How Did Romans Treat Enslaved People?

Slavery was a part of Roman life from early times. But the use of slave labor grew as Rome took over more territory. Thousands of prisoners from conquered lands were brought to Italy. Most spent their lives performing slave labor. By 100 B.C., about 40 percent of the people in Italy were enslaved.

Enslaved people did many different jobs. They worked in homes, fields, mines, and workshops. They helped build roads, bridges, and aqueducts. Many enslaved Greeks were well educated. They served as teachers, doctors, and artisans. Enslaved people who earned wages usually were able to buy their freedom.

For most enslaved people, life was miserable. They were punished severely for poor work or for running away. To escape their hardships, enslaved people often rebelled.

In 73 B.C. a slave revolt broke out in Italy. It was led by a gladiator named Spartacus (SPAHR•tuh•kuhs). Under Spartacus, a force of 70,000 enslaved people defeated several Roman armies. The revolt was finally crushed two years later. Spartacus and 6,000 of his followers were crucified, or put to death by nailing on a cross.

Roman Religion

The ancient Romans worshiped many gods and goddesses. They also believed that spirits lived in natural things, such as trees and rivers. Greek gods and goddesses were popular in Rome, although they were given Roman names. For example, Zeus became Jupiter, the sky god, and Aphrodite became Venus, the goddess of love and beauty. Roman emperors also were worshiped. This practice strengthened support for the government.

Romans honored their gods and goddesses by praying and offering food. Every Roman home had an altar for their household gods. At these altars, the head of the family carried out rituals. Government officials made offerings in temples. There the important gods and goddesses of Rome were honored. Some Roman priests looked for messages from the gods. They studied
the insides of dead animals or watched the flight of birds, looking for meaning.

As the empire grew larger, Romans came into contact with other religions. These religions were allowed, as long as they did not threaten the government. Those that did faced severe hardships. You will read about one of these religions—Christianity—in the next chapter.

**Reading Check**  **Contrast** Describe the freedoms of upper-class women that were not available to women of other classes.

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**Greek and Roman Gods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek God</th>
<th>Roman God</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ares</td>
<td>Mars</td>
<td>god of war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeus</td>
<td>Jupiter</td>
<td>chief god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hera</td>
<td>Juno</td>
<td>wife of chief god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aphrodite</td>
<td>Venus</td>
<td>goddess of love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artemis</td>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>goddess of the hunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athena</td>
<td>Minerva</td>
<td>goddess of wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermes</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
<td>messenger god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hades</td>
<td>Pluto</td>
<td>god of the underworld</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poseidon</td>
<td>Neptune</td>
<td>god of the sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hephaestus</td>
<td>Vulcan</td>
<td>god of fire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Section 1 Review**

**Reading Summary**

**Review the Main Idea**

- Roman art, literature, and science borrowed much from the Greeks. Roman engineers made advances, including the development of cement, the arch, aqueducts, and domes.
- Religion and family were important parts of Roman life. Enslaved people carried out many different tasks in Roman society.

**What Did You Learn?**

1. What were some of Ptolemy’s scientific achievements?
2. How were the Roman and Greek religions similar?

**Critical Thinking**

3. **Compare and Contrast**

   Draw a chart like the one below. Fill in details to compare and contrast Roman and Greek art and architecture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek Art</th>
<th>Roman Art</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greek Architecture</td>
<td>Roman Architecture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **Analyze** Explain the importance of the language of the Romans.
5. **Describe** Describe the education of Roman children.
6. **Conclude** The Romans borrowed ideas from other peoples. Do you think our culture today borrows ideas from other peoples? Explain your answer.
7. **Responding and Reflecting** Look at the art showing the Roman house on page 308. Write five things that come to mind as you view this picture.