

## History Revision – Ancient Rome

### THE ROME OF ANCIENT TIMES;

2000 years ago Rome was a city of a million people – the largest in Europe. Marble and stone buildings surrounded its public spaces. There was running water, central heating, a sewerage system, schools, public baths and lavish public entertainments paid for by the Govt.

### THE ROMAN FORUM;

A public space where people gathered to buy and sell goods, in the market, held there every eight days. Newspapers, informing people of the latest developments were posted. The Senate was housed here and many public celebrations were held on the Via Sacra, which ran right through the Forum. Generals held their victory parades along this road.

### THE AQUADUCTS;

These were high stone arches containing cement-lined pipes, which carried water from the hills to the city where it was gathered into huge cisterns. From these the water flowed into public fountains at the end of every street. For a special fee the rich had water piped straight to their homes. Other pipes on the Aqueducts carried sewerage to the River Tiber.

### THE PUBLIC BATHS;

The largest of these could cater to 10.000 people in a day. They opened at 10.30 till mid-afternoon. Those using the baths proceeded through a series of rooms, each of which had a different purpose. Both rich and poor alike used the public baths.

(1) **CHANGING ROOM** – To leave their clothes and other belongings.

(2) **TEPIDARIUM** – A warm hall to help people sweat.

(3) **FRIGIDARIUM** – A cold room, with a swimming pool.

(4) **CALDARIUM** – A very hot room containing a Sauna and a Turkish bath. Here the Romans covered their bodies with oil and perfume they then scraped the dirt off themselves with an instrument known as a Stirgil.

### THE PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENTS;

- **THE RACES** – These were chariot races seven laps long around the **Circus Maximus**, which held 250.000 people. Crashes were common and huge bets were placed.
- **THE GAMES** – These took many forms. The most common were the Gladiator fights against wild animals or other Gladiators. They were staged all over the Empire, but the **Colosseum** in Rome was the most popular venue. (50.000)

## **THE LIVES OF THE RICH;**

At the baths or the games rich people were accompanied by their slaves. The rich wore a **Tunic** of wool or linen, which reached to the knees. Over this the men wore a **Toga** while the women wore a **Stola**. The rich had great power. They helped run the Empire and the Army. They lived in great luxury on huge estates in the country and in large townhouses in the city.

These houses, called a **Domus** were entered through a narrow door, which led to an **Atrium**. This was the central area of the house around which all the rooms were built. It was open to the sky and had an ornamental pond. The house also had a garden called a **Peristyle**, which was surrounded by a covered passage. Some houses had a central heating system called a **Hypocaust**. The entire house was decorated with wall paintings and floor mosaics.

They held lavish dinner parties reclining on couches. They ate meat, vegetables, fruit and fish. If they had eaten too much they could go to a room called a **Vomitorium** to have their throat tickled by a slave causing them to vomit.

## **THE LIVES OF THE POOR;**

Most Roman families lived in single room flats in six or seven story blocks called **Insulae**. Because of poor regulation in the building trade these Insulae were badly built and dangerous. They were also unhealthy, cold in the winter and hot and stuffy in the summer. The cheapest flats were always at the very top of the building while the ground floor usually held shops. The poor dressed in a single short tunic all year round. Those unable to earn a living were given free grain by the Govt called the **Dole**. They had no access to education but could attend the public entertainments free of charge.

## **THE LIFE OF A CHILD;**

Roman children were brought up very strictly. A father had the power to sell or even kill his children! Boys were generally brought up by their fathers and accompanied them at all times. Girls stayed at home with their mothers and learned domestic skills.

For the rich, both boys and girls attended an elementary school called a **Ludus** from the ages of 7 – 11. From age 12 – 16 boys attended a **Grammar school** where they learned Greek, Latin and Oratory. Discipline was very strict and flogging was widely used. Schools closed every eighth day because of the market at the Forum. Until he was aged 16 a boy wore a Toga with a purple stripe after this he wore a plain white Toga to signify he was now an adult.

## **THE LIVES OF THE SLAVES;**

Slaves were prisoners of war; they could be bought and sold like property. Their treatment varied greatly. Some were given important tasks to do like teaching children while others were chained together and forced to do long hours of manual labour. Some slaves had a piece of their earlobe cut off, so they could be publicly identified as slaves. If they were given their freedom they wore an iron earring to signify their new status. Many ran away because of the cruel treatment but if caught they were branded with a hot iron or even crucified.

## **HOW THE EMPIRE WAS RULED;**

The Empire stretched from Scotland to the Sahara Desert, from Portugal to Iraq. One man, the **Emperor** ruled. He appointed **Governors** to rule the Provinces, for example, Pontius Pilate ruled the Province of Judea. The Provinces had to pay high taxes, which led to frequent rebellions, which had to be put down by the army.

## **THE ROMAN ARMY;**

The main fighting unit was called a **Legion**, which contained about 5.000 soldiers, called **Legionnaires**. This was made up of Infantry, Cavalry and Artillery. The Legion was further divided into **Centuries** and **Cohorts**. A Roman soldier served for twenty years, after which he was given a farm in a distant corner of the Empire to retire to. Legionnaires had to be Roman Citizens. However as time went on and the army got bigger non-citizens were drafted in and these were known as **Auxiliaries**.

The weapons and tools carried by a Legionnaire weighed about 40 kilos. His main weapon was a short two-edged sword but he also carried a shield and two Javelins.

## **TRAVEL IN THE EMPIRE;**

Romans were famous for their road building. These stretched in long straight lines from Rome to distant parts of the Empire. Milestones marked the distance from Rome. The most famous road was the **Via Appia**, which stretched from Rome to Brindisi.

Romans also travelled extensively by sea, especially during the summer months. Rome traded with India, Greece, Africa, Arabia and China.

## **PAGANS AND CHRISTIANS IN ROME;**

The pagans had many gods and goddesses. **Jupiter** was the father of the gods and his temple was on the **Capitol Hill**. Romans also built altars in their homes and had a strong belief in the spirits of their ancestors. They believed in life after death and placed a coin in the mouth of the dead as a payment to **Charon**, the ferryman of the underworld, who brought the spirits of the dead across the **River Styx**. Many Emperors were worshiped as gods too.

Around 60 A.D. **Christianity** arrived in Rome, through the Apostles Peter and Paul. After the great fire of Rome in 64 A.D. The Emperor Nero blamed the Christians for starting it and began a **persecution**. Thousands were put to death including the two Apostles. Suffering and death, however only strengthened the Christian religion and it gained more and more converts across the Empire.

Finally in the year 312 A.D. a man whose mother was a Christian became Emperor. Constantine passed the **Edict of Milan**, which granted freedom of worship to all Christians.

## **THE STORY OF POMPEII;**

24 August 79 A.D. **Mt. Vesuvius** erupted raining ash, pumice and lava down on the city of Pompeii. At the end of the eruption the city lay buried under the ash and almost perfectly

preserved. For over a thousand years the existence of Pompeii was forgotten until some workmen, digging for a well found some ruins.

However it was not until 1860 that an Italian archaeologist named, **Giuseppe Fiorelli** began to excavate the city properly. Firstly, they cleared away mounds of earth and ash and revealed the streets of Pompeii for the first time since the day of the eruption. Then, Fiorelli numbered every street and house, marking the whole city off in a grid. He catalogued every artefact found and recorded the exact place that they had been found in. Some houses were so well preserved that by examining the Mosaics and the wall paintings, he was able to identify their owners.

His greatest achievements were the **plaster casts** he made of the bodies of the dead. The ash had buried those who had died in the eruption. As the centuries had passed these bodies had rotted but their imprints had remained under the ash .By pouring plaster of Paris into these imprints he created perfect plaster casts of those who had died, preserving their death agony forever. Modern visitors to Pompeii can still view these same plaster casts often in the exact spot where they died.