



Year 4

Life in Ancient Rome

Reading Booklet

Lesson Series:

- 1. Locating Ancient Rome**
- 2. Monarchy, Republic, Empire: Rome's different governments**
- 3. Pompeii**
- 4. A day in the life of Ancient Rome**
- 5. Latin: A Roman Legacy**

Name: _____

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Lesson 1 - Locating Ancient Rome

The Roman Empire was one of the most powerful and influential empires ever to have existed. Its influence is still felt today in everything from language, to culture, to the location of cities such as London.

It is said Rome was founded by the mythical brothers Romulus and Remus, around 750 BCE. The city grew in power over the centuries, reaching its height in the 2nd Century CE, before falling to the Goths in the 5th Century. Its location in the centre of the Mediterranean gave it a powerful position from which to dominate the surrounding countries and remain safe for hundreds of years from migrating tribes and armies.



Lesson 2 - Monarchy, Republic, Empire: Rome's different governments

For the first 250 years of its existence, Rome was ruled by kings. The last king, Tarquin, was so proud that the people drove him out.

After this, Rome was run as a republic – meaning a ‘thing of the people’. This was where the wealthy and landowning classes held certain elected positions. There were two positions of ‘consul’ which was roughly equivalent to a modern president, in which the position lasted for one year.

Other wealthy men became senators and held this post for life. There were up to three hundred senators in the senate, and they advised the consuls. Beneath the senators were patricians: men of land and money. The ordinary people of Rome were called plebeians, who frequently did not own property. Beneath them was a vast underclass of slaves, who undertook most of the manual work of the empire, and upon which the empire was heavily economically dependent.



Lesson 3 - Pompeii

Pompeii was a wealthy town on the Italian coast, near modern day Naples. On the afternoon of the 24th August 79 CE, the nearby mountain of Vesuvius began to pour out plumes of black smoke. These quickly increased in volume and the volcano began erupting gas, stones and lava. As the pressure built up in the clouds from the volcano, they collapsed into a pyroclastic flow: a searing hot wall of ash and stone that travelled down the mountain at hundreds of miles an hour.

This buried the town so swiftly and completely, that when the ruins were excavated in 1748, the bodies of people were found frozen in the moments of their deaths. Alongside the thousands of objects discovered, many buildings had also been preserved.



Lesson 4 - A day in the life of Ancient Rome

Daily life for a wealthy Roman might have included many different activities: a visit to the forum would have been likely. The forum was the centre of Roman public life, with market stalls set up, merchants and traders doing business and politicians speaking to large crowds of listeners.

Romans would also go to the baths to meet friends, exercise and clean themselves by moving through a series of baths of different temperatures. On special days such as festivals and the coronation of a new emperor, there would be games held. The militaristic Romans valued blood sports involving immense danger.

One of the most popular sports were gladiator fights, where teams of trained slaves were pitted against each other in fights to the death. People also enjoyed chariot racing, involving four chariots racing around a track. Gladiators fought in amphitheatres whilst chariots raced in circuses. The Romans also had more peaceful interests, such as poetry and the theatre.



Lesson 5 - A Roman Legacy

The Roman Empire stands out in the history of Europe and the Near East, not just due to its longevity, but because of the immense influence it had on the history, culture, language and politics of the region for centuries after.

The Latin language formed the basis of the modern 'Romance' languages: Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian, and heavily influenced the English language, to the point where tens of thousands of English words come from Latin roots.

Latin also became the language of scholarship for centuries after the fall of Rome. Until the 17th century, almost all works of science, religion and politics were written in Latin.

