

Roman Culture

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An introduction to the culture of Rome, especially the Roman Republic.

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The early Romans adopted culture from their neighbors, the Greeks and Etruscans, in particular, but imprinted their unique stamp on their borrowings. The Roman Empire then spread this culture far and wide, affecting diverse areas of the modern world. For instance, we still have colosseums and satire, for entertainment, aqueducts to supply water, and sewers to drain it. Roman-built bridges still span rivers, while distant cities are located along remnants of actual Roman roads. Going further and higher, the names of Roman gods pepper our constellations. Some parts of Roman culture are gone, but remain intriguing. Chief among these are the gladiators and death-games in the arena.

[Colosseum](#)



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The Colosseum in Rome is an amphitheater. It was developed as an improvement over the Circus Maximus for gladiatorial combats, wild beast fights (venationes), and mock naval battles (naumachiae).

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[Gladiators](#)



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In ancient Rome, gladiators fought, often to the death, to entertain crowds of spectators. Gladiators were trained in ludi ([sg. ludus]) to fight well in circuses (or the Colosseum) where the ground surface was covered with blood-absorbing harena 'sand' (hence, the name 'arena').

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[Roman Theater](#)



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Roman theater began as a translation of Greek forms, in combination with native song and dance, farce and improv. In Roman (well... Italian) hands, the materials of Greek masters were converted to stock characters, plots, and situations that we can recognize in Shakespeare and even modern sit-coms.

- [Roman Satire](#)

[Aqueducts, Water Supply and Sewers in Ancient Rome](#)



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The Romans are renowned for engineering marvels, among which is the aqueduct that carried water for many miles in order to provide a crowded urban population with relatively safe, potable water and water for latrines. Latrines served 12-60 people at once with no dividers for privacy or toilet paper. The main sewer of Rome was the Cloaca Maxima, which emptied into the Tiber River.

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[Roman Roads](#)



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Roman roads, specifically viae, were the veins and arteries of the Roman military system. Through these highways, armies could march across the Empire from the Euphrates to the Atlantic.

- [Appian Way](#)

[Roman and Greek Gods](#)



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Most of the Roman and Greek Gods and Goddesses share enough attributes to be considered roughly the same, but with a different name -- Latin for the Roman, Greek for the Greek.

- [Did the Romans Believe Their Myths?](#)

[Ancient Roman Priests](#)



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Ancient Roman priests were administrative officials rather than mediators between men and gods. They were charged with performing the religious rituals with exactness and scrupulous care so as to maintain the gods' good will and support for Rome.

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[Pantheon Pictures](#)



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The Roman Pantheon, a temple for all gods, is comprised of a huge, domed brick-faced concrete rotunda (43.3 m. high and wide) and an octastyle Corinthian, rectangular portico with granite columns.

- [Glossary entry o the Pantheon](#)

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[Roman Burial](#)



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When a person died, he would be washed and laid out on a couch, dressed in his finest clothes and crowned, if he had earned one in life. A coin would be placed on his mouth, under the tongue, or on the eyes so he could pay the ferryman Charon to row him to the land of the dead. After being laid out for 8 days, he would be taken out for burial.

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[Roman Marriage](#)



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In ancient Rome, if you planned to run for office, you could increase your chances of winning by creating a political alliance through the marriage of your children. Parents arranged marriages to produce descendants to tend the ancestral spirits.

- [Roman Women and Divorce](#)

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[Important Figures in Greek and Roman Medicine](#)



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The Greeks and Romans contributed greatly to the field of medicine, advancing it substantially from a magic-based process to one involving regimens, like diet and exercise, and observation, diagnosis, and more.

[Greek and Roman Philosophers](#)



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There isn't a clean line of demarcation between Greek and Roman philosophy. The better known Greek philosophers were of the ethical variety, like Stoicism and Epicureanism which were concerned with quality of life and virtue.

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