Daily Life in the Roman Empire...

for Women!

for Fun!

Students' time travel to Ancient Rome!

at School!

with the Gods!

with Food!

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Daily Life in the Roman Empire

- Text -

For Women
At School
For Fun
With the Gods
With Food
An average Roman wife preferred to stay indoors, at home. Here, she would spend her time taking care of the home, her children, and simple household chores, like taking care of a garden or spinning wool into yarn to make articles of clothing. She would even pass these skills onto her daughters. It was her job to take care of her husband, children, and household; if not for her, the home would have fallen apart.

Unfortunately, though, women had very few rights in everyday society. In Rome’s early history, a woman’s husband maintained complete control over her life. In fact, woman could not even make a simple suggestion to her husband. In this time, it would have been absurd to think a woman could vote or participate in government, as these were both restricted from her.

As Rome evolved into an empire, however, things started to slowly change. While they still had few political freedoms, women were allowed to speak more openly at home with their husbands. While still rare, it became more common for women to own land, run businesses, and even have their own slaves.

Did you know that in Rome’s early history, women were not allowed to drink wine? A husband would kiss his wife’s lips to see if they tasted sweet. If they did, she could be severely beaten!
Schools did not exist in Rome’s early history. However, this did not mean that children went untaught. Roman boys were often taught by their fathers the skills they would need to be successful in life. These skills included hunting, proper manners, and basic reading and writing. Girls, like their siblings, were taught by their mothers how to cook, spin yarn, and make clothes. Essentially, girls were prepared for their lives as homemakers.

Once schools were created, only Roman boys and a small selection of girls could attend. All those who attended were sent at around the age of 6 or 7, but only boys would continue until their late teen years. Boys were taught how to read and write, as well as study mathematics, politics, and public speaking. These subjects would prepare boys for government life. But, school was very intimidating; boys would often be whipped for making the slightest mistake.

In general, girls did not go to school. Only the girls from the richest families could attend, and here they learned basic skills like reading and writing. For the vast majority of girls, education continued at home with their mother. As girls aged, they were taught how to play musical instruments, how to sew, and were instructed on how to properly run a kitchen.

Did you know that “paper” was too expensive to let Roman boys write on? In fact, they had to use a wax tablet until they proved they were good enough to use paper!
Romans would do a variety of things to have fun! As children, the Romans would play with toys that people still play with today, such as rattles, balls, or marbles. Roman children would also play with dolls, however they would not be made out of plastic. Instead, dolls would have been made out of wood, wax, clay, or bronze. A popular game that children would play was one where they had mice pull tiny carts, and they would see which one was the fastest!

Into adult life, Romans entertained themselves by attending the gladiator games and chariot races. Most of these events took place in the Colosseum, which was an outdoor stadium that could hold over 50,000 people. Here, gladiators fought to the death, Christians were fed to lions, and circus shows entertained the crowds!

The main attraction in Rome were the gladiator games. Here, famous fighters, often slaves or prisoners-of-war, fought to the death. These shows were usually free, since the emperors believed it was a good way to keep the people happy!
Religion played a central role in the daily lives of ancient Romans. The Romans, like the Greeks before them, turned to the gods to explain the natural world. Too, Romans believed gods controlled every moment of their lives, which is why they spent a great deal of their day worshipping them.

The Romans worshipped a variety of gods, with most being based off the beliefs of their Greek ancestors. For example, Zeus, the supreme god to the Greeks, was Jupiter to the Romans. Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and warfare, was translated to Minerva. The Roman god Neptune, the god of the sea, was equivalent to Greece’s Poseidon. Each Roman god had their own temple and each was celebrated on their own special holiday.

At home, religion continued to play a central role to the Romans. Each home had a small altar where they kept household gods called “lares.” Romans believed these spirits observed, protected, and influenced all that happened within the home, therefore it was important to spend time each day worshipping these gods. In fact, it is believed that most Romans thought it was more important to please their “lares” than the public gods, such as Jupiter or Neptune.
To the Romans, what you ate each day depended largely on what class you were a member of. But, no matter what you ate, it was fairly common for Romans to have one main meal in the late afternoon, from around four in the afternoon to six in the evening. Breakfast and lunch were typically very light, usually consisting of bread or fruit. If you were part of the lower class, you could expect to eat mostly cereal grains, often spoiled or rancid, at each meal. Gruel or porridge was also very common. Meat was far too expensive for the average Roman, so this luxury would have been a dream for a member of the lower class.

Wealthy Romans enjoyed a life of extravagance. Their meals were filled with a variety impressive items, and this was exactly their goal; the wealthy class enjoyed showing off their wealth to all who were around. Wheat pancakes and honey were a common breakfast meal, and lunches consisted of fine bread, cheese, and wine. Many options typically existed at evening meals. For example, there would be a variety of exotic meats, such as roasted peacock and ostriches, vegetables, herbs, and spices.

Did you know that wealthy Romans would have extravagant banquets that lasted for hours upon hours? What's really strange is that in order to continue eating, they would induce vomiting.
Daily Life in the Roman Empire

- Student Note Packet -
Directions: Find the appropriate section in your guide packet that corresponds to the station you are currently working on. Closely, read through your material about daily life in the Roman Empire. After reading, write down what you think are the three greatest facts from this station. These shouldn’t be simple things! What are three things you would want to share with someone else? Then, in 2-3 sentences, explain how life in Rome is different than life today! Finally, draw a picture that depicts life in Rome (from what you learned in this station) and create a caption to go along with it!

Daily Life in the Roman Empire... for Women!

Facts about Daily Life:

I: ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

II: ____________________________________________
    ____________________________________________
    ____________________________________________

III: ____________________________________________
     ____________________________________________
     ____________________________________________

How is life different for women today? ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

“__________________________________________”
Daily Life in the Roman Empire... At School!

Facts about Daily Life:

I: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

II: __________________________________________
    __________________________________________

III: __________________________________________
     __________________________________________

How is life different at school today? __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

Daily Life in the Roman Empire... For Fun!

Facts about Daily Life:

I: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

II: __________________________________________
    __________________________________________

III: __________________________________________
     __________________________________________

How is what you do for fun today different from the Romans? _______________________
   __________________________________________

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
Daily Life in the Roman Empire... with the Gods!

Facts about Daily Life:

I: ________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________

II: ________________________________________________
    ________________________________________________

III: ________________________________________________
     ________________________________________________

How is religious life different today? ______________________________
   ________________________________________________

“________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________”

Daily Life in the Roman Empire... with Food!

Facts about Daily Life:

I: ________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________

II: ________________________________________________
    ________________________________________________

III: ________________________________________________
     ________________________________________________

How are meals different today? ______________________________
   ________________________________________________

“________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________”
Daily Life in the Roman Empire

- Student Time Travel Project -
You have discovered a way to travel back in time! In your first trip, you have decided to visit Ancient Rome. You want to share the most remarkable observations and experiences from your first trip, so you have decided to create a travel brochure to help future time-travelers.

The goal of your brochure is to highlight what you see, give practical tips to future time-travelers, and prepare the next time-traveler with “what to expect” while in Ancient Rome.

What is this worth?

_____ Quality of Writing

_____ Focus on Topic

_____ Creativity of Pictures

_____ Overall helpfulness of brochure in helping me understand life in Ancient Rome
1.) I would recommend breaking students into 5 stations, rotating every 20-30 minutes (or so) depending on the time needed for your students. Since the “sketch” is made last, this often becomes homework for my students. They should be able to reproduce a quality image from their notes on the left side.

2.) For the time-travel brochure, I have left the point values blank for you to write in how much you will assign to each category. Also, you will need to go over with your students how you want them to fold the brochure (I use the standard format), then they will use 5 out of the 6 sides for details. Each side they use will focus on one category of Daily Life in Ancient Rome. You will have to verbally explain this, however, since the requirements for this (and the style of brochure) will vary from teacher to teacher.

3.) This is usually the final piece that we do to learn about Ancient Rome. Feel free to have students include information that has already been taught/learned in regard to Rome.