

# ROME

CITY AND EMPIRE

## Educator Resource Guide

February 23–May 28, 2018



Statue head of Augustus, ca. 30 BCE  
Rome, Italy  
Marble  
The British Museum, 1888,1210.1  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

## ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This Educator Resource Guide is designed to help students prepare for gallery visits and follow-up discussions. Leaders of scheduled school tour groups receive this guide with a packet of art reproductions. It highlights works from *Rome: City and Empire* and includes questions and activities that will encourage your students to look closely and think critically. The activities are compatible with Tennessee curriculum standards for visual arts, language arts, and social studies.

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## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS AND TENNESSEE STATE STANDARDS

Docent-guided school tours support Tennessee academic standards by introducing ideas relevant to the visual arts, language arts, and social studies curricula. Specific standards are addressed according to grade-appropriate levels. View connections for all grade levels (K–12) at [tn.gov/education/instruction/academic-standards.html](http://tn.gov/education/instruction/academic-standards.html).

### Sixth Grade Social Studies

#### **World History and Geography: Early Civilizations through the Decline of the Roman Empire (5th century CE)**

Ancient Rome, c. 500 BC/BCE–500 AD/CE: Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, social, and religious structures of the civilizations of ancient Rome.

### Seventh Grade Social Studies

#### **World History and Geography: The Middle Ages to the Exploration of the Americas**

The Fall of the Roman Empire: The legacy of the Roman Empire and the consequences of the fall of the Roman Empire.

### Ancient History

#### **Classical Civilizations and Rise of Religious Traditions, 1000 BC/BCE to 500 AD/CE**

The student will demonstrate knowledge of the civilizations of Persia, India, and China in terms of chronology, geography, social structures, government, economy, religion, and contributions to later civilizations. The student will demonstrate knowledge of ancient Greece in terms of its impact on Western civilization.

The student will demonstrate knowledge of ancient Rome from about 700 BC/BCE to 500 AD/CE in terms of its impact on Western civilization.

### State Fine Arts Standards

This Educator Resource Guide supports Tennessee fine arts standards. Educators may address specific standards in their classrooms according to grade-appropriate levels. View connections for all grade levels (K–12) at [tn.gov/education/instruction/academic-standards/arts-education.html](http://tn.gov/education/instruction/academic-standards/arts-education.html).

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most extraordinary geopolitical powers in history, the Roman Empire continues to capture the imaginations of people across the globe, nearly three thousand years after the city of Rome arose from a cluster of villages in central Italy. *Rome: City and Empire* includes more than two hundred works from the British Museum that bring this ancient civilization vividly to life. The exhibition provides insights, through art, into the experiences of the Romans themselves, while cultivating an understanding of the dynamic relationships between the imperial government and the people it conquered. The range of objects, from across present-day western Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, show the diversity and interconnectedness of the vast empire.



While Rome was a seat of power for over five hundred years, its influence extended beyond its military conquests. Artworks in the exhibition reflect the empire's social, political, and aesthetic impact, as seen in sculptural portrayals of emperors and military leaders, wealthy citizens, and mythological figures, as well as elegant pottery, paintings, jewelry, coins, and other objects. These artifacts connect us to this bygone civilization: we share with its people an appreciation for art as a means of documenting reality, representing ideals, memorializing the past, and creating beauty on both a grand and intimate scale.

### **The Four Pillars of Roman Power**

Rome's power was based on four pillars: her social structures, her military forces, strict devotion to the gods, and the persona of the emperor.

## THE RISE OF ROME

From a series of villages, a small city was formed that then steadily grew into a rich metropolis. Initially a kingdom successively under native and foreign rulers, it was heavily influenced by the cultures of neighboring peoples. Around 509 BCE, the monarchy was defeated, and Rome became the “Roman Republic.” It was ruled by the Senate, which was made up of wealthy landowners and city elders. The Romans gradually subdued the other peoples of Italy before conquering their Mediterranean and North African neighbors.

A turbulent period of civil war resulted in the Republic’s collapse and the founding of the Roman Empire, with the first emperor, Augustus, taking power in 27 BCE. At Augustus’s death, it was clear that the Republic would never return. A new imperial system had been established and would last for four centuries.

Rome prospered because of its strategic location on the river Tiber, an important trade route. From the beginning, its culture and architecture were heavily influenced by its neighbors: the Etruscans in the north, the Greeks in the south, and other peoples in central Italy. The Romans had a particularly turbulent relationship with the Etruscans, yet many Etruscan customs, such as religious practices and gladiatorial games, were gradually absorbed into Roman culture.

### Earliest Times and the Etruscans



1  
Casket, 300–250 BCE  
Probably Cerveteri, Italy  
Bronze  
The British Museum, 1847,1101.15  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

- 1 Early Roman culture was heavily influenced by the neighboring Etruscans, who in turn took their inspiration from the Greeks. This bronze cista was used to hold a woman’s toiletries. It was made in an Etruscan city under Roman control and shows a Greek myth that explains the changing of the seasons. A seated Hades holds Persephone’s arm while Hermes approaches.

This bronze vessel showcases two artistic techniques: the body was likely made through the process of “raising,” which involved repeated heating, hammering, and cooling of the metal. The figures on the lid, as well as the legs, were cast from a mold created through the technique of lost-wax casting. The various pieces were then soldered or riveted together. The perfect symmetry of this vessel is a testament to the craftsman’s skill, as is the delicately engraved scene of Greek deities. The figures on the lid represent another scene from Greek mythology—namely, the moment the hero Peleus was defeated in a wrestling match by Atalanta, a heroine renowned for her physical strength. Rome was a melting-pot culture, as the combination of Etruscan and Greek qualities in this object can attest.

#### Question

- Like the Etruscans and Romans, different cultures often influence one another. What examples do we see of cross-cultural influence today in the United States?

## From Republic to Empire



2  
Roman Republican coin celebrating the assassination of Julius Caesar, 43–42 BCE  
Traveling mint with Junius Brutus  
Silver  
The British Museum, 1848,0819.147  
© The Trustees of the British Museum



3  
Statue head of Augustus, ca. 30 BCE  
Rome, Italy  
Marble  
The British Museum, 1888,1210.1  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

The Roman Republican Senate was composed of aristocrats, as well as **magistrates** elected by citizens. During the late Republic, many people, including **Julius Caesar**, vied for power. Caesar conquered Gaul in 52 BCE, and his increasing dominance led to a series of bitter civil wars. His **autocratic** rule resulted in his murder by a group of senators in 44 BCE. It was the final civil war, culminating in the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra in 31 BCE, that led to Caesar's heir **Octavian** becoming the first emperor, Augustus.

A long period of relative peace followed, maintained across the ever-expanding empire by the Roman army. Rome itself became one of the foremost cities of the ancient world. The Roman Republic was at an end, but a number of its institutions continued to operate under the control of the emperor.

2 This coin was struck by **Junius Brutus**, who with **Gaius Cassius** led the uprising against Julius Caesar. The reverse shows the "cap of liberty" between two daggers and an inscription, EID MAR (Ides of March), celebrating the assassination of Caesar on that day: March 15, 44 BCE. After Caesar's murder, Brutus and Cassius fled to Greece and were finally defeated by Mark Antony and Octavian, Caesar's adopted son.

3 This head of Octavian was made around the time that he defeated Mark Antony and Cleopatra, conquered Egypt, and became the first Roman emperor, Augustus. It shows him in the style of a Greek prince. Although he lived to be seventy-seven, almost all the portraits of Augustus depict him as a man of around thirty. Augustus was aware of how art could be utilized as propaganda to support his rule. This statue head shows a youthful, handsome man full of confidence. The statue showcases the influence of Greek idealism on Roman art. Monumental sculptures of Augustus would have been spread throughout the empire, encouraging veneration of the emperor.

### Questions

- The assassination of Julius Caesar marked a turning point in ancient Rome as it transitioned from republic to empire. How did the Roman Empire differ from the Republic?
- Why did Augustus and other emperors have statues of themselves made?
- Describe the appearance and demeanor of the statue head of Augustus. Why do you think that, even as he got older, Augustus continued to have himself depicted as a young man?

### Activities

- As a class, take a closer look at the Greek myth about the changing of the seasons, and discuss the importance of mythology to the Romans.
- In small groups, each with a different myth, complete one or both of the following activities:
  - Create a short skit based on your assigned myth to share with the class.
  - Create a visual depiction of your myth. What are the important characteristics to represent?

## MILITARY MIGHT

The Roman Empire was maintained through well-organized military control. This included not just an army but also a political and administrative structure that was copied in every conquered province. The size and the actions of the occupying forces depended on the level of resistance the Romans encountered. Some peoples, such as **Dacians**, **Gauls**, and **Britons**, were treated harshly, whereas those who readily accepted Roman domination benefited under the empire.

The Roman army was one of the most powerful in history, and victory in war was seen as a key attribute for a successful emperor. **Monuments** celebrating Roman military conquests were constructed all over the empire.

Roman armies played a major role in other activities, such as road-building, administration, and tax-collecting. These troops were stationed across the empire and coordinated by a highly efficient bureaucracy.

## The Roman Army

The Roman army was extensively reformed and enlarged by Augustus, and by around 150 CE it probably employed almost half a million men. Its strength and success lay in a complex mix of training, tactics, technology, manpower, and loyalty. The backbone of the Roman army was its **legions**, each made up of around 5,500 Roman citizens who served as infantrymen. Augustus had around thirty legions. The **legionaries** were often granted lands in new parts of the empire upon retirement.

The legions were supported by auxiliary units of provincial non-citizens who could support the legions as cavalrymen, infantrymen, or specialists like archers and slingers. Loyalty was encouraged by the promise of Roman citizenship on discharge.

## Conquest and Captives

The highest accolade for a Roman emperor was to be celebrated as a victor and a conqueror of new lands. Such success is shown on art from statues to coins. In Rome, and also throughout the empire, many emperors displayed their military prowess on major monuments such as triumphal arches. The most famous portrayal of any Roman campaign is on a column marking the tomb of Emperor Trajan (ruled 98–117 CE) and commemorating his defeat of the Dacians.

These victory monuments featured a variety of images. Depictions of defeated or dejected “barbarians” were used either as symbols of conquest or as representations of noteworthy resistance by noble adversaries. Victory was represented as a winged goddess, holding a wreath and palm branch.



4  
Statue fragment showing a captive “barbarian,” ca. 160–70 CE  
Ramleh, Egypt  
Marble  
The British Museum, 1973,0330.5  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

- 4 A bearded “barbarian” is shown with his hands tied behind his back, seated next to the skirts of a larger figure of Victory. He is wearing a Phrygian hat, which was worn in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Depictions of defeated or suppliant captives are found throughout the Roman world, emphasizing that one of Rome’s great missions was to “vanquish the proud,” as Virgil puts it in his epic poem *The Aeneid*.

The clothing and the long, unkempt beard and hair of the man in this statue identify him as a non-Roman. Non-Romans were pejoratively referred to as “barbarians.” This figure may represent not a specific person, but rather the idea of outsiders being conquered by seemingly invincible Rome.

While Rome could and did conquer different cultures by force, brutally crushing any attempted defense, life after battle was a very different story. In fact, the empire’s tolerance and respect for different cultures made it possible for imperial rule to reach far beyond the capital. So long as Roman laws were obeyed, and due respect paid to the emperor, conquered people could continue practicing their religions, social customs, and industries. It was especially in the best interests of the empire to support the provinces in terms of production and trade, as they supplied raw materials and crafts that further enriched Rome.

### Questions

- Why were statues and other representations of Roman military dominance important to Rome? What messages did they communicate?
- Why did Rome allow the conquered regions to maintain their own traditions and beliefs?

### Activity

- Write a letter from the perspective of someone whose territory has been conquered by Rome. Describe the experience of becoming part of the empire, using the following prompts:
  - To whom are you writing and why?
  - Did your people cooperate with the Romans, or did they resist? Did the Romans treat you well or poorly as a result?
  - Did you agree or disagree with fellow community members about how to handle the situation?
  - What is life like now that you live under Roman rule?

## THE ETERNAL CITY

Rome was the largest and most populous city in the Roman Empire. Its inhabitants included Roman citizens, women, children, slaves, and **provincials**. Rome grew significantly in size and splendor under the emperors, with the construction of major monuments such as the **Colosseum**, temples, several enormous bath complexes, aqueducts, triumphal arches, and palaces. Romans were fed by grain from North Africa and entertained at games with gladiators and wild beasts supplied from provinces and realms beyond the frontiers. Exotic goods—including silk, precious stones, incense, and perfumes—poured into the city, mainly from Africa, Arabia, and the Middle and Far East.

### Emperors and Monuments



The Colosseum. © The Trustees of the British Museum

Emperors were determined to leave their mark on Rome with a series of massive building projects. The use of arches and vaults, made possible by the Roman invention of concrete, played a crucial role in the largest structures. A vast number of laborers and artisans transported materials such as marble and timber and constructed and decorated buildings. From the Colosseum to the **Pantheon**, we can witness the sheer scale and innovation of imperial architecture. Many of the monuments still bear their patrons' names—for example, the **Baths of Caracalla**, the **Aqua Claudia**, and the **Arch of Constantine**—immortalizing these rulers forever.

- 5 At times, women fought as gladiators in the arena. The historian Suetonius records that Emperor Domitian (ruled 81–96 CE) liked to watch women fighting by torchlight. Here two gladiatrices, Amazon and Achillia, are shown fighting with shields and swords. The plaque commemorates the two gaining their freedom after successful careers. Women were eventually banned from participating in the games by Septimius Severus (ruled 193–211 CE).

#### Questions

- Why did emperors build monuments?
- Can you name some modern monuments in the United States and whom or what they commemorate?



5 Relief showing two female gladiators, 1st–2nd century CE  
Halicarnassus (modern Bodrum), Turkey  
Marble  
The British Museum, 1847,0424.19  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

## Glory of the Gods

As well as raising monuments in their own names, imperial family members constructed religious buildings and monuments to honor the gods. This also helped the public to associate them with deities.

The main gods worshipped by the Romans were the twelve Greek deities who lived on Mount Olympus. The Romans also accepted and adopted gods from other cultures, particularly those from the East. This led to the worship of a huge array of different gods and goddesses—some very personal and domestic, others public and ceremonial.

## The Main Roman (Greek) Deities



Statuette of Jupiter, about 1st–3rd century CE  
Probably Italy or France  
Bronze  
The British Museum, 1824,0453.1  
© The Trustees of the British Museum



Statuette of Minerva, about 1st–3rd century CE  
Italy  
Bronze  
The British Museum, 1757,0315.11A  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

Jupiter (Zeus), king of the gods  
Juno (Hera), queen of the gods  
Apollo (Apollo), god of arts, healing, and the sun  
Bacchus (Dionysus), god of wine, drama, and rebirth  
Ceres (Demeter), goddess of agriculture  
Diana (Artemis), goddess of hunting and the moon  
Mars (Ares), god of war  
Mercury (Hermes), god of travelers, merchants, and thieves  
Minerva (Athena), goddess of wisdom, crafts, and war  
Neptune (Poseidon), god of the sea and earthquakes  
Venus (Aphrodite), goddess of love and procreation  
Vulcan (Hephaistos), god of crafts

- 6 Jupiter, king of the gods, holds a thunderbolt, a symbol associated with him.
- 7 Minerva, a daughter of Jupiter, was the goddess of wisdom, crafts, and war, and like her Greek counterpart Athena is shown with a helmet, spear, and breastplate.

Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva formed the Capitoline Triad, the three supreme deities for the Romans. They were worshipped in the main Roman temple on the Capitoline Hill in Rome, which had its origins in the pre-Republican period.

### Question

- Many deities are identified by *attributes*, items they frequently hold or wear in their depictions. Look at the attributes of Jupiter and Minerva. How are these items connected to their roles as deities?

## Christian Rome

The last great monument constructed in Rome before the arrival of Christianity was the Arch of Constantine in 315 CE. Following Emperor **Constantine's** conversion to Christianity, all the major new buildings were churches. St. John Lateran became the seat for the bishops of Rome (later known as popes) in 324 CE, and although Rome's importance as a political center had been waning for over a century, it remained the spiritual heart of the empire. Despite the fall of the western Roman Empire in the fifth century CE, the eastern Roman Empire survived, to be called the **Byzantine Empire**, with its own capital of Constantinople (now Istanbul).



8  
Medallion honoring the city of Constantinople, about 330–47 CE  
Minted in Rome, Italy  
Copper alloy  
The British Museum, R.13024  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

- 8 This medallion was struck to celebrate and commemorate the dedication of Constantine the Great's new city of Constantinople in 330 CE, although Rome remained the capital of the empire at this time. It shows a helmeted personification of Constantinople on the front, and Victory crowning another personification of the city on the reverse.

### Questions

- How did the transition to Christianity affect monuments?
- Why is it important to commemorate significant events?
- What would we know about Rome if they had not commemorated events and created monuments?

### Activity

- Design a modern monument or smaller object (e.g., a medallion or a figurine) to honor a historical or contemporary event or person. Use drawing materials to make a two-dimensional sketch, or use cardstock, chipboard, cardboard, clay, and/or other materials to create a three-dimensional rendering of your commemorative object.
  - What or whom do you want your design to commemorate or represent?
  - What are the important moments of the event or the characteristics of the person to communicate?
  - What kinds of materials would you use for the actual monument or object, and why? Are the materials durable? Are they symbolic?
  - How large would the completed monument or object be?
  - Where would the monument or object be displayed? If it is not intended for public display, how would it be seen by viewers?
  - What feelings do you want the monument or object to evoke in the viewer? Happiness? Curiosity? Fear? Empathy? Nostalgia?

## PEOPLES OF THE EMPIRE

At its height, the Roman Empire was home to around one hundred million people with a complex range of lifestyles and beliefs. They lived throughout what are now regions in western Europe, North Africa, and western Asia, from Britain in the north to Morocco in the south and Iraq in the east.

Officially, to be “Roman” meant that you had the legal rights of a Roman citizen. Citizens could stand for public office and own property, and their status gave them greater legal protection, often guaranteed that their children would become citizens, and ensured that they retained these rights wherever they were in the Roman Empire. In thought and behavior, however, individuals could choose to identify themselves ethnically and culturally as they wished. Common attitudes and values were absorbed, borrowed, or inherited from all the provinces, and these were both influenced by those in Rome and themselves an influence on Roman culture. In such an expansive empire, however, populated by so many different provincial, ethnic, and tribal groupings, significant diversity remained. How people lived their daily lives varied across provinces and changed over time.

### The Northern Provinces

Rome’s first major attempt to conquer lands north of Italy came when Julius Caesar waged his Gallic Wars (58–52 BCE). Gaul and Germania fell, but Britain did not, until Claudius’s invasion of 43 CE. In many ways, the impact of Rome on Gaul, Germany, and Britain was more profound than it had been on more closely related cultures in the Mediterranean. Roman construction in stone, brick, and concrete totally changed the built environment of the northern peoples.

The presence of large multicultural Roman armies had significant cultural and religious influences. The fusing of local traditions with those of the conquerors can most easily be observed in smaller artifacts, especially jewelry and everyday objects. Many of these are found together in hoards, which were buried for safekeeping or for religious reasons.



Gilded statuette of Hercules, 2nd century CE  
Said to be from near Birdoswald on Hadrian’s Wall, England  
Copper alloy  
The British Museum, 1895,0408.1  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

- 9 This youthful Hercules wears a sleeveless tunic with a lion-skin cloak. The exact location on Hadrian’s Wall where it was found is not certain. Emperor Commodus (ruled 177–92 CE) associated himself with Hercules. During his reign, there was much fighting in northern Britain, so the statue is most likely connected to his armies.

Hercules is typically pictured in a cape made from the hide of a legendary lion. There was probably a club in the raised hand of this statue that is now lost. Supposedly the son of the god Zeus and a mortal woman, Hercules was blessed with incredible strength and had many adventures associated with him, including ones that led him to Rome. Zeus and a mortal woman, Hercules was blessed with incredible strength and had many adventures associated with him, including ones that led him to Rome.

#### Questions

- How was the Roman idea of citizenship beneficial to the empire? Think about which people were considered citizens. Discuss the purpose of citizenship and how it could be awarded.
- Why do you think Emperor Commodus chose to associate himself with Hercules?

## North Africa and Egypt

10



Statue of the nymph Cyrene fighting a lion, about 120–50 CE  
Cyrene (near modern Shahhat), Libya  
Marble  
The British Museum, 1861,0725.3  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

Roman North Africa consisted of several provinces: Mauretania in the west, and Africa Proconsularis and Numidia (mostly modern Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria), Cyrenaica (mostly modern Libya), and Egypt in the center and to the east. Each became part of the empire at different times, and each was treated slightly differently. Overall, however, the African provinces prospered from the time of Augustus onward and became among the empire's wealthiest regions in the second century CE.

Egypt had a different status from its neighboring provinces. After Augustus had defeated Cleopatra, the last queen of Egypt, her country was considered the private property of the Roman emperor. Its taxes were used mainly to pay for Roman troops and administrators there, and for centuries its wheat fields produced copious amounts of grain to feed Rome. Because of this, it became the richest province of the empire.

10 Like the Greeks, Romans believed in the mythological origins and foundations of cities—for example, Rome has the story of the twins **Romulus** and **Remus** and the she-wolf. Cyrene in North Africa was thought to have been founded by the god **Apollo** for the huntress **Cyrene**, with whom he had fallen in love after he witnessed her killing a lion.

The sculptor of this statue has captured not only the woman's strength, but also the death throes of the lion. Its paw clutches in vain at the woman's arm, its tongue is extended, and its ribs are clearly visible as it vainly gasps for air. The woman seems unusually large in comparison to the lion—a decision made by the artist to indicate her importance.

### Questions

- When you look at the statue, what can you tell about the person in it? Why do you think Apollo fell in love with her?
- Imagine that you have the power to create a city in honor of someone you admire. What would you name the city, and what would it be like?

## The East

Rome only gradually gained control of the Middle East. The province of Syria was created in 63 BCE and Arabia in 106 CE. Further east, the Romans were in a state of almost constant warfare with first the Parthians and then the Sassanians, based in Iraq and Iran. At the same time, Rome imported numerous luxuries from these eastern provinces, including royal purple dye, linen, glass, and dates. From the edges of the empire and beyond the frontiers, via cities such as Palmyra and Petra, came silk from China; pepper, cotton, garnets, and emeralds from India; and incense and myrrh from Arabia. The wealth of the eastern provinces was legendary, and the governorship of Syria was one of the most sought-after posts in the Roman Empire.



Bust of Serapis, about 300 CE  
Probably Egypt  
Lapis lazuli  
The British Museum, 1912,1016.1  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

11 In the Roman period, **lapis lazuli** was mined in Afghanistan and exported west to the Mediterranean world. It was highly prized for making jewelry and for creating blue pigments for painting. Here a large piece of lapis was carved into a head of the Egyptian god Serapis, a deity who was worshipped throughout the late Roman world, along with his consort Isis.

### Question

- The figures of Hercules, Cyrene, and Serapis were made in different regions and have different characteristics. Look closely at the material, the type, and the subject of each object, and describe the differences. Then look at the figures again and identify how they are similar. If you were depicting a Roman god or hero, what differences or similarities would you choose to emphasize?

### Activities

- Using Roman deities as inspiration, create a drawing or a sculpture of a character with specific attributes and abilities.
  - Is your character imaginary? A person you know?
  - What attributes would be associated with this figure?
  - What powers would we associate with the figure?
  - What would be its purpose? Would it bring good luck, wealth, etc.?
  - How could you represent the attributes and powers?
- Write a story about a character with specific attributes and abilities.
  - Who is the character?
  - What are this character's attributes?
  - Where does this story take place?
  - Would this character be considered heroic, selfless, benevolent, evil, volatile, full of rage, etc.?
  - What is the conflict?
  - How does your story conclude?

## IN MEMORIAM: REMEMBERING THE DEAD

Commemorating the dead was important to people across the Roman Empire. Memorials varied in form and size and reflected different beliefs and cultural practices in different provinces. They ranged from huge civic monuments dedicated to emperors to small inscriptions mourning the personal loss of a family member.

In some cases, funeral monuments and inscriptions celebrated a person's great deeds and achievements, but for the majority of people they were simply a way to record a name and age, personal qualities, relationships, and social status.

Memorials provide a visible and long-lasting reminder of how people wanted themselves, or their families, to be remembered and give us fascinating and lasting insights into the individuals who made up the city and empire of Rome.



12  
Sarcophagus showing the wedding of Bacchus and Ariadne,  
2nd century CE  
Rome, Italy  
Marble  
The British Museum, 1805,0703.130  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

12 Not all funerary art was somber, as demonstrated by the front of this **sarcophagus**, which shows the marriage procession of **Bacchus** and **Ariadne**. Bacchus, god of wine and rebirth, is lounging beneath a small parasol, pouring wine into a bowl held by a satyr. Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos, plays with a garland slung across her body.

The married couple are depicted at far left, riding in a chariot drawn by two **centaur** musicians and guided by a cupid. Behind the centaurs, a woman carries a basket filled with fruit, while in front of her the dancing goat-legged god of the forest, Faunus, kicks the lid off a basket used for housing the sacred snakes of Bacchus. Next come several dancing followers of Bacchus, known as **satyrs** and **maenads**. The god's tutor, Silenus, drunkenly perches on a donkey as a satyr tries to keep him from falling off. A satyr carrying a shepherd's crook encourages the procession, while a naked maenad holds a drum above her head. Several satyrs and childlike figures look back toward Bacchus, while a tiny elephant moves among them.

The figures meant to be perceived as closer to the viewer are depicted in **high relief**, their bodies almost entirely detached from the background, while background figures are depicted in **low relief** to suggest distance.

### Questions

- Why do you think the creators of this sarcophagus chose to highlight the marriage procession of Bacchus and Ariadne?
- How would one's status in life have dictated rituals and remembrances in death in ancient Rome?

### Activity

- Create a simple relief sculpture, using clay or paper materials (like cardboard, chipboard, or cardstock).
  - Plan your scene. What is happening?
  - Use paper and pencil to sketch your relief.
  - How are figures and objects placed? Do they overlap?
  - If you are using paper supplies, draw your objects and figures on a thick piece of cardboard. Then, cut them out and glue them to chipboard or cardstock.
  - If using clay, create a thick slab. Then carve away part of the slab's surface until you have a raised relief image.

## GLOSSARY

<b>Apollo:</b>	A Greek/Roman god of the arts, healing, the sun, and more. He is typically portrayed as a teenager or young man.
<b>Aqua Claudia:</b>	An aqueduct designed to transport water throughout Rome. It was completed by Emperor Claudius in 52 CE.
<b>Arch of Constantine:</b>	A monument that commemorates Constantine's victory over Maxentius in 312 CE.
<b>Ariadne:</b>	A Cretan princess. She is perhaps best known for her role in the story of Theseus and the Minotaur; she gives the hero the thread that enables him to find his way out of the labyrinth.
<b>Augustus (63 BCE–14 CE):</b>	Born Gaius Octavius and referred to as Octavian, he became the first Roman emperor following the assassination of Julius Caesar; he ruled from 27 BCE to 14 CE.
<b>autocratic:</b>	Pertaining to an individual with absolute power.
<b>Bacchus:</b>	Roman god of agriculture, wine, and fertility; known in Greek mythology as Dionysus.
<b>Baths of Caracalla:</b>	Public baths completed in 216 CE. They were named after Emperor Caracalla, who reigned from 211 to 217 CE.
<b>Britons:</b>	People of Celtic origin who lived in the region now known as the United Kingdom before and during the formation of the Roman Empire.
<b>Byzantine Empire:</b>	A continuation of the Roman Empire in the Middle East after its division in 395 CE.
<b>centaur:</b>	A mythological creature with the upper body of a human and the lower body and legs of a horse.
<b>Cleopatra (69–30 BCE):</b>	The last active ruler of Egypt. Egypt became a Roman province following her death.
<b>Colosseum:</b>	An amphitheater built in the 1st century CE in Rome and used for gladiatorial contests and other events.
<b>Constantine (ca. 272–337 CE):</b>	Roman emperor from 306 to 337 CE. He made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire in 324 CE; in 330 CE, he moved his capital from Rome to Byzantium and renamed it Constantinople.
<b>Cyrene:</b>	In Greek mythology, a fierce huntress whom Apollo observed as she wrestled and killed a lion. Apollo fell in love with her and carried her off to North Africa, where he founded the city of Cyrene and made her its queen.
<b>Dacians:</b>	Before and during the reign of the Roman Empire, people who lived in an area of central Europe covering much of the historical region of Transylvania (modern north-central and western Romania).
<b>emperor:</b>	The supreme male ruler of an empire.
<b>empire:</b>	A single political unit, with one supreme ruler, composed of an aggregate of nations or peoples.
<b>Etruscans:</b>	People who lived in the ancient region of Etruria, which corresponds to what is now central Italy.

<b>Gaius Cassius (85–42 BCE):</b>	A prime conspirator in the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BCE.
<b>Gauls:</b>	People who lived in the ancient region of Gaul, which encompassed modern-day France and parts of Belgium, western Germany, and northern Italy.
<b>Greek idealism:</b>	The use of balance and accurate proportions by ancient Greek artists to convey aesthetic beauty.
<b>Hades:</b>	In Greek mythology, the name of both the underworld inhabited by the dead and the god who rules there; the god is known in Roman mythology as Pluto.
<b>Hermes:</b>	In Greek mythology, the messenger of the gods, and himself the god of travelers, invention, commerce, and eloquence; known in Roman mythology as Mercury.
<b>high relief:</b>	A type of sculpture where the figures are projected strongly from the background.
<b>imperial:</b>	Of or pertaining to an empire or its ruler.
<b>Julius Caesar (100–44 BCE):</b>	A Roman general and statesman, and dictator of Rome from 49 BCE until his assassination in 44 BCE.
<b>Junius Brutus (85–42 BCE):</b>	A Roman politician and a conspirator in the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BCE.
<b>lapis lazuli:</b>	A semiprecious stone valued for its deep blue color.
<b>legion:</b>	A division of the ancient Roman army, made up of 4,000–6,000 soldiers. There were about 30 legions in the Roman army.
<b>legionaries:</b>	Infantrymen in the Roman army.
<b>low relief:</b>	A type of sculpture where the figures are projected slightly from the background; also known as bas-relief.
<b>maenads:</b>	Female followers of the god Bacchus; known as bacchantes in Roman mythology.
<b>Mark Antony (83–30 BCE):</b>	Roman general under Julius Caesar in the Gallic wars. Having formed a personal and political alliance with the Egyptian queen Cleopatra, he was defeated by Octavian at Actium.
<b>magistrates:</b>	Elected officials of the Roman Republic who exercised varying degrees of power and responsibility.
<b>metropolis:</b>	Any major urban area; a city.
<b>monarchy:</b>	A nation or government ruled by or in the name of a king or queen whose power is either absolute or limited by a constitution.
<b>monument:</b>	A statue, building, or other structure made to commemorate a famous or notable person or event.
<b>myth:</b>	A story or series of related stories based on tradition or legend, originating via oral history and incorporating a society's beliefs about the origins of the world, the causes of natural events, and the origins of the society's customs and practices.
<b>Octavian:</b>	Another name for Gaius Octavius, who would later be known as Augustus after becoming the first Roman emperor in 27 BCE.

<b>Pantheon:</b>	An ancient Roman building known for its unique architecture. It was completed by Emperor Hadrian and dedicated in the 2nd century CE. The well-preserved structure remains intact today.
<b>Persephone:</b>	In Greek mythology, the daughter of Demeter and Zeus. She was carried off by Hades to the underworld and thereafter permitted to spend only half of each year back in the world. The myth presents this cycle of loss and return as the origin of the seasons.
<b>provincial:</b>	An inhabitant of a province—that is, a region outside the capital city of a country.
<b>Remus:</b>	In Roman mythology, a founder of Rome, with his twin brother, Romulus.
<b>Romulus:</b>	In Roman mythology, a founder of Rome, with his twin brother, Remus, whom he killed.
<b>sarcophagus:</b>	A carved stone coffin that often includes images and inscriptions.
<b>satyrs:</b>	Half-human and half-beast fertility spirits; often companions of Bacchus.
<b>Senate:</b>	Ancient Rome’s governing and advisory council. It proved to be the longest-lasting element in the Roman constitution.
<b>veneration:</b>	The feeling or expression of great respect, awe, or reverence.

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