

## Reading Comprehension

### What did Romans do in their spare time?

Most people in Roman times did not have much spare time, they were too busy working. They liked board games. We know this because archaeologists have found counters and dice in the ground.

The Romans enjoyed watching fights between gladiators, and fights between people and animals. These bloodthirsty shows were put on in front of crowds in large arenas called amphitheatres. Gladiators fought one another, usually in pairs. They also fought wild animals such as lions or bears. When a gladiator was beaten (but still alive), the audience would wave scarves or put their thumbs out if they wanted him killed. If he'd fought well, and they wanted him to live, they would close their thumbs onto their fingers. Different types of gladiators used different weapons. For example, a man with a sword and shield might fight a man with a three-pronged spear or trident, and a big net.

Romans enjoyed the theatre. Most plays were funny comedies, though there were serious tragedies as well. Actors often wore masks to show whether their character was happy or sad! They also wore wigs - an old man had a white wig, a slave had a red wig. Roman emperors put on free shows at

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theatres and amphitheatres as it was a good way to make themselves popular.

In Rome there was a huge stadium called the Circus Maximus, used for chariot races. Chariot races were held in Britain too, which were thrilling but very dangerous. Chariots were small two-wheeled carts, driven by one man and pulled by four galloping horses. They raced around an oval track. There were often smashes during the seven-lap races.

1. Why did many Romans have little spare time?
2. What is an amphitheatre?
3. How did actors show whether their characters were happy or sad?
4. What is a chariot?
5. Why do you think putting on free shows could help to make an emperor more popular?
6. Why do you think that gladiator fights no longer happen today?



## A day in the life of Antonius



My name is Antonius, son of Aquilus the Senator. We live in a large Villa. Every day, I wake up and get ready for school and I put on a toga and a pair of leather boots. I eat breakfast with my family which means that I have to wait for my mother and sisters to get ready and they take far too long to get dressed. That makes me even hungrier!

My mother, Claudia and my sisters, Amica and Aurelia, like to make their skin white with chalk and highlight their eyebrows with crushed ants eggs, which I think is disgusting!

Before breakfast, we pray to the Gods. There are quite a few to worship and Mum never forget to pray to Venus, the Goddess of beauty! Our breakfast is usually made by our slaves, and they make me my favourite – fresh fruit, olives and fish – yummy! My friends usually stop at the bakery for pancakes on the way to school, but my family like to lie on our sofas in a circle when we eat. Most children here are poor so they can't afford to pay the teachers. Instead of going to school, they have to work in the fields pulling up weeds and ploughing. Because my family are rich I can go to school every day *and* I have my own slave to walk me there and back! It's nice being rich – I heard that poor families in the towns have to share a toilet too – gross!

At school, we learn maths and read poetry from scrolls. I am learning to write at the moment and I practise on a tablet. A tablet is covered in bees wax and I write words into it with a small metal stylus.



After school I go home I love to play board games before dinner, sometimes with Casius the slave boy when he isn't working. Every night our family eat a feast, with lots of meat, herbs and vegetables. My favourite part of the dinner is the gravy called *liquamen* which is made with rotten fish!



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What does Antonius wear?

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What are the names of his sisters?

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Write two things that happen before Antonius eats his breakfast

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What do poor Roman children have to do instead of going to school?

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What does Antonius do at school?

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### Something a little easier:

#### A day in the life of Antonius



My name is Antonius, son of Aquilus the Senator. We live in a big \_\_\_\_\_. Every day, I wake up and get ready for school and I put on a \_\_\_\_\_ and a pair of boots.

Before breakfast, we pray to the \_\_\_\_\_. Our breakfast is usually made by our \_\_\_\_\_. When we eat breakfast, we lie down on a sofa.

Most Roman children here are poor so they can't afford to pay the teacher. They work in the \_\_\_\_\_. It's nice being rich – poor families have to share a toilet - yuck!



At \_\_\_\_\_, we learn maths and read. I am learning to write on a \_\_\_\_\_.



Every night our family eat a feast. The best part of dinner is the gravy called \_\_\_\_\_ which is made with rotten \_\_\_\_\_!

Reading Comprehension



fish



villa



gods



fields



toga



tablet



slaves



school