

Lesson 4 The Daily Life of Romans

MAIN IDEAS

Culture Roles in Roman family life and society were clearly defined.

Belief Systems Roman religious beliefs were influenced by other cultures and linked with government.

Culture Although they were overcrowded and dirty, Roman cities were also places of interesting innovations and entertainments.

Family and Society

ESSENTIAL QUESTION How were the family and society organized?

Women

- Women could inherit property but couldn't vote
- Women ran household, cared for children
- Father was head of family, owned property

Children

- Most educated at home; rich families sent boys to private school
- Girls learned household skills, married around age 14

Social Classes

- Patricians, wealthy plebeians formed upper class
- Middle class of businessmen, officials developed
- Farmers formed one of lower classes
- Slaves were lowest, largest class—one-third of population
 - worked in mines, on estates, as servants, in clerical positions
 - revolts were common, but none succeeded

REVIEW QUESTION

What were the roles in a typical Roman family?

Roman Beliefs

ESSENTIAL QUESTION What religious beliefs did the Romans hold?

Religious Influences

- Early Romans worshiped nature spirits, household gods
 - later, they adopted Etruscan rituals and borrowed Greek gods

Religion and Public Life

- Religion and government were linked in Rome
 - priests were government officials, emperor was head of church
- Roman gods that symbolized state were honored in public ceremonies
- Over time, living emperor worshiped as god

REVIEW QUESTION

What influences helped form Roman religion?

Life in Roman Cities

ESSENTIAL QUESTION What was life like in Roman cities?

The Crowded City

- At height of Roman Empire, nearly 1 million people in Rome
- People moved to Rome from all over empire
- Poor, unemployed lived in dirty, noisy, crowded city center
 - lacked food; government gave free grain to prevent unrest
- Rich had large country homes, went to theater, had dinner parties
 - ate food like dates, oysters, ham

Structures of City Life

- Built sewers, plumbing systems to improve sanitation
- **Aqueducts** brought water to towns through pipes and channels
 - mostly underground, but also over high bridges
- Public baths were used by all classes to bathe and to socialize

Roman Sports

- Government provided entertainment to distract Romans from problems
 - Circus Maximus—large oval stadium for chariot races
 - **Colosseum**—famous arena
- **Gladiators**—trained warriors who fought to the death in arenas

REVIEW QUESTION

How did the Roman government try to solve some of the problems of city life?

Lesson Summary

- Family life and social classes were important in ancient Rome.
- Romans worshiped many gods both privately at home and in public ceremonies.
- Roman city life was challenging, but the government tried to ease some of its problems.

Why It Matters Now . . .

Ancient Rome was a mixture of different cultures and beliefs, just like many modern societies.