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Document-Based Activities on Ancient Rome

Using Primary Sources and the Internet

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DOCUMENT-BASED ACTIVITIES ON ANCIENT ROME

TEACHER INTRODUCTION

Description:

Students of ancient Roman civilization often learn about Roman architecture, daily life, religion, and government. The activities in this book cover each of these topics as well as Roman maps and the Roman view of the world. As students proceed through these activities, they will gain an understanding of what it might have been like to live in ancient Rome, what the Romans emphasized and valued, and how Roman civilization compares to our own.

Students will begin by learning about the Roman aqueducts, a major feat of engineering and urban planning. They'll then investigate various aspects of Roman daily life, including school and work. They'll consider the role of religion in daily life, examining how the Romans worshipped gods of the household. They'll read excerpts that discuss the Roman system of government, and they'll compare this system to the United States government. Finally, they'll analyze some Roman maps and gain insight into the Roman view of the world.

Unit Objectives:

Knowledge: students will

- discuss why the Romans built the aqueducts, and hypothesize how Rome might have been different had the aqueducts not been built
- assess aspects of Roman daily life
- read and answer questions about religion in Roman daily life
- read about and analyze the Roman system of government, and compare it to the U.S. government
- analyze three Roman maps, and discuss what the maps reveal about the Romans' view of the world

Skills: students will

- analyze, evaluate, and interpret primary source documents, including maps
- use evidence to draw conclusions

Prior Knowledge Required:

Students should be familiar with the location of Rome, the geographical difference between the city of Rome and the Roman Empire, and the fact that Roman civilization was influenced by the Greeks.

Lesson Format:

Each lesson consists of two parts: a teacher's page and a student handout or worksheet. The teacher's page contains an overview, objectives, materials (including Web addresses), directions, discussion questions, and an extension activity. Each student handout contains an introduction, directions, Web addresses, and questions to be answered about the source.

Assessment:

Students should be assessed on how accurately they answer factual questions and how thoughtfully they answer open-ended questions. An answer key containing suggested answers can be found in the Appendix. Point values are not assigned to questions on the worksheets to allow teachers to evaluate students according to standards that have been previously developed and maintained in the classroom. It is recommended, however, that teachers evaluate each student worksheet in conjunction with that student's participation in class discussions. Suggested rubrics are included in the Appendix.

Additional Sources:

The Appendix contains answer keys, an annotated list of Web sites on Ancient Rome for students and for teachers, rubrics, and supplementary materials available from www.socialstudies.com.

OVERVIEW: ANCIENT ROME

The history of ancient Rome is typically divided into two major periods: the Roman Republic (509 BCE–27 BCE) and the Roman Empire (27 BCE–393 CE). The Republic began when the Etruscan monarchy was driven out of Rome in 509 BCE. Over time, the institutions of the Republican government developed. The Empire began in 27 BCE after twenty years of civil war, when Octavian defeated the army of Antony and Lepidus, changed his name to Augustus, and became the first emperor of Rome.

The Roman government was similar to that of the Greeks but introduced the practice of representative democracy. The three main divisions of government included the consuls, the Senate, and the people. A system of checks and balances and separation of powers prevented any of these groups from gaining too much authority, not unlike the way the United States government works. This power structure changed, however, during the Roman Empire, when emperors had tremendous authority and left little to the people.

As anyone who has visited Rome has seen firsthand, the Romans were known for their architectural and engineering feats, many of which still exist. For example, the Roman government practiced advanced urban planning by constructing 11 main aqueducts to bring water into the city. These aqueducts helped the city cope with an expanding population and had the added benefit of providing water for an extensive underground sewage system.

Religion was very important to the Romans, who believed in numerous major and minor gods, goddesses, and spirits. The major gods and goddesses of the Roman Pantheon were adapted from the Greek deities; thus, the Greek Zeus performed the same functions as the Roman Jupiter. The minor gods, called the *numen*, were also very important to the Roman people. The *Lares* and *Penates*, for example, were the guardian spirits of the house, and pantry or hearth, respectively. Every Roman family had its own *Lares* and *Penates*, to whom they would offer part of each evening's meal as a sign of respect.

Some interesting primary sources exist to tell us about Roman work, school, and recreation. Adult men worked in agriculture, business, trade, government, and other professions that are familiar to us today. Women commonly worked in agriculture, taverns, and laundries, and as midwives, wet-nurses, florists, and more. In school, one of a student's main goals was to become a good public speaker. Wealthy schoolboys would take their own slaves to school, where they studied reading, writing, and math (and Latin and Greek grammar and literature for the older children). When not working or in school, Romans enjoyed the theater, watching gladiators fight at the Coliseum, chariot racing, and track and field.

The Romans, like civilizations before and after them, created maps showing the world as they understood it. The Italian peninsula was generally toward the center of the map, with such remote lands as the British Isles and India at the peripheries. As the Roman Empire expanded, the Romans learned more about the areas into which their new

roads ventured. In addition to the desire to maintain trade and control of the empire, Romans expressed curiosity about the outside world. Once Emperor Augustus had rid the Mediterranean of pirates, wealthy Romans began to take vacations around the Mediterranean, including the Italian peninsula, Greece, and Turkey, with an aim to see the historical and mythological sites they'd read about.

As you will see throughout the activities in this book, the ancient Romans shared many things with modern American culture. Governmental structures, such as separation of powers; sophisticated methods of transporting water into a thirsty city; a focus on education; and an interest in recreation all share similarities with the way we live. Still, many differences exist, including religious views, occupations, and views of the world. As you proceed through the activities in this unit, try to think of ways in which to compare and contrast Roman civilization to our own.

Roman Aqueducts Teacher Page

Overview:

In order to increase water supply to the city of Rome, the ancient Romans built eleven main aqueducts that channeled water into the city. The Romans went to lengths not only to construct the aqueducts but also to make sure the water entering the city was as clean as possible, having deposited its sediments at settling basins along the way. According to Sextus Julius Frontinus, a Roman water commissioner who wrote a detailed account of the aqueduct system, the aqueducts not only provided the city with more water but also improved its health and cleanliness.

In this lesson, students will view photographs of the aqueducts as they appear today, and they'll read excerpts from Frontinus' account. They'll conclude by discussing why the Romans built the aqueducts and hypothesizing how Rome might have been different had the aqueducts not been built.

Objectives:

Students will:

- look at pictures of ancient Roman aqueducts, and answer questions about what they see
- read excerpts from the writings of an ancient Roman water commissioner who described the aqueducts, and answer questions about what he says
- write proposals pretending they're ancient Romans who have been put in charge of designing a new aqueduct for the city

Web Sites Used in this Lesson:

Archaeology 291: The Roman Aqueducts and Water Systems
<http://academic.bowdoin.edu/classics/research/moyer/index.shtml>

This page lists the eleven Roman aqueducts and provides sketches or photographs of each one. Students will look at Aqua Alexandrina, Aqua Traiana, and Aqua Marcia. In addition, students will view a photo of the Aqueduct in Caesarea at <http://alpha.furman.edu/~mcknight/cr7.htm>.

Sextus Julius Frontinus: The Aqueducts of Rome
http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Frontinus/De_Aquis/text*.html

Students will read paragraphs 4,7,87, and 88.

The PBS NOVA Online “Watering Ancient Rome” pages (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/lostempires/roman/watering.html>) provide an interview

with an expert on Rome's water distribution system. These two pages contain information pertinent to this lesson in general and to the Wrap-Up activity in particular. You might therefore want to have students read these pages after they look at the primary source materials.

You might also want to use this Web article for some background information on the aqueducts and their engineering:

InfoRoma: Roman Aqueducts: <http://www.inforoma.it/feature.php?lookup=aqueduct>

Strategies:

Ask students to describe some of the ways in which American cities get their water today. They'll probably mention lakes and rivers, and they might also mention canals or aqueducts. Explain that people have built aqueducts to transport water from lakes or rivers to cities or agricultural regions. One example is the California Aqueduct, which carries water from northern to southern California through the San Joaquin Valley. (Students can view a virtual reality movie of the California Aqueduct at <http://geoimages.berkeley.edu/GeoImages/QTVR/CentralCalif/CaliforniaAqueduct.html>).

If students have already learned some things about ancient Roman architecture and city planning, ask them to describe some of the things they know. What types of buildings did the Romans construct? What was the city of Rome like in ancient times? Did the Romans believe in making continuous improvements to the city, or did they tend to let the city stagnate or fall into disrepair?

Have students complete the worksheet.

Wrap-Up:

Discuss students' responses to the questions on the worksheet.

Ask students to hypothesize the answers to these questions: "Why did the Romans build the aqueducts? Why were they proud of them? What might have happened if they'd never built them? How might the city of Rome have been different?" Discuss their ideas as a class.

Extension Activity:

Have students carry the concluding exercise from the worksheet (#11) a step further by researching one of the actual Roman aqueducts and pretending they're planning to build it. Ask them to research the logistics involved in the design and construction of this aqueduct and to base their proposals on these facts. All of the Web sites mentioned in this lesson would be helpful for this task.

Roman Aqueducts Student Worksheet

Introduction:

As the population of Rome expanded, the Romans realized that they needed to increase their water supply. They therefore built aqueducts to transport water from rivers into the city. In this activity, you'll see photographs showing what the aqueducts look like today. You'll also read what a Roman water commissioner had to say about the aqueducts.

All Web links for this lesson can be found at:

<http://www.socialstudies.com/ancientlinks.html>

Directions:

Go to the following Web pages to see photographs of the Roman aqueducts as they look today. Then answer the questions below:

Aqua Alexandrina

<http://academic.bowdoin.edu/classics/research/moyer/html/alexandrina.shtml>

Aqua Traiana

<http://academic.bowdoin.edu/classics/research/moyer/html/traiana1.shtml>

The Aqueduct in Caesarea

<http://alpha.furman.edu/~mcknight/cr7.htm>

1. Aqueducts flowed both underground and above ground. The ones you see here flowed above ground. About how high off the ground do you think the tallest one in these pictures is? Why do you think the Romans built them to this height?
2. What are the aqueducts made of? Do they look like they were solidly built? Why or why not?
3. How do you think these structures would have helped the city of Rome?

8. Why was Aqua Marcia built?

9. How much of Aqua Marcia flowed underground? How much flowed above ground?

Now scroll down to sections 87 and 88, where Frontinus talks about the overall impacts of the aqueducts. Answer this question:

10. According to Frontinus, how did the aqueducts benefit the city of Rome? Name at least four examples.

11. Imagine that you're an ancient Roman who works for the government. You have been charged with the task of designing an aqueduct that will bring new water to the city of Rome. List the things you will need to investigate before completing your design (for example, where the water will come from, the route it will take, what geographic obstacles the aqueduct will need to cross, how long each section will be) and then write a proposal for your aqueduct. Your proposal should address everything on the list of things you need to investigate, and it should also explain how the new aqueduct will benefit Rome.