



Big Era Four
Expanding Networks of Exchange and Encounter
1200 BCE - 500 CE



Closeup Teaching Unit 4.5.2
Roman Slavery
100 BCE – 450 CE

PowerPoint Presentation
Roman Slavery

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Why this unit?

Slaves made up a substantial part of the population in ancient Rome. According to some estimates, during the first century CE, they may have comprised one third of the population of the empire. Wealthy Romans owned hundreds or thousands of slaves, but even the average person could own a few. Some slaves even had their own slaves (*vicarii*).

Slaves performed a wide variety of jobs in Rome. Although some tasks, such as domestic service, did not generate revenue for the master, there were many others, such as [farming](#) and mining, that did. In some cases, slave labor brought the owner considerable financial gain.

In this unit students will learn about the ways in which the Romans acquired slaves. They will also learn about the life of slaves and about the ways in which they could escape [slavery](#), both through manumission (legal freeing of slaves) and through various forms of resistance.

Unit objectives

Upon completing this unit, students will be able to:

1. Describe which sources supplied slaves in imperial Rome.
2. Describe what kind of work slaves had to do and the economic importance of some of their jobs.
3. Explain the treatment slaves received at the hands of their masters.
4. Analyze the reasons and forms of slave resistance.
5. Assess the reliability of [primary sources](#) as historical evidence.

Time and materials

This unit will take 5 to 7 class periods to complete.

An LCD projector is required for showing the PowerPoint presentation associated with this unit. Students will also need access to world history textbooks for the extension activities.

Author

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The historical context

Evidence indicates that there were already slaves in Rome in the early first millennium BCE, although at first their numbers were small. This changed with the third-century BCE wars of conquest, when Rome became a slave society and began using the slave mode of production. Many citizens lost their farmland because they were away for extended periods fighting in the

Roman legions. Aristocrats then bought up their land with the profits of war. They needed workers for their increasingly larger holdings, but they did not want to employ free citizens who might be more useful if they remained available for the army and future wars. In addition, free citizens did not want to work for others. It appears, then, that their only alternative was to use larger numbers of slaves to work the land.

Quantifying slaves in imperial Rome is a difficult task. Not only are the sources unreliable, but the numbers of slaves varied by region and over time. During the second century BCE, regions more dependent on [agriculture](#), like Italy, would have required, and obtained, more slaves than those less dependent on agriculture. By the second century CE, there were fewer slaves working the land empire-wide. Some scholars believe that, for reasons not fully analyzed, landowners switched from viticulture (cultivation of grapes, especially for wine-making) to cereal production. This ended the slave-mode of production, but not slavery. In addition, the supply of slaves, discussed below, could not have remained constant. But although numbers are elusive, scholars, using a variety of methods, have come up with estimates that range from 10 to 35 percent of the total population in the first century CE.

Besides the difficulties involved in the quantification of slaves in imperial Rome,¹ an investigation of the slave supply is also complicated. Scholars disagree on how to interpret the evidence, and the supply fluctuated over time. It is clear, however, that the Romans owned and used slaves during this period. And for numerous reasons, including an increase in the demand, as well as slave deaths and manumissions, masters needed to acquire new slaves.

War was a common source of slaves. Before the early third century BCE, the victor in a war could take some or all the enemy captive. But the market for slaves at Rome was not large, and the captives were often ransomed by their families, exchanged for the other side's prisoners, or sold to dealers who resold them elsewhere. This changed during the third century BCE, when the victorious Romans began to enslave and sell many of the captives because of the demand for slave labor in agriculture.

The Romans did not depend only on war as a source of slaves. New ones could also be obtained through natural reproduction among the existing slave population, the exposure of infants, piracy, kidnapping by brigands, the sale of one's children or of oneself, and long-distance trade with communities beyond the frontiers.

Concerning the economic importance of slavery in imperial Rome, some masters generated substantial income from the labor of their slaves. These slaves performed a large variety of rural and urban jobs, often working side by side with free people. But the services of many others, such as messengers, entertainers, and personal attendants, cannot be measured in economic

¹ A note on chronology: Throughout the unit reference is made to imperial Rome, although the title of the unit indicates that it covers five and a half centuries, beginning in 100 BCE and ending in 450 CE. This obeys to the need of including important sources and events relating to the late Republic that will give students a better understanding of Roman slavery.

terms. Some masters owned many non-economically-productive slaves simply to show off their wealth.

The lives that slaves led differed greatly depending on who owned them and what kind of work they did. Some owners felt affection for their slaves and treated them humanely. Perhaps they also thought it was a good idea to take care of their investment. Other owners abused their slaves by beating them, torturing them, and even killing them. It is known that many abused slaves reacted against their masters by running away. Others sought supernatural help, and a few killed their masters or started a rebellion, as in the case of Spartacus.

There never was an attempt to abolish slavery in Rome. Even former slaves did nothing to eliminate slavery and were themselves sometimes slave-owners. But it is known that Rome was unique among slave-owning societies in that slaves were regularly manumitted. If this was done following certain formalities, the ex-slave became a Roman citizen. Although some public offices were closed to them, a freedman or freedwoman's child had, at least in theory, the same opportunities as other free-born citizens.



**Kirk Douglas
in the movie
“Spartacus”**

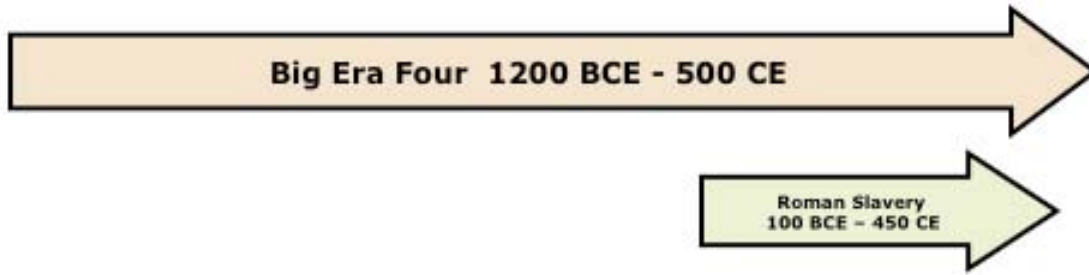


**Mosaic with two slaves serving wine to a man. Undated.
Bardo Museum, Tunis**

Source: VRoma, http://www.vroma.org/images/mcmanus_images/man_slaves.jpg

Sources: Keith R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, *passim*; Moses I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1980, *passim*; Keith Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, *passim*; Sandra Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status at Rome: A Study of the Occupational Inscriptions* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), *passim*; Walter Scheidel, “Quantifying the Sources of Slaves in the Early Roman Empire,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 87 (1997), *passim*; Thomas Wiedemann, *Slavery* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), *passim*. Source of image of Spartacus in the 1960 movie: The Internet Movie Database, <http://www.imdb.com/media/rm1658691072/tt0054331>.

This unit in the Big Era Timeline

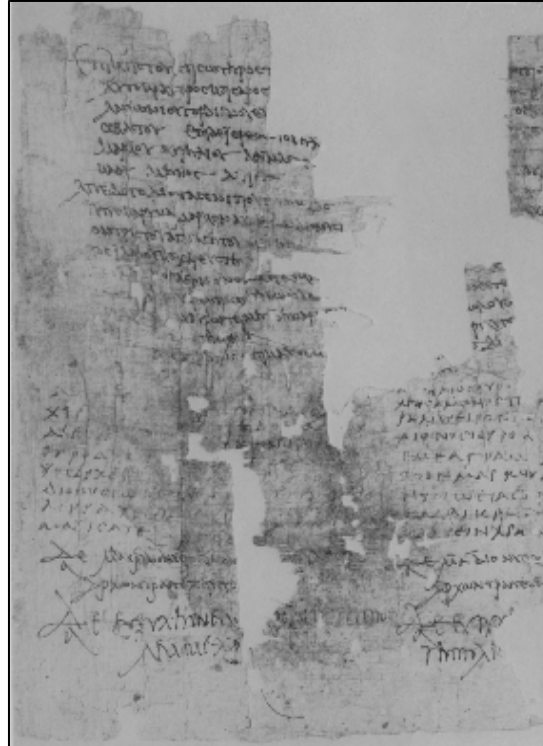


Four female slaves dressing a woman's hair
Relief from a family tomb in Neumagen, Germany. Undated.

Landesmuseum Trier. Source: VRoma,
http://www.vroma.org/images/mcmanus_images/toilette2.jpg

Introductory Activity

Before viewing the PowerPoint presentation ([PowerPoint Overview Presentation: Roman Slavery](#)), distribute Student Handout 0 (Graphic Organizer). Ask students to list everything they already know about each topic. Tell them that if they know very little, or nothing, it is all right. Ask them to save their organizers and, after they finish working on the unit, have them write in the last column what they found out about each topic.



**Papyrus found at Oxyrhynchus, Egypt,
recording the sale of a slave girl on the island of Rhodes**

First half of the third century CE

Source: John F. Oates, "A Rhodian Auction Sale of a Slave Girl,"
The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology 55 (1969), 195.

Introductory Activity***Student Handout 0—Graphic Organizer***

	What I know	What I learned
Way(s) of becoming a slave		
Life of a slave		
Manumission		
Abuse and resistance		

Lesson 1

Becoming a Slave in Rome

Preparation

Make one copy of Student Handouts 1.1, 1.2, and 1.4 for each student. Make 10 copies of Student Handout 1.3 for each student, one for each primary source document.

Introduction

In this lesson students will learn about the slave supply in imperial Rome. Divide the students into small groups. If time is limited the teacher may assign only a few of the documents in Student Handout 1.2 to each group. In this case, students may share their findings with the other groups.

Activities

1. Distribute Student Handout 1.1 (The Slave Supply: Introductory Essay). Ask students to read this essay and discuss it as a class. If this is assigned as homework, the discussion can take place the following day.
2. Distribute Student Handouts 1.2 (The Slave Supply: Primary Source Documents), 1.3 (SOAPS for Primary Source Documents), and 1.4 (Vocabulary Words and Terms), which defines the terms that appear in boldface in Student Handout 1.2. Ask students to analyze the primary sources and then answer the SOAPS questions on Student Handout 1.3.

Extension activity: Ask students to research the slave supply in the United States, Brazil, or the Caribbean in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and then create a Venn diagram showing the similarities and differences between Roman and modern slavery. Instead of using the diagram, you may ask students to write a 3-paragraph essay comparing the slave supply in the Americas to the sources of slaves in ancient Rome. Have students share their work with the class.

Assessment

Based on Lesson 1, ask students to list the most important information about the slave supply in imperial Rome that they think should be included in a world history textbook. They should explain how they arrived at the choices they made, including how they decided on what was “most important.” What information about this topic, in addition to what is presented in Lesson 1, would they like to see included, if it could be found? Why? What might lead someone else to make different choices?

Lesson 1

Student Handout 1.1—The Slave Supply: Introductory Essay

In imperial Rome slaves were supplied from many sources. One of them was war. That does not mean that the Romans waged war for the sole purpose of capturing slaves. After all, there was never the guarantee that the Romans would win and that they would be able to enslave people. But some wars in which the Romans were victorious supplied very large numbers of slaves. Not all captives, however, were deprived of their freedom and taken to Rome. Some captives were ransomed by their families, exchanged for the other side's prisoners, or sold to slave dealers (*mangones* or *venalicii*), who frequently followed Roman armies.

Slaves were also obtained through the natural reproduction of the existing slave population, which is known as "slave-breeding." This source of new slaves was so important that the law allowed the buyer of a female slave to get a replacement or a refund from the seller in case the slave could not have children.

Slaves were also obtained through infant exposure. Some parents were too poor to afford raising another child. Others, who were well-off, did not want to have to divide the inheritance among too many children. There is evidence that more girls than boys became foundlings, because girls were not valued as highly as boys. Besides children who were abandoned, others were simply sold by their parents. Desperate grown-ups even sold themselves into slavery!

Slaves could also be "imported," and there is evidence of extensive long-distance trade with communities beyond the frontiers. During the empire, slaves came from Britannia, Dacia (present-day Romania), Germania, and even from Arabia and the region of the Black Sea. But even within the empire slaves could be sold and re-sold. Some places, like Delos, had permanent markets, others had periodic markets, and there were everyday, small-scale private transactions in which one or more slaves passed into the hands of a new master.

Within the frontiers, piracy and kidnapping also supplied numerous slaves. Although this practice was illegal, it still took place. Practically anyone could become a slave this way. When Julius Caesar was young, he was kidnapped by Cilician pirates. If his friends had not paid his ransom in a timely manner, the pirates could have sold him into slavery. And in the fifth century CE, Galatians (from a region in modern-day Turkey) were famous for descending upon North African villages and kidnapping the inhabitants.

Sources: Keith R. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), *passim*; William V. Harris, "Child-Exposure in the Roman Empire," *Journal of Roman Studies* 84 (1994), *passim*; Walter Scheidel, "Quantifying the Sources of Slaves in the Early Roman Empire," *Journal of Roman Studies* 87 (1997), *passim*.

Lesson 1

Student Handout 1.2—The Slave Supply: Primary Source Documents

Document A

The *Digest* was a compilation of more than 700 years of Roman legislation enacted under the emperor Justinian in the early sixth century CE. This selection shows that war was a source of slavery:

... Slavery is an institution of the *ius gentium*, whereby someone is against nature made subject to the ownership of another. Slaves (*servi*) are so-called, because generals have a custom of selling their prisoners and thereby *preserving* rather than killing them; ... When a place is captured by an enemy ... freemen become slaves ...

Source: *The Digest of Justinian* 1.5.4 and 11.7.36, Vol. I, trans. Alan Watson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 15 and 354.

Document B

Velleius Paterculus was a Roman historian who wrote in the first century CE. Sometimes large numbers of people were captured in one war alone:

During this period, including the years which immediately followed and those of which mention has already been made, more than four hundred thousand of the enemy were slain by Gaius Caesar and a greater number were taken prisoners. Many times had he fought in pitched battles, many times on the march, many times as besieger or besieged. Twice he penetrated into Britain, and in all his nine campaigns there was scarcely one which was not fully deserving of a **triumph**. His feats about Alesia [in Gaul] were of a kind that a mere man would scarcely venture to undertake, and scarcely anyone but a god could carry through.

Source: Velleius Paterculus 2.47, *Compendium of Roman History*, trans. Frederick Shipley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1924), 153.

Document C

Suetonius was a second-century-CE Roman writer. In this selection we learn about the abandonment of Gaius Melissus:

Gaius Melissus was born at Spoleto; he was free-born, but abandoned because of an argument between his parents. Because of the interest and efforts of the man who brought him up, he received a higher education and was presented as a gift to Maecenas to use as a grammarian. Because he realized that Maecenas liked him and accepted him as he would a friend, he retained the status of a slave even though his mother claimed his freedom on his behalf, and he preferred his present status to that due to his true birth. For this he was soon freed, and became friendly with Augustus; ...

Source: Suetonius, *Grammarian* 5, qtd. in Thomas Wiedemann, ed., *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1981), 118.

Document D

The *Theodosian Code* was a compilation of fourth- and fifth-century Roman laws, published in 438 CE. This selection is from a law passed by Constantine in the early fourth century CE:

The August Emperor Constantine, to the Italians.

In accordance with the decisions of earlier emperors, any person who lawfully obtains a new-born child in any manner and intends to bring it up, shall have the right to hold it in a state of slavery; so that if after a series of years anyone asserts that it is free, or claims it as his own slave, that person must provide another similar slave or pay an equivalent price.

Source: The *Theodosian Code* 5.10.1, qtd. in Thomas Wiedemann, ed., *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1981), 118-9.

Document E

P. Oxy. 744 is a letter written on papyrus in Egypt in 1 BCE. A man tells his wife to expose their baby if it is a girl:

Hilarion to Alis his [wife], heartiest greetings, and to my dear Berous and Apollonarian. Know that we are still even now in Alexandria. Do not worry if when all the others return I remain in Alexandria. I beg and beseech of you to take care of the little child, and as soon as we receive wages I will send them to you. If—good luck to you!—you bear offspring, if it is a male, let it live; if it is a female, *expose* it. ...

Source: *P. Oxy.* 744, in Mary F. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant, ed., *Women's Life in Greece and Rome: A Sourcebook in Translation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 2005), 187.

Document F

The novelist Longus wrote the story of *Daphnis and Chloe* in the second or third century CE. Although this narrative is fictional, it reflects some aspects of reality that Longus' contemporaries would have recognized:

While pasturing his flock on this estate [near Mitylene] a [slave] goatherd name Lamo found a baby being suckled by a she-goat. ... Naturally he was amazed, and coming closer he discovered a male child, ... he waited until nightfall and brought everything to his wife, Myrtale: the tokens [of identity], the child, and the goat as well. ...

When two years had been accomplished, a [slave] shepherd named Dryas was pasturing his flock on an adjoining farm when he happened upon similar discoveries and sights. ... a newly-lambd ewe kept visiting this shrine of the Nymphs [and feeding another child]. This child was female ... he picked up the baby in the crook of his arm ... And when it was time to drive his flock home, he returned to his farmhouse and told his wife what he had seen, showed her what he had found, and urged her to regard it as a little daughter and raise it ...

[Many years later both babies are recognized by their parents.] What's this I see? What has become of you, my little daughter? Are you still alive too ...? There was a time when I had little to live on: ... During that time a daughter came along. Reluctant to raise her in poverty, I ... abandoned her ...

[The boy's father] Dionysophanes cried out ... We abandoned them both, we have found them both ...

Source: Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe* 1.2-6 and 4.35-6, trans. Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2009), 17-21 and 195.

Document G

Suetonius was a second-century-CE Roman writer. In this selection we read about kidnapping:

Many evil precedents that were harmful to public order had either carried on from the habitual lawlessness of the civil war period, or had actually arisen since peace had been restored. **Brigands** went about openly carrying swords, which they claimed were for self-defense, and in the countryside travelers were kidnapped without discrimination between slave and free, and held in the prisons (*ergastula*) belonging to the landowners; ...

Source: Suetonius, *Augustus* 32.1, qtd. in Thomas Wiedemann, ed., *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1981), 113-4.

Document H

This contract on papyrus records the sale, in 142 CE, of ten-year-old Abaskantis:

In the consulship of L. Cuspius Rufinus and L. Statius Quadratus, at Side, before L. Claudius Auspicatus, **demiurge** and priest of the goddess Roma, on 26 Loos. Pamphilos, otherwise known as Kanopos, son of Aigyptos, from Alexandria, has purchased in the marketplace from Artemidoros, son of Aristokles, the slave girl Abaskantis, or by whatever other name she may be known, a ten-year-old Galatian, for the sum of 280 silver **denarii**. M. Aelius Gavianus **stands surety for** and guarantees the sale. The girl is healthy, in accordance with the Edict of the Aediles ... is free of liability in all respects, is prone neither to wandering nor running away, and is free of epilepsy ...

Source: P. Turner 22, in Keith R. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 2.

Source I

Suetonius was a second-century-CE Roman writer. This selection shows one way of acquiring a slave:

Staberius Eros was a Thracian bought at a public sale, and later set free because of his interest in literature. ...

Source: Suetonius, *Grammarians* 13, qtd. in Thomas Wiedemann, ed., *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1981), 127.

Document J

In 301 CE, the emperor Diocletian published the Edict of Maximum Prices in an attempt to control inflation. It imposed severe penalties on those who charged more than the maximum prices. But the law could not be enforced and was revoked shortly afterwards:

Types of slaves	Prices
[Male slave ...] Between the ages of 16 and 40	30,000 <i>denarii</i>
Female of age above-specified	25,000 <i>denarii</i>
Man between 40 and 60	25,000 <i>denarii</i>
Female of age above-specified	20,000 <i>denarii</i>
Boy between 8 and 16; also girl of age above-specified	20,000 <i>denarii</i>
Man over 60 or under 8	15,000 <i>denarii</i>
Female of age above-specified	10,000 <i>denarii</i>

Note: It is difficult to give a modern dollar equivalent for the value of one *denarius*, especially considering that Diocletian published this edict at a time of rapid inflation. But for comparison it may be useful to keep in mind that a free farm laborer earned 25 *denarii* a day, a painter of pictures 150 *denarii*, and a tailor between 40 and 60 *denarii*, depending on his skills. Students should notice the discrepancy in the prices of slaves depending on age and gender.

Source: Diocletian's Edict of Maximum Prices, *ZPE* 34 (1979), 177, adapted from Thomas Wiedemann, ed., *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1981), 105.



**A defeated barbarian kneels
before the Roman emperor.**

Second century CE

**Relief on sarcophagus. Rome,
Vatican Museum**

Source: UCLA Hoxie Slide Collection, #
MSR A164, <http://www.hoxie.ucla.edu/>

Lesson 1***Student Handout 1.3—SOAPS for Primary Source Documents***

Name _____ Period _____

Source-Who wrote it? Where is it from?
Occasion-Letter, law, etc.
Audience-For whom was it meant?
Purpose-Why was it written?
Summary-Write a three-sentence summary of the document.

Lesson 1***Student Handout 1.4—Vocabulary Words and Terms***

Word/term	Definition
brigands	bands of robbers
demiurge	an official
<i>denarii</i> (sing: <i>denarius</i>)	silver coins
<i>ergastula</i>	private prisons attached to Roman farms
expose	to abandon in an open place
<i>ius gentium</i>	law of nations
stands surety for	gives a pledge to guarantee an obligation; e.g. that a loan will be repaid
triumph	formal celebration granted to a victorious general

Lesson 2

The Life of a Slave

Preparation

Make one copy of Student Handouts 2.1-2.3 for each student.

Introduction

In this lesson students will learn about the life of a slave in imperial Rome. Divide the students into small groups. If time is limited, the teacher may assign only a few of the documents in Student Handout 2.2 to each group. In this case, students may share their findings with the other groups.

Activities

1. Distribute Student Handout 2.1 (The Life of a Slave: Introductory Essay). Ask students to read the essay and discuss it as a class. If this is assigned as homework, the discussion can take place the following day.
2. Distribute Student Handouts 2.2 (The Life of a Slave: Primary Source Documents) and 2.3 (Vocabulary Words and Terms), which define the terms that appear in boldface in Student Handout 2.2. Ask students to analyze the primary sources and then answer the following questions:
 - a. For each of the selections in this lesson, what reasons can you give for considering it reliable historical evidence and what reasons for questioning its reliability?
 - b. Which of the selections do you consider most reliable as historical evidence, and why?
 - c. What are the advantages and disadvantages as historical evidence of written documents? Of funerary inscriptions? Of laws?

Extension activity: Ask students to research the life of slaves in the United States, Brazil, or the Caribbean in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and then create a Venn diagram showing the similarities and differences between Roman and modern slavery. Instead of using the diagram, you may ask students to write a three-paragraph essay comparing the life of slaves in the Americas to the life of slaves in ancient Rome. Have students share their work with the class.

Assessment

Have students write a diary entry (yes, some slaves could read and write!) in which they describe their activities in the urban or rural job of their choice. Make sure they choose from the jobs that appear on Student Handout 2.2.

Lesson 2

Student Handout 2.1—The Life of a Slave: Introductory Essay

Slaves in ancient Rome did not have any rights, and they were considered inferior to free citizens. Their lives belonged to their masters, who chose the slaves' names even if they already had one, decided what kind of work the slaves had to do, how many hours a day they had to work, what they could wear, and if, when, and what they could eat. Because they were considered objects, they could be bought and sold.

Almost everyone in Rome could own slaves. The very rich sometimes had several thousand, the common people could have a few, and even slaves owned slaves (*vicarii*). Nearly every slave had to work, even if she or he was still very young.

Not all slave labor could be measured in economic terms. Some domestic slaves provided services that did not generate revenue. We know that some Romans owned private secretaries, table attendants, and messengers, as well as dancers, singers, and jugglers to entertain them and their guests. A single wealthy matron could have dozens of personal slave-attendants. Her children could have nurses who had to feed them, as well as sing to them and tell them stories. Yet even these slaves, if they had been purchased in the market, would have generated an income for a slave-dealer.

In some instances, the same job could be seen both as economically and non-economically productive. Wet-nurses were sometimes rented out by their owner to the parent of an infant, thus producing an income for the owner; but they could also nurse the owner's child, or the children of the owner's female slaves.

There were many other cases in which slave labor led to (sometimes considerable) economic gain for the master. Some wealthy landowners invested heavily in slave labor to produce **cash crops** that would achieve marketable surpluses. Agricultural labor ranged from plowing and hoeing to harvesting. But the Romans also employed slaves for other tasks. For example, they could manufacture goods, such as pottery. They could spin, weave, or dye woolen or linen cloth, extract gold, silver, or lead from mines, and build temples and houses.

How did slaves get their skills? A child could learn shepherding from a shepherd, and a baker, a weaver, or a midwife could teach the occupation to someone else. Some masters even sent their young slaves to "public schools" so that they could learn to read and write, both Latin and Greek. Later, tutors, possibly also slaves, trained them in Greek literature so that masters could show off at dinner parties by having their own slaves read or recite Greek literature.

Sources: Keith R. Bradley, *Discovering the Roman Family* (New York: Oxford UP, 1991), *passim*; Keith R. Bradley, *Slavery and Rebellion in the Roman World* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989), *passim*; Sandra Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status at Rome: A Study of the Occupational Inscriptions* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), *passim*; Thomas Wiedemann, *Slavery* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), *passim*.

Lesson 2

Student Handout 2.2—The Life of a Slave: Primary Source Documents

Document A

The *Digest* was a compilation of more than 700 years of Roman legislation enacted under the emperor Justinian in the early sixth century CE. This selection shows that slaves were property:

The first chapter of the lex Aquilia provides as follows: “If anyone kills unlawfully a [male] slave or [slave-girl] belonging to someone else or a four-footed beast of the class of cattle, let him be condemned to pay the owner the highest value that the property had attained in the preceding year. ...”

Source: *The Digest of Justinian* 9.2.2, Vol. I, trans. Alan Watson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 277.

Document B

Varro was a first-century-BCE Roman writer. This selection shows that masters were free to choose their slaves' names:

... when three men have bought a slave apiece at Ephesus, sometimes one derives his slave's name from that of the seller Artemidorus and calls him Artemas; another names his slave Ion, from Ionia the district, because he has bought him there; the third calls his slave Ephesius, because he has bought him at Ephesus. In this way each derives the name from a different source, as he preferred.

Source: Varro, *De Lingua Latina* 8.21, trans. Roland G. Kent (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1951), 389.

Document C

ILS 1514 is a first-century-CE funerary inscription that shows that the slave Musicus Scurranus owned sixteen slaves:

To Musicus Scurranus [slave] of Tiberius Caesar Augustus, superintendent of the Gallic Treasury of the province of Lyon: [dedicated] to him, as he well deserved, by those of his under-slaves who were with him at Rome when he died:

Venustus, buying agent	Agathopus, physician	Facilis, attendant
Decimianius, treasurer	Epaphra, in charge of silver	Anthus, in charge of silver
Dicaeus, attendant	Primio, in charge of wardrobe	Hedylus, chamberlain
Mutatus, attendant	Communis, chamberlain	Firmus, cook
Creticus, attendant	Pothus, attendant	Secunda
	Tiasus, cook	

Source: *ILS* 1514, in Thomas Wiedemann, ed., *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1981), 123-4.

Document D

The *Digest* was a compilation of more than 700 years of Roman legislation enacted under the emperor Justinian in the early sixth century CE. This selection shows that the Romans distinguished between urban and rural slaves:

Where [urban] slaves have been **bequeathed**, some authorities distinguish them not by their place but by their work, so that even if they are on country estates but do not do country work they are held to be [urban] slaves. ... There may be doubt whether huntsmen and **fowlers** should be included under [urban] or country slaves, but it should be said that where the head of the household used to maintain them and they stayed is where they should be counted as belonging. ...

Source: *The Digest of Justinian* 32.99, Vol. III, trans. Alan Watson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 99.

Document E

The *Digest* was a compilation of more than 700 years of Roman legislation enacted under the emperor Justinian in the early sixth century CE. In this selection we read about a variety of slave occupations:

... Trebatius [a lawyer] further thinks that a baker and barber, intended to serve the needs of the rural household, are included [with the equipment of the farm]; likewise, the mason, who is intended to repair the villa, and the women who cook bread and look after the villa; likewise, the millers, if they are intended for use on the estate; likewise, the kitchen maid and the **steward**'s wife ... likewise, the wool-makers who make clothes for the rural household and those women who cook relishes for the rural slaves. ...

Source: *The Digest of Justinian* 33.7.12, Vol. III, trans. Alan Watson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 125.

Document F

Seneca was a first-century-CE Stoic philosopher and writer. In this selection we read about the training of slaves:

There is another type of knowledge which does allow us to use the assistance of others. I remember that there was a very rich man called Calvisius Sabinus. ... His memory was so bad that he would sometimes forget the name Ulysses, or Achilles, or Priam ... No slave assigned the job of reminding us of people's names (*nomenclator*), no matter how old, ever made so many mistakes in imposing names ... The following solution occurred to him: at enormous expense he bought some slaves, one to memorize the whole of Homer off by heart, another Hesiod, and one each assigned to the nine lyric poets. That he paid an enormous price for them isn't surprising—he couldn't find any for sale, and had to contract for them to be trained. ...

Source: Seneca, *Letters* 27, qtd. in Thomas Wiedemann, ed., *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1981), 126.

Document G

Hippolytus was a Christian who wrote in the early third century CE. In this selection we read about a slave who had a job that involved handling large amounts of money:

[Callistus] happened to be the house-slave of someone called Carpophorus, a Christian believer belonging to the Emperor's household. Carpophorus entrusted a considerable sum of money to him, since he seemed to be a reliable person, and told him to invest it profitably in banking. He took the money and set up a bank in what is called the "Public Fish-Market," and in time several quite significant deposits were lodged with him on behalf of widows and other Christians. ...

Source: Hippolytus, *Refutation of all Heresies* 9.12, qtd. in Thomas Wiedemann, ed., *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1981), 131.

Document H

Columella wrote *De Re Rustica*, a treatise on farming, in the first century CE. In this selection he describes the tasks of the woman overseer (*vilica*):

... [The *vilica*] must send out of doors those slaves who have some work to do in the fields, and keep within the walls those for whom it seems that there is some duty to perform in the villa; and she must see that the daily tasks are not spoilt by inaction. She must carefully inspect everything that is brought into the house to see that it is not damaged, and receive it after it has been examined and found intact; then she must set apart what has to be consumed and guard what can be placed in reserve, so that the provision for a year may not be spent in a month. Again, if any member of the household is beginning to be affected by bad health, she will have to see that he is given the most suitable treatment; ... but in order that she may have recourse to wool-work on rainy days or when, owing to cold or frost, a woman cannot be busy with field-work under the open sky, there should be wool prepared and combed out ready, so that she may be able more easily to carry out the task of spinning and demand this work also from others. ... She will also have to be perpetually on the watch, when the slaves have left the villa, and seek out those who ought to be doing agricultural work outside, and if anyone, as sometimes happens, has managed to skulk indoors and escape the vigilance of her mate, she must inquire the reason for his laziness and find out whether he has stayed behind because bad health has prevented him from working or whether he has hidden himself through idleness. ... Then too she will have to see that the kitchen and the cowsheds and also the mangers are cleaned, ...

Source: Columella, *De Re Rustica* 12.1 and 12.3, Vol. III, trans. E. S. Forster and Edward H. Heffner (London: W. Heinemann, 1955), 173-5.

Document I

In the first century BCE, Varro wrote *De Re Rustica*. This selection is on rural jobs:

For herds of larger cattle older men, for the smaller even boys; but in both cases those who range the trails should be sturdier than those on the farm who go back to the **steading** every day. Thus on the range you may see young men, usually armed, while on the farm not only boys but even girls tend the flocks ...

Source: Varro, *De Re Rustica* 2.10.1, trans. W. D. Hooper (London: Heinemann, 1934), 405-7.

Document J

Columella wrote *De Re Rustica*, a treatise on farming, in the first century CE. In this selection he writes about men's jobs:

The next point is with regard to slaves—over what duty it is proper to place each and to what sort of tasks to assign them. So my advice at the start is not to appoint an overseer from that sort of slaves who are physically attractive, and certainly not from that class which has busied itself with the ... occupations of the city. The lazy and sleepy-headed class of servants, accustomed to idling, to the **Campus**, the **Circus**, and the theatres, to gambling, ... never ceases to dream of these follies; and when they carry them over into their farming, the master suffers not so much loss in the slave himself as in his whole estate. A man should be chosen who has been hardened by farm work from his infancy, one who has been tested by experience. If, however, such a person is not available, let one be put in charge out of the number of those who have slaved patiently at hard labor; ... He should be, then, of middle age and of strong physique, skilled in farm operations or at least very painstaking, so that he may learn the more readily; for it is not in keeping with this business of ours for one man to give orders and another to give instructions, nor can a man properly exact work when he is being tutored by an underling as to what is to be done and in what way. Even an illiterate person, if only he have a retentive mind, can manage affairs well enough. ... an overseer of this sort brings money to his master oftener than he does his book, because, not knowing his letters, he is either less able to falsify accounts or is afraid to do so through a second party because that would make another aware of the deception.

Source: Columella, *De Re Rustica* 1.8.1-4, Vol. I, trans. E.S. Forster and Edward H. Heffner (London: W. Heinemann, 1955), 85-7.



Medallion of Antoninus Pius.

The slave on the right is holding a plate of fruit.

Second century CE

Source: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, # RC-A-25509,
<http://images.bnf.fr/jsp/index.jsp?destination=afficherListeCliches.jsp&origine=rechercherListeCliches.jsp&contexte=resultatRechercheSimple>

Lesson 2***Student Handout 2.3— Vocabulary Words and Terms***

Word/term	Definition
bequeathed	left to someone in a will
Campus	Field of Mars, with theaters, baths, etc.
Circus	hippodrome
fowlers	hunters of birds
steading	farm
steward	male slave who worked as superintendent or overseer of farm
<i>vilica</i>	female slave who worked as superintendent or overseer of farm

Lesson 3

Manumission

Preparation

Make one copy of Student Handouts 3.1- to 3.3 for each student.

Introduction

In this lesson students will learn about the manumission of slaves in imperial Rome. Divide the students into small groups. If time is limited, the teacher may assign only a few of the documents in Student Handout 3.2 to each group. In this case, students may share their findings with the other groups.

Activities

1. Distribute Student Handout 3.1 (Manumission: Introductory Essay). Ask students to read this essay and discuss it as a class. If this is assigned as homework, the discussion can take place the following day.
2. Distribute Student Handouts 3.2 (Manumission: Primary Source Documents) and 3.3 (Vocabulary Words and Terms), which defines the terms that appear in boldface in Student Handout 3.2. Ask students to analyze the primary sources and then answer the following questions:
 - a. In what ways do the primary sources differ from one another? How would you account for the differences?
 - b. What do you find most surprising about the documents and the information in them, and why?

Extension activity: Ask students to research manumission in the United States, Brazil, or the Caribbean in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and then create a Venn diagram showing the similarities and differences between Roman and modern slavery. Instead of using the diagram, you may ask students to write a three-paragraph essay comparing manumission in the Americas to manumission in ancient Rome. Have students share their work with the class.

Assessment

Have students discuss the following question: “Considering the limitations and disadvantages derived from becoming a freedwoman/freedman, would slaves still want to be manumitted?”

Lesson 3

Student Handout 3.1—Manumission: Introductory Essay

There never was an attempt to abolish slavery in Rome. Even former slaves did nothing to eliminate slavery and were themselves slave-owners. It is known that Caius Caecilius Isidorus, a first-century BCE freedman, owned more than 4000 slaves. The tombstone of Aulus Kapreilius Timotheus, a first-century CE freedman, reveals that he was a slave-trader. But it is known that Rome was unique among slave-owning societies because slaves were regularly manumitted.

The Romans manumitted their slaves for many reasons. One reason is that the master could show off! His fellow Romans would think he was kind. Besides, a manumitted slave was still dependent on the former master (who became his patron) and owed him certain pre-arranged services, known as *operae*. One of these was to follow the patron around town. A large crowd of clients made the patron look good.

The Romans also manumitted one or more slaves as a special reward. Perhaps the slave had been very loyal, or he had saved the master's life. Maybe a slave-woman had had three or more children, so now the master had more slaves!

Sometimes a master allowed a slave to buy his own freedom with his savings. This way the master obtained financial gain and could then invest the money in another slave. This appears to have been especially convenient for masters who owned highly-skilled slaves. Life expectancy in antiquity was not high, so it was better to get some money for the slave rather than to have to suffer the loss if the slave suddenly died.

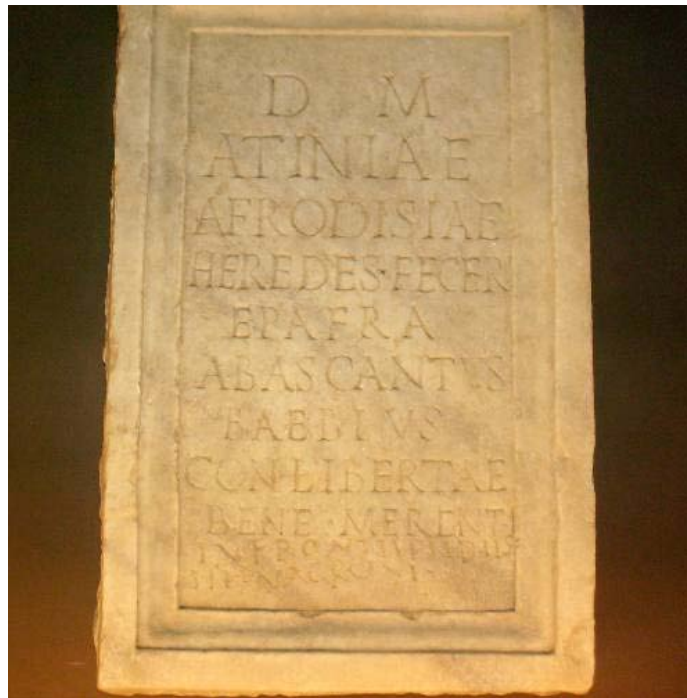
Sometimes it happened that a master manumitted his female slave so that he could marry her legally. According to Roman law, only citizens who, by definition, were free, had the right to contract *iustum matrimonium*, that is, Roman-style marriage. Once both parties were free citizens, marriage could take place. The only restriction was that a former slave could not marry a member of the senatorial order.

Did the Roman state oppose manumission? No. In fact, it was convenient for several reasons. One was that, if it followed certain formalities, which will be indicated below, manumission created new citizens. This was especially important at the time when only citizens could join the army. Another reason was that manumission was a source of revenue for the state because for every slave formally manumitted a five-percent tax had to be paid.

According to Roman law, there were several ways to manumit a slave. These ways could be formal and informal. One formal way resembled a mock trial. It could take place before a consul, a praetor, or a proconsul. A master could also ask the censor to enter the slave in the census. Finally, a master could free his slaves in his will. In these three cases, the slave had to be over thirty years of age, and he or she always became a Roman citizen.

There were also informal ways of freeing slaves, which were convenient because there were no age requirements, but they did not confer Roman citizenship. The master could free a slave in the presence of friends or dinner guests or write a letter telling the slave he or she was free. In the early fourth century, the emperor Constantine decreed that slaves could be manumitted in a church in the presence of a bishop.

Sources: Keith R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (New York: Oxford UP, 1987), *passim*; William W. Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1908, repr. 1970), *passim*; David Daube, "Two Early Patterns of Manumission," *Journal of Roman Studies* 36 (1946), *passim*; Thomas Wiedemann, "The Regularity of Manumission at Rome," *Classical Quarterly* 35 (1985), *passim*.



Funerary monument of Atinia Afrodisia, a manumitted slave-woman. Undated.

Museo della Civiltà Romana, Rome.

Photo by Ingrid de Haas

Lesson 3

Student Handout 3.2—Manumission: Primary Source Documents

Document A

Cassius Dio was a second- and third-century CE writer. In this selection we learn about the legislation passed by Augustus in 4 CE concerning manumission:

Since also many were freeing their slaves indiscriminately, he fixed the age which the **manumitter** and also the slave to be freed by him must have reached and likewise the legal principles which should govern the relations of both citizens in general and the former masters toward slaves who were set free.

Source: Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 55.13, trans. Earnest Cary, Vol. VI (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1960), 427.

Document B

Suetonius was a second-century CE Roman writer. In this selection we learn why Lenaeus was manumitted:

Lenaeus was the freedman of Pompey the Great ... the story is told that when he was still a slave (*puer*) he escaped from his chains and fled back to his own country, where he taught literature; he sent his master the price he had cost him, but was manumitted for nothing because of his excellent character and scholarship.

Source: Suetonius, *Grammarians* 15, qtd. in Thomas Wiedemann, ed., *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1981), 127.

Document C

The *Digest* was a compilation of more than 700 years of Roman legislation enacted under the emperor Justinian in the early sixth century CE. In this selection we read about some reasons for manumitting a slave:

Past events can provide several grounds for manumission: thus, the slave may have aided the master in battle, protected him against brigands, healed him in sickness, uncovered a plot. And it is a long business, should we wish to make a list, since many services can occur for which it is honorable to grant freedom.

Source: *The Digest of Justinian* 40.2.15.1, Vol. III, trans. Alan Watson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 426.

Document D

The first-century CE writer Columella favored the manumission of slaves under special circumstances:

To women, too, who are unusually prolific, and who ought to be rewarded for the bearing of a certain number of **offspring**, I have granted exemption from work and sometimes even freedom after they had reared many children. For to a mother of three sons exemption from work was granted; to a mother of more her freedom as well.

Source: Columella, *De Re Rustica* 1.8.19, Vol. I, trans. E.S. Forster and Edward H. Heffner (London: W. Heinemann, 1955), 95.

Document E

Augustine was a Christian who became bishop of Hippo, in North Africa. He lived in the fourth and fifth centuries CE. He believes manumission should be a reward:

You lead the slave whom you are going to set free by the hand into the church; silence falls; the official record is read out, or you make a statement as to your intentions. You say that you are setting the slave free because he has been faithful to you in every respect. That is what you approve of and show that you respect, what you are rewarding with freedom.

Source: Augustine, *Sermon* 21.6, qtd. in Thomas Wiedemann, ed., *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1981), 52.

Document F

The *Digest* was a compilation of more than 700 years of Roman legislation enacted under the emperor Justinian in the early sixth century CE. Slaves could pay for their own freedom:

If anyone says that he was purchased with his own cash, he can institute proceedings against his master to whose good faith he had recourse and complain on the ground that he is not being manumitted by the master, appearing at Rome before the **prefect of the city**, but in the provinces before the governor, ... subject, however, to the warning that the slave who has not made good this allegation should be sent to penal labor in the mines ...

Source: *The Digest of Justinian* 40.1.5, Vol. III, trans. Alan Watson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 422.

Document G

The *Digest* was a compilation of more than 700 years of Roman legislation enacted under the emperor Justinian in the early sixth century. In this selection we read about one of the obligations of former slaves; the other one is *obsequium* (respect or gratitude):

[The freedman or freedwoman] should swear to furnish days of work or a gift or service, any kind of work, providing that it is honestly, justly, and legally imposed. ... The types of services offered to the patron should be assessed in accordance with the age, status, health, need, way of life, and other such considerations in respect of either party. ...

Source: *The Digest of Justinian* 38.1.7.3 and 38.1.16.1, Vol. III, trans. Alan Watson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 321 and 323.

Document H

Suetonius was a second-century CE Roman writer. In this selection we read about freedmen whose manumission was reversed:

[Emperor Claudius] ... reduced to slavery any [freedmen] who failed to show due gratitude or about whom their former owners had cause for complaint ...

Source: Suetonius, *Claudius* 25, qtd. in Thomas Wiedemann, ed., *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1981), 54.

Document I

Pliny the Elder was a first-century CE Roman writer. Here he refers to some very successful freedmen:

In later years we saw many freed slaves who were richer than Crassus—not long ago during Claudius' reign there were three at once, Callistus, Pallas, and Narcissus. Let's suppose that these three are still running the **government** and not say a word about them. On 27 January 8 BC, Caius Caecilius Isidorus, freedman of Caius, stated in his will that although he had lost a great deal in the civil wars, he left 4,116 slaves, 3,600 pairs of oxen, 257,000 other animals, sixty million **sesterces** in coined money; and he ordered eleven hundred thousand to be spent on his funeral.

Source: Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 33.47, qtd. in Thomas Wiedemann, ed., *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1981), 100.

Document J

Pliny the Elder was a first-century-CE Roman writer. In this selection we read about a hard-working freedman who was hated by less successful, free-born Romans:

Caius Furius Chresimus had been set free from slavery; when he started getting much larger harvests from a fairly small farm than his neighbors did from very large ones, he became highly unpopular and was accused of **abstracting** other people's crops by sorcery. He was afraid that he would be found guilty at his trial before the **Curule Aedile** Spurius Albinus; so when the tribes were about to cast their votes, he brought all his farm equipment into the Forum and brought along his slaves, who were all healthy and well looked-after and well dressed ..., and his well-fashioned iron tools, heavy hoes and plow-shares, and well-fed oxen; and then said, "Here, Romans, is my sorcery, though I can't show you or bring into the Forum all the work I've put in at night and my early mornings or how I've sweated." As a result they acquitted him unanimously.

Source: Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 18.8, qtd. in Thomas Wiedemann, ed., *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1981), 59.

Document K

ILS 8532 is an undated funerary inscription that shows that a slave-nurse had been freed:

To the Spirits of the Dead.
To Servia Cornelia Sabina, freedwoman of Servius.
Servius Cornelius Dolabella Metillianus
made this for his nurse and "mummy" (*nutrici et mammul.*) who well deserved it.

Source: *ILS* 8532 in Thomas Wiedemann, ed., *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1981), 124.



**Wall painting with slaves working in the kitchen
Rome, first century CE**

Source: Getty Villa. VRoma project, http://www.vroma.org/images/mcmanus_images/culinaslaves.jpg

Lesson 3***Student Handout 3.3—Vocabulary Words and Terms***

Word/term	Definition
abstracting	taking away, removing, stealing
Curule Aedile	official who superintended buildings, the supply of water, etc.
manumitter	person who frees a slave
offspring	children; also the young of animals
prefect of the city	official who had jurisdiction in criminal matters and was in charge of maintaining peace and order in the city
sesterces	silver coins

Lesson 4

Abuse and Resistance

Preparation

Make one copy of Student Handouts 4.1-4.4 for each student.

Introduction

In this lesson students will learn about some of the ways in which masters abused their slaves in imperial Rome and how slaves reacted to abuse. Divide the students into small groups. If time is limited, the teacher may assign only a few of the documents in Student Handout 4.2 to each group. In this case, students may share their findings with the other groups.

Activities

1. Distribute Student Handout 4.1 (Abuse and Resistance: Introductory Essay). Ask students to read this essay and discuss it as a class. If this is assigned as homework, the discussion can take place the following day.
2. Distribute Student Handouts 4.2 (Abuse and Resistance: Primary Source Documents) and 4.3 (Vocabulary Words and Terms), which define the terms that appear in boldface in Student Handout 4.2. Ask students to analyze the primary sources and then answer the following questions:
 - a. What moral standards may be used in assessing blame or guilt for things done long ago and far away by people different from us? Should they be judged by their own values, or by ours? Why?
 - b. Should historians try to avoid any moral judgment of actions taken by people in the past? Why or why not?
3. Distribute Student Handout 4.4 (Play: A Day in the Life of Euodia). Ask one student to read the part of Euodia and another to read the part of Aurelia. Explain to students that the information on the numerous sales of Euodia is based on a contract written on papyrus in 225 CE. Note that Euodia was sold alone, without her mother or siblings, and that she was only 14! Concerning the forms of resistance, explain that there is no direct evidence that slaves in the Roman empire deliberately destroyed their master's property or worked slowly, but scholars of ancient slavery, based on modern slave autobiographies and interviews, believe they may have done so. After the students have finished reading the play, discuss agency. That is, despite the fact that slaves had no legal rights, they should nevertheless not be seen as completely powerless. Then discuss how the sale of a slave affects her family and social life.

Extension activity: Ask students to research slave resistance in the United States, Brazil, or the Caribbean in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and then create a Venn diagram showing the similarities and differences between Roman and modern slavery. Instead of using the diagram, you may ask students to write a 3-paragraph essay comparing slave resistance in the Americas to slave resistance in ancient Rome. Have students share their work with the class.

Assessment

Divide students into small groups. Have them discuss the difficulties facing slaves who wanted to revolt or run away from their masters.



**Stretch of the Via Appia outside the city of Rome
In 71 BCE, when Spartacus' rebellion ended,
6000 slaves were crucified along this road.**

Photo by Ingrid de Haas

Lesson 4

Student Handout 4.1—Abuse and Resistance: Introductory Essay

Slaves were under the power of their masters, who could use and abuse them any way they wished. Masters could beat, torture, and even kill slaves. This does not mean that all masters abused their slaves or that they abused them often or severely. After all, slaves were an investment that had to be kept in good shape. Some masters may even have felt affection for their slaves. It is possible that some slaves did nothing about abuse, sometimes out of fear, and sometimes because being submissive gave them a better chance of being manumitted.

The most spectacular form of resistance was rebellion. Spartacus, the gladiator-slave who turned rebel in 73 BCE, has received much attention from historians and even from Hollywood producers. But rebellions only occurred occasionally in Rome. Other violent means of resistance involved murdering the master. Some slaves committed suicide to liberate themselves from an intolerable situation.

Running away from the master was a “popular” form of resistance among slaves. Sometimes small groups of men and women belonging to the same master ran away together. Roman laws contain detailed dispositions concerning runaways. For example, the laws stipulated that the seller had to disclose whether a slave had run away or attempted to do so. If the buyer found out that the seller’s statement was untrue, she or he could either rescind the contract or get a partial refund on the purchase. In other words, slaves, as other kinds of merchandise, came with a warranty.

Slaves could also appeal to the supernatural for help. According to modern scholars, nearly everyone in the ancient world, slave or free, believed in magic. Some slaves who ran away from their masters bought and carried an amulet to avoid being caught. Others purchased a lead tablet (*defixio*), which can be likened to a letter addressed to a deity with a request for help. It was normally deposited in a grave or in a body of water after following a ritual that involved uttering special words.

Slaves could also seek asylum in a temple. They could file a complaint with the priest or priestess, and he or she would make a decision. This decision was made in the name of the god or goddess at whose temple the slave had sought sanctuary. But in no case was the slave set free; if the complaint was deemed justified, the slave’s owner was ordered to sell the slave. Starting in the first century CE, a slave could also seek asylum at the emperor’s statue. This statue was believed to be the abode of the emperor’s religious power. Then a magistrate had to hear the slave’s case, but there was no guarantee that he would be willing to do so, or that he would believe what the slave said.

Sources: Heinz Bellen, *Studien zur Sklavenflucht im Römischen Kaiserreich*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1971, *passim*; Keith R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control*. New York: Oxford UP, 1987, *passim*; John G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*. New York: Oxford UP, 1992, *passim*; Thomas Wiedemann, *Slavery*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, *passim*.

Lesson 4

Student Handout 4.2—Abuse and Resistance: Primary Source Documents

Document A

Galen was a second-century-CE doctor and philosopher. This selection shows some ways in which masters abused their slaves:

There are other people who don't just hit their slaves, but kick them and gouge out their eyes and strike them with a pen if they happen to be holding one. ... The story is told that the emperor Hadrian struck one of his attendants in the eye with a pen. When he realized that he had become blind in one eye as a result of this stroke, he called him to him and offered to let him ask him for any gift to make up for what he had suffered. When the victim remained silent, Hadrian again asked him to make a request of whatever he wanted. He declined to accept anything else, but asked for his eye back. ...

Source: Galen, *Diseases of the Mind* 4, qtd. in Thomas Wiedemann, ed., *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1981), 180-1.

Document B

Suetonius was a second-century-CE Roman writer. In this selection we learn that some slaves were chained:

Lucius Voltacilius Pilutus is said to have been a slave, and even to have been chained up in the old-fashioned way as a door-keeper. ...

Source: Suetonius, *Grammarians* 27, qtd. in Thomas Wiedemann, ed., *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1981), 128.

Document C

This papyrus records a complaint filed before the authorities in Roman Egypt against an abusive husband and master:

He shut up his own slaves and mine with my foster-daughters and his agent and son for seven whole days in his cellars, having insulted his slaves and my slave Zoe and half-killed them with blows, and he applied fire to my foster-daughters, having stripped them quite naked, which is contrary to the laws. ...

Source: *P. Oxy.* 903, in Keith R. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 171.

Document D

Cassius Dio was a second- and third-century-CE writer. He reports an excessive case of abuse in which the slave was saved by the emperor himself:

This same year Vedius Pollio died, a man who ... belonged to the **knights**, and had performed no brilliant deeds; but he had become very famous for his wealth and for his cruelty, so that he has even gained a place in history. Most of the things he did it would be wearisome to relate, but I may mention that he kept in reservoirs huge **lampreys** that had been trained to eat men, and he was accustomed to throw to them such of his slaves as he desired to put to death. Once, when he was entertaining [the emperor] Augustus, his cup-bearer broke a crystal goblet, and without regard for his guest, Pollio ordered the fellow to be thrown to the lampreys. Hereupon the slave fell on his knees before Augustus and supplicated him, and Augustus at first tried to persuade Pollio not to commit so monstrous a deed. Then, when Pollio paid no heed to him, the emperor said, "Bring all the rest of the drinking vessels which are of like sort or any others of value that you possess, in order that I may use them," and when they were brought, he ordered them to be broken. When Pollio saw this, he was vexed, of course; but since he was no longer angry over the one goblet, considering the great number of the others that were ruined, and, on the other hand, could not punish his servant for what Augustus also had done, he held his peace, though much against his will. ...

Source: Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 54.23, Vol. VI, trans. Earnest Cary (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1960), 339-43.

Document E

The *Digest* was a compilation of more than 700 years of Roman legislation enacted under the emperor Justinian in the early sixth century CE. This selection shows that the law allowed masters to punish and torture their slaves:

As no home can be safe except if slaves are compelled to guard their masters both from members of the household and from outsiders at the risk of their own lives, **senatus consulta** have been introduced concerning the questioning on public authority of the household slaves of those who have been killed. ... However, we understand "questioning" to mean not only torture but all investigation and inquiry into the death. However, this *senatus consultum* punishes those who were under the same roof in every case ...

Source: *The Digest of Justinian*, Vol. II, trans. Alan Watson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 896-8.

Document F

Tacitus was a second-century CE writer. When a magistrate was murdered, it was decided that all the slaves in the household should be punished:

Shortly afterwards, the city prefect, Pedanius Secundus, was murdered by one of his own slaves; ... when the whole of the [slaves] who had been resident under the same roof ought, in accordance with the old custom, to have been led to execution, the rapid assembly of the populace, bent on protecting so many innocent lives, brought matters to the point of sedition, and the senate house was besieged. Even within its walls there was a party which protested against excessive harshness, though most members held that no change was advisable. Gaius Cassius, one of the majority, when his turn to speak arrived, argued in the following strain: "I have frequently, **Conscript Fathers**, made one of this body, when demands were being presented for new senatorial decrees in contravention of the principles and the legislation of our fathers. And from me there came no opposition—not because I doubted that, whatever the issue, the provision made for it in the past was the better conceived and the more correct, and that, where revision took place, the alteration was for the worse; but because I had no wish to seem to be exalting my own branch of study by an overstrained affection for ancient usage. At the same time, I considered that what little influence I may possess ought not to be frittered away in perpetual expressions of dissent: I preferred it to remain intact for an hour when the state had need of advice. And that hour is come today, when an ex-consul has been done to death in his own home by the treason of a slave—treason which none hindered or revealed, though as yet no attacks had shaken the senatorial decree which threatened the entire household with execution. By all means vote impunity! But whom shall his rank defend, when rank has not availed the prefect of Rome? ... Is it your pleasure to muster arguments upon a point which has been considered by wiser minds than ours? But even if we had now for the first time to frame a decision, do you believe that a slave took the resolution of killing his master without an ominous phrase escaping him, without one word uttered in rashness? Assume, however, that he kept his counsel, that he procured his weapon in an unsuspecting household. Could he pass the watch, carry in his light, and perpetrate his murder without the knowledge of a soul? A crime has many antecedent symptoms. So long as our slaves disclose them, we may live solitary amid their numbers, secure amid their anxieties, and finally—if die we must—certain of our vengeance amid the guilty crowd. To our ancestors the temper of their slaves was always suspect, even when they were born on the same estate or under the same roof, and drew in affection for their owners with their earliest breath. But now that our households comprise nations—with customs the reverse of our own, with foreign cults or with none, you will never coerce such a medley of humanity except by terror. ..." [but] the party advocating execution prevailed ...

Source: Tacitus, *Annals* 14.42-5, Vol. V, trans. John E. Jackson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1931), 177-81.

Document G

The *Digest* was a compilation of more than 700 years of Roman legislation enacted under the emperor Justinian in the early sixth century CE. It regulated the capture of runaways:

A man who conceals a runaway is a thief. ... This *senatus consultum* also grants a soldier or civilian access to the land of senators or civilians for the purpose of searching for a runaway ... Every person who apprehends a runaway must produce him in public. **Magistrates** are rightly warned to keep careful guard on them in case they escape. ... Careful guard may include chaining. ...

Source: *The Digest of Justinian*, Vol. I, trans. Alan Watson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 344-5.

Document H

Symmachus was a fourth-century CE writer. In this letter he asks a friend for help in getting his runaways back:

My first reason for writing is to express my respect for you by sending you my greetings. The second is to claim the benefit of your proven friendship towards me with a reasonable request. Several of the slaves in my household have disappeared as runaways, and are hiding in places which are under your authority. I ask you to listen to the evidence submitted by my agent and return these people to me; for it would be in accordance with your high character both to pay due regard to the links of friendship between us, and to deny any refuge to dishonest slaves.

Source: Symmachus, *Letters* 9.140, qtd. in Thomas Wiedemann, ed., *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1981), 192-3.

Document I

CIL 15.7194 is an iron necklace that had been worn by a fourth-century-CE slave. The inscription says:

When you return me to my master Zoninus, you will receive a *solidus*.

Source: *CIL* 15.7194, in Heinz Bellen, *Studien zur Sklavenflucht im Römischen Kaiserreich* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1971), 29; translated from Latin by the writer of this unit.

Document J

The *Digest* was a compilation of more than 700 years of Roman legislation enacted under the emperor Justinian in the early sixth century CE. In this selection we learn that slaves came with a warranty:

The aediles say: "Those who sell slaves are to apprise purchasers of any disease or defect in their wares and whether a given slave is a runaway, a loiterer on errands ... If a slave be sold without compliance with this regulation or contrary to what has been said of or promised in respect of him at the time of his sale, ... we will grant to the purchaser and to all other interested parties an action for rescission in respect of the slave. ...

Source: *The Digest of Justinian* 21.1.1, Vol. II, trans. Alan Watson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 602.

Document K

This contract written on papyrus in 139 CE records the sale of six-year-old Passia in the Roman province of Dacia, present-day Romania. The seller has to guarantee that she has not tried to flee:

Maximus Bato buys the girl named Passia, or whatever other name she has, more or less six years old ... She is now a healthy girl [and] is not a runaway or a wanderer ...

Source: *CIL* III 3937 (*FIRA*² III no. 87), in Carl Bruns, ed., *Fontes Iuris Romani Antiqui* (Aalen, Germany: Scientia Antiquariat, 1958), 330; translated from Latin by the writer of this unit.

Document L

The *Digest* was a compilation of more than 700 years of Roman legislation enacted under the emperor Justinian in the early sixth century CE. This selection is about one of the duties of the city prefect:

He is to give a hearing to slaves who have taken refuge by the statue [of the emperor] or who have paid with their own money for their manumission, when they make complaints against their masters. ... The statement that the prefect is supposed to give a hearing to slaves making complaints is one we should accept in this sense: not as to slaves making an accusation against masters (for this is in no way permissible for a slave to do save in specified cases), but in the event that they should make a truthful expostulation and if they were to show in the prefect's court a case of savagery or of harshness or of starvation whereby their masters were oppressing them, ...

Source: *The Digest of Justinian* 1.12.1, Vol. I, trans. Alan Watson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 28-9.

Document M

In the early second century CE, the writer and politician Pliny the Younger wrote a letter to the emperor Trajan telling about a slave who had taken refuge at a statue:

A soldier named Appuleius, sir, stationed at Nicomedia, has sent me this report about a certain Callidromus. This man ... had escaped and taken refuge before one of your statues. When brought before the magistrates, he made the following statement. He had once been a slave of Laberius Maximus, was captured in Moesia by Susagus, and sent by Decebalus as a gift to Pacorus, King of Parthia, in whose service he remained for several years until he escaped and so made his way to Nicomedia. As he repeated the same story when brought before me, I thought I ought to send him on to you ...

Source: Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 10.74, Vol. II, trans. Betty Radice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1975), 259-61.

Document N

Tacitus was a second-century CE Roman writer. This selection is about the right of asylum:

[Emperor] Tiberius, however, while tightening his grasp on the solid power of the **principate**, vouchsafed to the senate a shadow of the past by submitting the claims of the provinces to the discussion of its members. For throughout the Greek cities there was a growing laxity, and impunity, in the creation of rights of **asylum**. The temples were filled with the dregs of the slave population; ... It was resolved, therefore, that the communities in question should send their charters and deputies to Rome. ... It was an impressive spectacle which that day afforded, when the senate scrutinized the benefactions of its predecessors, the constitutions of the provinces, even the decrees of kings whose power antedated the arms of Rome, and the rites of the deities themselves, with full liberty as of old to confirm or change. The Ephesians were the first to appear. ... Deputations from other states were heard as well; till the Fathers, weary of the details, and disliking the acrimony of the discussion, empowered the consuls to investigate the titles, in search of any latent flaw, and to refer the entire question back to the senate. ... The senate, accordingly, passed a number of resolutions, scrupulously complimentary, but still imposing a limit; and the applicants were ordered to fix the brass records actually inside the temples, both as a solemn memorial and as a warning not to lapse into secular intrigue under the cloak of religion.

Source: Tacitus, *Annals* 3.60-3, trans. John E. Jackson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1931), 619-23.

Document O

The *Digest* was a compilation of more than 700 years of Roman legislation enacted under the emperor Justinian in the early sixth century CE. In this selection we read that some slaves may have resorted to suicide as a means of resistance:

No valuation is put on slaves who have been drowned, any more than if they had sickened and died on board or thrown themselves into the sea. ... The damage arising when a slave wounds himself is not a deductible item, any more than if he had committed suicide or thrown himself over a cliff; ... He is deemed a bad slave who does something to remove himself from human affairs, for example, he strangles himself or drinks a poisonous potion, casts himself from a height, or does something else in the hope of resulting death; it is as though there is nothing that he would not venture against others, who dares to do it against himself.

Source: *The Digest of Justinian* 14.2.2.5, 15.1.9, and 21.1.23.3, Vols. I and II, trans. Alan Watson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 420 and 439 (Vol. I), 609 (Vol. II).

Document P

ILS 3001 is an undated inscription found in Tuder, Italy, recording the discovery of a curse tablet (*defixio*). A public slave had used magic against the members of the town council:

For the safety of the colony and of the members of the council and of the people of
Tuder!
To Jupiter Greatest and Best, the Protector, the Preserver;
Because by the force of his thunderbolt he destroyed the names of the members of the
Council which had been placed on the tombs of the dead as an unspeakable act of horrid
sorcery by a most evil public slave; and because he liberated the City and its citizens and
freed them from fear of danger. ...

Source: *ILS* 3001, in Thomas Wiedemann, ed., *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1981), 189.

Document Q

Plutarch was a second-century CE writer. In this selection we read about the beginning of Spartacus' rebellion.

The insurrection of the gladiators and their devastation of Italy, which is generally called the war of Spartacus, had its origin as follows. A certain Lentulus Batiatus had a school of gladiators at Capua, most of whom were Gauls and Thracians. Through no misconduct of theirs, but owing to the injustice of their owner, they were kept in close confinement and reserved for gladiatorial combats. Two hundred of these planned to make their escape, and when information was laid against them, those who got wind of it and succeeded in getting away, seventy-eight in number, seized cleavers and spits from some kitchen and sallied out. On the road they fell in with wagons conveying gladiators' weapons to another city; these they plundered and armed themselves. Then they took up a strong position and elected three leaders. The first of these was Spartacus, a Thracian ... They were also joined by many of the herdsmen and shepherds of the region, sturdy men and swift of foot, some of whom they armed fully, and employed others as scouts and light infantry. ... [After the rebels defeated the Romans in several battles, the senate] chose Crassus to conduct the war ...



Source: Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, Vol. III, *Crassus* 8-10, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1916), 337-43; first-century-CE bronze statuette: Getty Villa, # 96.AB.189, "© 2009. The J. Paul Getty Trust. All rights reserved," <http://www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artObjectDetails?artobj=35439>

Document R

Epictetus was a former slave who became a philosopher. This selection indicates that some slaves obeyed in order to avoid punishment:

Slaves obey because they know it is best to do so: "For to one man it is reasonable to hold a chamber-pot for another, since he considers only that, if he does not hold it, he will get a beating and will not get food, whereas, if he does hold it, nothing harsh or painful will be done to him ..."

Source: Epictetus, *The Discourses* 1.2.8, trans. W. A. Oldfather (London: W. Heinemann, 1926), 17.



Bulla (bronze tag) of a runaway slave

Rome, fourth century CE

The inscription reads: "Hold me, lest I flee, and return me to my master Viventius on the estate of Callistus."

Source: The British Museum, # 00257783001, <http://www.bmimages.com/resultsframe.asp?cat=GR>

Lesson 4***Student Handout 4.3— Vocabulary Words and Terms***

Word/term	Definition
asylum	privilege of slaves, debtors, and criminals to flee to temples and statues for refuge
Conscript Fathers	senators
knights	originally the horse-soldiers (<i>equites</i>) of the Roman state, during the empire they filled the higher offices of the state
lampreys	freshwater eels
Magistrates	public officials
principate	the Roman empire during the first and second centuries CE
<i>senatus consulta</i> (sing: <i>senatus consultum</i>)	laws enacted by the senate
<i>solidus</i>	a gold coin

Lesson 4***Student Handout 4.4—Play: A Day in the Life of Euodia***

Two slave girls are standing in the atrium of the master's house in Narmouthis, in the Roman province of Egypt. One of them is spinning linen and the other one is weaving.

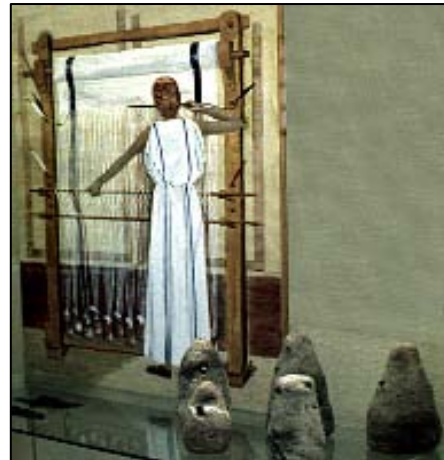
Aurelia: Euodia, you look worried. What's wrong?

Euodia: I found out that master is going to sell me. This will be the fifth time! I don't want to go back to Antinoupolis. I have just started making new friends here.

Aurelia: But what did you do to make master angry?

Euodia: I was tired of getting yelled at. Master thinks I should weave twice as much cloth every day. Of course, I do it on purpose because we, as slaves, have no rights, and by weaving slowly I feel that I am getting back at him for making me work long hours. So, to make a long story short, I yelled back at him.

Aurelia: You are so brave! Is that also why your former master sold you last year in Antinoupolis?



Euodia: No. My former master used to beat me for breaking things.

Aurelia: Did you do that on purpose?

Euodia: Of course! I used to do that for the same reason I weave slowly. But I guess he got tired of having to replace things, maybe he even got tired of beating me, and so he took me to the market and got rid of me.

Aurelia: And do you remember why your previous owner sold you two years before that in Heracleopolis? Maybe you don't, you were only 11!

Euodia: Oh, yes, I do. It was a horrible year for me. Only a few months before that, I had been sold in Alexandria. Both owners said I was lazy because I was always falling asleep. If only I had had enough to eat, I would not have done that. Or maybe I would, just to make them angry!

Aurelia: [She drops and breaks the distaff, that is, the tool used to hold fiber before spinning.] Oh, great! This is not a good time to get in trouble! [She hides the broken distaff and takes another one.] So now what?

Euodia: I could try to seek asylum at the emperor's statue and talk to the magistrate, but I know he won't help me. He is good friends with master.

Aurelia: Yes, everyone in town knows that.

Euodia: Hey, Aurelia, do you want to join me in running away?

Aurelia: No, I saw what happened to Trypho and Felix. Master found them and now they have the letter "F" tattooed on their forehead that shows everyone that they had run away.² And they also got a serious flogging!

Euodia: Ouch! Yes, I have seen those boys. Anyway, I heard that many years ago a group of gladiators escaped from their school in Capua.



Aurelia: Yes, and after fighting the Roman army for almost three years, all those who did not die fighting were crucified along the Appian Way outside Rome. All 6000 of them!

Euodia: Maybe I'll try running away. It may be easier if I am alone. ...

Aurelia: Fine, but try to see the magician who hangs out by the temple of Isis and ask him for an amulet that will protect you from being caught!

Image sources: Weaver, http://www.vroma.org/images/mcmanus_images/weaving.jpg ; spinner with replica distaff in the foreground, http://www.vroma.org/images/mcmanus_images/spinning.jpg

² The letter "F" stood for *fugitivus*, meaning runaway.

Assessment

1. In the Introductory Activity, students were asked to fill out the column “What I know” of the Graphic Organizer (Student Handout 0). Now that they have completed the unit, ask them to fill out the last column, “What I learned.”
2. We have no sources directly from slaves. Ask students to discuss how this might affect how slaves are viewed by modern historians.



Model of the Colosseum, an amphitheater built in the first century CE

Museo della Civiltà Romana, Rome

Many public spectacles, including gladiatorial contests, took place in amphitheaters.

Photo by Ingrid de Haas

This unit and the Three Essential Questions

	How might you explain the forced migration of large numbers of slaves to lands controlled by the Romans in terms of environmental and ecological changes during the republican and imperial periods? What were the consequences of the displacement of equally large numbers of free citizens?
	The Romans saw slaves as biological human beings but thought they were inferior to free humans. Using specific primary sources from this unit, write a paragraph about the value of slaves' lives in imperial Rome.
	The ideas of Stoic philosophy may have helped individual slaves in their personal relations with their masters. Research the main ideas of Stoicism. Discuss why Stoic thinkers such as Seneca may not have tried to abolish slavery.

This unit and the Seven Key Themes

This unit emphasizes:

Key Theme 1: Populations in Motion

Key Theme 3: Uses and Abuses of Power

Key Theme 4: Haves and Have-Nots

This unit and the Standards in Historical Thinking

Historical Thinking Standard 1: Chronological Thinking

The student is able to (F) reconstruct patterns of historical succession and duration in which historical developments have unfolded, and apply them to explain historical continuity and change.

Historical Thinking Standard 2: Historical Comprehension

The student is able to (F) appreciate historical perspectives—(a) describing the past on its own terms, through the eyes and experiences of those who were there, as revealed through their literature, diaries, letters, debates, arts, artifacts, and the like; (b) considering the historical context in which the event unfolded—the values, outlook, options, and contingencies of that time and place; and (c) avoiding “present-mindedness,” judging the past solely in terms of present-day norms and values.

Historical Thinking Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation

The student is able to (F) compare competing historical narratives.

Historical Thinking Standard 4: Historical Research Capabilities

The student is able to (A) formulate historical questions from encounters with historical documents, eyewitness accounts, letters, diaries, artifacts, photos, historical sites, art, architecture, and other records from the past.

Historical Thinking Standard 5: Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making

The student is able to (A) identify issues and problems in the past and analyze the interests, values, perspectives, and points of view of those involved in the situation.

Resources

Resources for teachers

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Resources for students

Mellor, Ronald and Marni McGee. *The Ancient Roman World*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. This volume is part of the World in Ancient Times series and includes a chapter on the story of Spartacus and his slave revolt.

Nardo, Don. *Life of a Roman Slave*. San Diego: Lucent Books, 1998. Discusses aspects of slavery in ancient Rome, including becoming a slave, its privileges and perils, the use of slaves in farming, business, and public service, and the dark side of the institution.

Correlations to National and State Standards

National Standards for World History

Era 3: Classical Traditions, Major Religions, and Giant Empires, 1000 BCE-300 CE. 5A: The student understands major global trends from 1000 BCE to 300 CE. Therefore, the student is able to compare institutions of slavery or other forms of coerced labor in the Han empire, the Maurya empire, the Greek city-states, and the Roman empire.

California: History-Social Science Content Standard

Grade Seven, 7.7.1: Study the early strengths and lasting contributions of Rome ... and its ultimate internal weaknesses (e.g., ... the growth of corruption and slavery, lack of education, and distribution of news).

Illinois Social Science Goals and Standards

D.16.D3 (W) Identify the origins and analyze consequences and events that have shaped World social history including famines, migrations, plagues, slave trading.

Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework

Grade Seven, 7.40: Describe the characteristics of slavery under the Romans.

Minnesota Academic Standards in History and Social Studies

III.C.2: Students will demonstrate knowledge of ancient Rome, including art, politics and philosophy: Architecture, sculpture, myths, free/slave labor ...

New Hampshire Social Studies Curriculum Frameworks

SS:WH:12:4.3: Analyze the development and impact of various labor systems, e.g., slavery, the medieval guilds, or wage labor.

Virginia History and Social Science Standards of Learning

WHI.6.c: The student will demonstrate knowledge of ancient Rome from about 700 BC to 500 AD in terms of its impact on Western civilization by explaining the social structure and role of slavery, significance of citizenship, and the development of democratic features in the government of the Roman Republic.

Conceptual links to other teaching units



Big Era Four Panorama Teaching Unit

Expanding Networks of Exchange and Encounter, 1200 BCE – 500 CE

Trafficking in human beings was a major commercial activity on most of the trade routes that knitted Afroeurasia together in this Big Era. It was one of the ways that societies met their needs for labor. Many people taken in bondage to be sold or exchanged started out as war prisoners. Many were captured in slave raids. Some were refugees from wars or natural disaster. Still others were enslaved because they were convicted of crimes, had debts they could not pay, or were regarded in their home societies as ritually defective and undesirable.

Big Era Four Landscape Teaching Unit 4.5

Giant Empires of Afroeurasia, 300 BCE – 200 CE

Routes extending out from the Roman empire north, east, and south were conduits for importing slaves from neighboring parts of Afroeurasia. Also, all of the large states of Afroeurasia that were contemporaneous with Rome had institutions of social bondage of one type or another, whether chattel slavery or forms of serfdom.

Big Era Four Closeup Teaching Unit 4.5.2

Roman Slavery, 100 BCE – 450 CE

The social organization of the Roman empire included the practice of “chattel slavery” on a large scale, that is, a form of “unfreedom” in which the bonded person is regarded as an item of property, without legal rights. Rome became increasingly dependent on slave labor in its later centuries.