

ROMAN CULTURE STUDY GUIDE:

Naming

Praenomen	1st part of name
Nomen	Middle part of name
Cognomen	Last part of name
Agnomen	Nickname

Know these unusual praenomen abbreviations:
You abbreviate the name **Gaius** as **C.**
“ “ “ **Gnaeus** as **Cn.**
“ “ “ **Tiberius** as **Ti.**

Remember that females received the female version (ended in -a) of their father's nomen

Clothing

Tunica	Shirt-like garment worn by men & women; tunic
Sublegaceum	Underwear
Soleae/socci	Sandals
Calcei	Senator's purple sandals
Anulus	Ring (Roman citizens wore an iron ring)
Stola	Dress
Palla	Veil
Toga Sordida	Dirty gray toga worn by people in mourning
Toga Picta	Purple and gold toga worn by triumphant generals
Toga Candida	Bright white toga worn by candidates for public office
Toga Virilis	Plain white toga worn by adult males
Toga Praetexta	Toga with a purple stripe on the hem, worn by boys and senators
Caraculus/ gallus	cloak
Petanus	brimmed traveling hat

Facts about Rome:

Tiber	
Capitoline Hill	River that runs through Rome
Palatine Hill	Hill where important temples and early fortress were Imperial palaces and houses of wealthy were here; the others of the 7 hills were: Quirinal, Viminal, Esquiline, Caelian & Aventine
Forum	Central market place, political, religious of Rome
Rostra	Speakers platform
Via Sacra	Road that ran through the Forum; triumphs paraded down it
Curia	Senate House
Circus Max.	Race Track
Colosseum	Arena for gladiator fights; official name was Flavian Amphitheater
Pantheon	Temple to all the gods that had an incredible dome
Basilica	Law court
Ostia	Rome's port city at the mouth of the Tiber
Cloaca Maxima	Rome's Sewer *THIS IS NEW INFO*
Tabularium	Rome's Prison *THIS IS NEW INFO*

Baths:

Thermae	Public Baths
Frigidarium	Cold Bath
Tepidarium	Warm Bath
Caldarium	Hot Bath
Palaestra	Exercise yard / gym
Apodyterium	Changing Room
Strigiles	Scrapers for removing dirt & oil from your skin
hypocaustum	system of raised, heated floors (and walls) which heated baths

Chariot Races

Auriga	Charioteer
Biga	2 horse chariot
Quadriga	4 horse chariot
Factiones	Racing teams: red, white, blue and green (later purple & gold were added)
Mappa	Napkin dropped to start a race
Ova et Delphini	Eggs and dolphins; used as counters to mark # of laps
Spina	Dividing wall that ran down the center of the track *NEW INFO*
Metae	Goal posts—posts at each end of the track that you had to go around *NEW*
Carcares	Starting gates *NEW INFO*
Curriculum	Lap *NEW INFO*

sparsor stood at the turning posts of a race track and doused chariots and charioteers with water as they went by to prevent the wooden axles of the chariots from catching fire due to the friction caused by racing at high speeds

milliarii charioteer who won a 1,000 races (a select group to be sure)

mulomedicus- veterinarian, especially one specializing in race horses

Gladiators:

Samnite	Gladiator who fought with a sword with a flat tip and a large rectangular shield
Retiarius	Gladiator who fought with a trident (three pronged spear) and net
Thracian	Gladiator who fought with a curved sword and small round shield
Myrmillo	“The Fisherman” this gladiator fought w/ oval shield, sword; his hat had fish on it
Laquedarius	fought with a lasso
Essedarius	fought in a celtic war chariot
Diplomachus	fought with two large daggers
Andabata	fought blind (wore a helmet with no eye holes)
Bestiarii	Animal hunters; they fought lions, tigers, etc. in amphitheater
Venatio	wild animal hunt (which bestiarii fought in)
Harena	Sand; gives us the English word Arena
Rudus	Wood Sword given to a gladiator that had earned his freedom
Naumachia	mock naval battles fought in flooded arena
Velarium	awning which could be raised to shade spectators at the Colosseum
“Nos Morituri Te Salutamus”	“We who are about to die, salute you”. The gladiators chanted this to the Emperor
Porta	Gate of death—gate that the bodies of dead gladiators were removed through
Libitinensius	(they were then thrown in the Tiber River)

psychopompus- soul conductor: got rid of ghosts and spirits; at gladiatorial games, psychopompi dressed as Mercury and carrying a red hot caduceus prodded the bodies of fallen gladiators to make sure they were dead, then hauled them off through the Porta Libitennis

munera- gladiatorial games

doctor -gladiator trainer

editor - organizer of gladiatorial games

auctoratus- volunteer gladiator (most were slaves, but some freeborn or freed men became gladiators for fame, glory and good money)

gladiatrix- female gladiator

praepositus camelorum- beast supplier--oversaw the logistics of getting exotic beasts to have at the animal hunts

Houses:

Villa Country house

Villa Rustica Farm house

Domus Town House

Insulae Apartment house

Vestibulum Entrance way

Atrium Main Hall; had **Compluvium** = hole in roof; **Impluvium** = pool in floor

Lararium Shrine to **Lares et Penates** the household gods

Imagines Wax images of dead ancestors

Alae "wings" of the house, halls that led off of Atrium *NEW INFO*

Tablinum Master's study; this room contained the **arca** = safe for storing valuables

Triclinum Dining Room

Culina Kitchen

Cubiculum Bedroom

Peristylum Colonnaded (having columns) courtyard with a garden

Calendar:

The Romans had certain key days within each month:

Kalens = 1st of the month

Nones = 7th or 5^h day of the month

Ides = 13th or 15th of the month

(March, May, July and October have the 7th and the 15th)

fasti – holidays/feast days –perceived as lucky

nefasti – unlucky days

Saturnalia – harvest festival; celebrated in mid December; featured lighting of candles, exchange of gifts and role reversal (slaves got to act like masters, etc.)

Lupercalia – fertility festival (celebrated around Valentine's Day) which featured young boys being smeared with blood and then running naked around the Palatine while being whipped with the milk soaked hides of freshly slaughtered animals

Maternalia- Mother's day

Liberalia- festival marking the coming of age of young men

The Army:

Legio =legion; group of 5,000 soldier, headed by a **legatus**

Centurion = officer who commanded 100 men

Castra = military camp
Tabellarius = messenger
Aquila- golden eagle standard carried by each legion
Aquilifer = “Eagle Bearer” carried each legion’s standard (like a flag) into battle
Signifer- carried the standard of each century
Hasta = spear
Scutum = shield
Gladius = sword
Pugio –dagger
Lorica Segmentata – armor made of strips of steel
Lorica Squaemata – scale armor (a leather vest with metal scales stitched on)
Lorica Haemata – chain mail
Caligae = soldier’s boots; they had hobnails on them, like cleats do
Ballista – large crossbow (suitable for launching tree-trunk sized bolts)
Scorpio – smaller more readily portable crossbow
Onager – torsion operated catapult; literally means ‘the kicking donkey’
Turrus – siege tower
Testudo – literally ‘the Turtle’; shield wall formation used by soldiers
Aries –battering ram
vexillarius- flag bearer
funditores- slingers (they were more deadly and had a greater range than archers)

Meals:

ientaculum = breakfast
prandium = lunch
cena = Dinner
vesperna – a light supper
ante cena/ gustus – appetizers
secunda mensa – dessert
mappa – napkin
lectus - dining couch
taberna – shop, including restaurants
thermopolium – fast food shop
garum = fish sauce
panis = bread
Vinum = wine
Mulsum = honeyed wine
Mel = honey
Uvae = grapes
Perna = pork (the favorite meat of the Romans)
popina = fast food joint even more casual than a thermopolium

see more bolded terms below in the text

MEALS

A rich Roman would begin his day with a light **ientaculum**, or breakfast, which his slaves would prepare for him. This might consist of fresh bread spread with honey and bit of cheese or fresh fruit. Some would wash this down with warm milk. A poor Roman would probably eat no breakfast at all, or if he did, it would consist of some scraps of bread or a bit or

cheese.

Lunch, **prandium** could either be a light snack, or the largest meal of the day, depending on dinner plans. A light lunch might be bread, cheese and olives with a few slices of cured sausage and a cup of watered wine. A heavy lunch would be a hot meal that could run several courses long (you will see some sample menus later in the reading). Many poor folk would probably eat their most substantial meal at lunch time. For most, this was a thick porridge of boiled grains, called **puls**.

If a Roman had eaten a large lunch, he might have a simple supper, called **vesperna**, of cold leftovers. If the evening meal was to be the main meal of the day, it would be more elaborate meal of several courses called **cena**. Now we shall talk about what it was the Romans actually ate on a regular basis.

COMMON FOODS

If you look at the list of modern foods the Romans did not eat, you are probably quite glad that you are not a Roman. Many of our favorite foods and most common ingredients are on that list. But for their times, the Romans ate very well. They ate a varied diet of fruits, grains, vegetables, meats and fish brought from all over the empire. Grains (**frumentum**) were a staple of the ancient diet, either in the form of porridge (**puls**) or as bread (**panis**). **Puls**, a porridge made of boiled grains, was the main food source for many poor Romans. Often, it might be their only meal of the day. Sometimes it was mixed with honey or scraps of fruit, or it might be cooked with a bit of meat, cheese and vegetables. This might sound rather unappetizing, but consider modern grain dishes such as hot oatmeal, cream of wheat, grits or pilaf. This was a very similar idea.

The Roman enjoyed many of the same fruits we do (minus bananas, pineapples, kiwi, mangos, papaya and the like). They enjoyed fresh fruits such as apples (**malum**), pears (**pirum**), peaches, grapes (**uva**), cherries (**cerasus**) and assorted berries. Other fruits were often eaten dried as well as fresh, these included plums, apricots, dates (**palmula**) and figs (**ficus**). Fruits and nuts (**nux, nucis**) such as walnuts, almonds and hazelnuts were common desserts.

Vegetables (**holera**) were also an important part of most Roman diets. Many houses had areas set aside for small gardens, and every town had a market where fresh vegetables were sold. Some Roman favorites included peas (**cicer, pisum**), lentils, beans (**fabae**), (all three of which were particularly handy because they could be dried and stored) cabbage (**brassica**), carrots, radishes, beets, turnips, cucumbers, zucchini and wild nettles (not something we eat very often!)

Those Romans who were rich enough would have enjoyed a variety of meat (**caro, carnis**), fish (**piscis**) and cheese (**caseus**) in their diet. The favorite meat of the Romans was pork. Pork was popular both because pigs were easy and inexpensive to raise and also because it lent itself so well to curing as ham (**perna**) and bacon. Veal was also a common meat, since young cow is particularly tender. Beef was also eaten, along with lamb. Chicken (**pullus** or **gallinaceus**) was considered something of a luxury since ancient chickens were somewhat scrawny and did not produce much meat, and because hens were more valued for their eggs (**ovum**) than their meat. Many other types of wild birds and game were also featured on the Roman dinner table, including duck, goose, pheasant, thrush and rabbit. Ancient cooks did not like to waste any part of the animal so brains, livers, kidneys, tongues, intestines and much more went into special dishes or were made into sausage. One of the most famous and usual meat items the Romans ate was dormice (**glires**). These little chipmunk like rodents were specially raised on rich diets of milk and grain. Then the plump little critters were killed and stuffed for a tasty (and expensive) treat.

Fish was very common in the diet of rich and poor alike. No place in Italy is particularly far from the sea and salt and fresh water species are abundant. In addition to lobster, crab,

shrimp, tuna, and all sorts of white fish, the Romans enjoyed clams, mussels, scallops, oysters, squid and octopus. Some fish was eaten fresh, other types were salted or smoked to preserve them.

Roman cooks would combine these items into a wide variety of dishes, which were flavored with an equally wide variety of herbs and spices. From early days the Romans mined salt (**sal, salis**) and used it heavily for flavoring and curing foods. Most homes had extensive herb gardens where native Mediterranean herbs like parsley, dill, mint, sage, rosemary, lovage, mustard and thyme were grown. Other spices were imported from the near and far east. The most popular of these were black pepper (**piper**), cloves, cumin, coriander, cinnamon and allspice. It was a sign of wealth and status to use these imported spices heavily, and among those who could afford it, black pepper was the most popular spice of all. Other important ancient seasoning including honey (**mel**), which was the only real sweetener available, and a special fish sauce known as **garum** (see box for full details).

The Romans rarely used butter in their cooking, instead they relied heavily on olive oil (**oleum**).

Drinking Parties

One can hardly think of food and the Romans without thinking of wine (**vinum**). People often have the conception that the Romans were hopeless drunkards who drank wine three meals a day. But while it is true they drank wine in large quantities, ancient people did not always drink it to get drunk or at great strength. Romans drank wine because it did not spoil, like unfermented drinks and was safer than water, which was often contaminated. When they drank wine, most Romans mixed it with water. This was both to cut down on the alcohol content of the drink and to help decontaminate the water, since the alcohol in the wine killed some of the potentially harmful bacteria in the water. Some elaborate would end with a drinking party, called a **comissatio**. At a **comissatio**, one guest would be chosen **magister bibendum** (also called **arbiter** or **rex bibendum**), or master of the drinks. His job was to determine how heavily the wine should be watered, and then mix it. If he wanted the wine to be strong, he might choose two parts wine to one part water, if he wanted it weak, he might do the opposite. There were many types and grades of wine. Children usually drank a less fermented wine more similar to grape juice, called **mustum**. With appetizers and dessert many Romans drank a wine mixed with honey and spices called **mulsum**. Bad wine was quite common, and was often vinegary or full of grit and pulp. Some sources instruct drinks to strain such wine through their teeth to help filter out twigs and small rocks. The best wine was a variety called **Falerian**. It was quite expensive and could be aged for a hundred years without losing its quality.

Political Office:

In the Republic, Romans held political offices in a very specific order; this “Ladder to Success” was called the **Cursus Honorem**

Step 1= **Quaestor** = treasurer / tax collector

Step 2= **Praetor** = judge

Step 3= **Aedile** = person in charge of public games/ entertainment; this was optional

Step 4= **Consul** = chief magistrate

Other officials:

Proconsul = governor of a province; usually a former consul

Censor = official in charge of public building projects & morality

Tribune = representative of the common folk; had the power of **veto** = power to forbid a law from passing (literally means “I forbid”)

Lictor—honor guard for other magistrates, who carried a special bundle of rods and axes

called **Fasces**

Publicanus—tax collector

Vigiles –firemen

Patricians- noblemen

Plebeians – freeborn commoners

Equestrians – wealthy commoners

cursus publicus - governmental postal service

frumentarius - overseer of the the grain supply (many poor Romans depended on the free handouts of grain provided by the government, so this was a pretty important job); the free bread and grain provided to the people was called the **annona**

7 Hills of Rome:

1. **Capitoline**

2. **Palatine**

3. **Quirinal**

4. **Viminal**

5. **Esquiline**

6. **Caelian**

7. **Aventine**

Religion:

Pontifex Maximus = chief priest (name means “great bridge builder”)

Augur—priest who told the future by watching the flight of birds

Haurispex—priest who foretold the future by looking at animals innards (guts)

Vestal Virgins—priestesses who had to keep the sacred fire of Vesta lit; if they let it go out, they were stoned to death

Salii – the Leaping Priest of Mars

Flamen Dialis- chief priest of Jupiter; there were 15 flamines (less priests); the Flamen Dialis was forbidden to: touch metal, ride a horse or see a corpse; he alone could wear the

albogaleus or **apex**, which is a white, rounded cap with a pointy spike affixed to the top

Rex Nemitorum – high priest of Diana in the city of Aricia; he could only obtain this post by killing the previous incumbent in trial by battle; to keep the post, he had to defeat all challengers in battle

Rex Sacrorum – priesthood reserved for patricians; they performed monthly sacrifices and carried ceremonial axes

Ara – altar

Suovetaurilia- special type of sacrifice involving the slaughter of a pig, a sheep and a bull

pullarius- priest who interpreted the movements of the **pulli**, sacred military chickens (before major battles, the pullarius fed the chickens and watched their eating habits; if they ate well, the pullarius proclaimed "*Tripudium solistimum*": *the corn danced*. This was considered a good omen; if the chickens squawked and wouldn't eat, this was considered a really bad omen.

victimarius- religious attendant who prepared animals for sacrifice and led them to the altar

popa- religious attendant who hit sacrificial animals with a large mallet (hammer) to stun them before the kill

cultrarius- religious attendant who killed the animal and exposed its entrails for examination

epulones- priests who organized the special feasts held after sacrifices

Parts of the Body:

Caput =head

Oculus = eye

Aurus = ear

Os = mouth

Lingua = tongue

Collum = neck

Cor, cordis = heart

Manus = hand

Digitis = finger/toe

Pes, pedis = foot

Bracchium = arm

Den, dentis = tooth

Slaves and Freedmen:

vilicus-overseer; slave who watched other slaves

libertus—freed slave

FUG— stands for *Fugitivus* was branded on the forehead of a slave who had tried to escape

pileus— hat, which was symbol of freedom which was given to freed slaves

manumission— act of freeing a slave, usually involved giving them a slap on the cheek

nomenclator- slave whose job was to remind his master of the names of those they met while out in public

Bizarre slave jobs:

praegustator- food taster (to check for poison)

alipilius- arm hair plucker

unctor- masseuse (who rubbed you with oil)

unctuarium- room at the baths where massages took place

sandaligerula- removed and changed his master or mistress's shoes

flabellifer- slave who carried large fans and flapped them on command to cool their master

fistulator- slave who played a small pitchpipe to help public speakers begin a speech at a desirable pitch

vicarius - a stand in; a slave hired to do another's job; slaves could hire their own stand-in's by making money through a **peculium**, which was a sum of money belong to their master which they managed or invested on their masters' behalf; if the slave invested skillfully and made a profit, he or she got to keep a portion of it as personal income

Gross slave jobs:

carnifex - executioner/torturer (forced to live apart from others in a hovel outside the city walls)

silentarius - slave who would keep other slaves quiet in the presence of their masters (ironically, by whipping them)

stercorarius- sewage remover; slave who carried away liquid or solid bodily waste from cesspits not connected to the public sewage network

Social Status:

patronus – patron; wealthy or influential Roman who provided support, protection and jobs to underlings in return for various services rendered by those underlings

cliens – client; a underling supported by a patron; performed jobs and other services for his patron; clients were expected to contribute to the dowry of their patrons' daughters

sportula- goodie basket of food and such given by a patron to his client

Funerals:

Columbarium—tomb with niches to hold pots (called urns) full of the ashes of dead people

Cenotaph—empty tomb, used when remains were unavailable

Libitenarius/ designator—undertaker; his job was to take care of the dead body, and oversee burial

Conclamatio—ceremony in which the eldest son would call out the name of the dead person three times (to confirm that he was dead), then proclaim, “He had been called” and shut his eyes

Cypress branches or **pine branches** were hung over the doorway of the house where someone had died

CHILDHOOD

The birth of a child was an important occasion for any family. Soon after birth, the newborn baby was placed at his father’s feet. The child’s father would show that he accepted the child as his own by lifting him up and holding him high, for all to see. In rare instances, a father might refuse to pick up his child. This might happen if he thought the child was not his own, or if the child was horribly deformed. In that case, the poor baby would be put out on the street and abandoned. This practice was very cruel, and luckily it almost never happened.

Infant mortality was very high and new parents were reluctant to get too attached to new baby in case the child died soon after birth. For this reason, newborns were referred to simply as **pupae** until they were nine days old. At that point, when survival seemed more certain, they were officially named. The naming day was known as the **dies lustricus**. The naming ceremony was a joyous occasion, somewhat similar to baptismal ceremonies that many modern babies are given. The proud parents would give the new baby a special good luck charm, called a **bullae**. This little charm was a little locket, or sack, which Roman children continued to wear until adulthood. No one is quite certain what bullae contained, but most assume they contained a charm sacred to the child’s **genius** or guardian spirit (much like a guardian angel). Friends and family would give the newly named baby little rattles made in all different shapes. These rattles, known as **crepundia**, were put on a string and placed around the baby’s neck as a toy. If a baby were lost or stolen, these rattles could help in identifying the missing youngster.

In wealthy families most of the day to day care for young children was taken care of by nursemaids (much like modern nannies). These nursemaids were usually slaves, and many were Greek, since wealthy Romans wanted their children to grow up speaking Greek as well as Latin. Often children kept up strong bonds with their nursemaids long after they had grown up. While slaves saw to their basic care, it was generally the children’s mothers who saw to their early schooling. A mother was expected to teach her child how to speak Latin properly, and to train him or her in the essential Roman virtues of modesty, obedience and bravery. To show the children how they should behave, Roman mothers often regaled them with the stories of their brave ancestors. Fathers were expected to help their sons learn the basics of fighting and weaponry. Aristocratic fathers also made certain to bring their young sons with them almost everywhere while conducting their day to day business, so the children could learn by experience how noblemen acted and what they did.

At age seven, most boys went off to school (**ludus**). Girls usually stayed at home and learned household crafts and management skills from their mothers. Only wealthy girls received any further schooling, and it was generally done at home by private tutors. Schools were widely available, and quite cheap, but their quality varied widely. School teachers were generally Greek slaves, or other poor freedmen, and were the children did not often respect them (though many feared them). Class met wherever there was space available. Often this meant having class in noisy market stalls or cramped apartment rooms.

A typical school day began before dawn. A young boy would be walked to school by a slave called a **paedagogus**, who would carry his bags and keep out of trouble. A boy’s **paedagogus** often

became a lifelong friend, like a nursemaid did. Students would study by candlelight until dawn and work on until noon. They would meet again after lunch and a siesta break (which lasted until about 2:00 PM) and then they would continue work until dusk.

Young boys were taught by a teacher called a **litterator**. The litterator focused on the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. Students learned to write by copying letters over and over onto a wax tablet, called a **tabella**. They used a pointed stick, called a **stylus** to scratch the letters into the wax. Students learned to read by repeating syllables, then words then whole sentences after their teachers again and again. Learning math was harder for young Romans, since Roman numerals are very awkward to work with. Students were encouraged to work things out in their heads. When things were really tough, a student could use complicated methods of finger counting, or an abacus to help out.

For many young Romans a few years with a litterator was the extent of their schooling. Sons of richer men would probably continue on to a **grammaticus**. This schooling was the equivalent of junior high and high school. A grammaticus instructed students in the finer points of grammar and used famous works like the Iliad and Odyssey (and later the Aeneid) to teach elements of literary criticism, geography, history, philosophy and ethics. Geometry and music rounded out the usual curriculum. The Romans placed a high value on memorization, and students were required to memorize long passages of famous literature and Roman law code.

Childhood was relatively short for the Romans. A girl was considered old enough to be married off by age twelve, and boys were considered adults somewhere between the age of 14 and 17. When a boy came of age, the occasion was celebrated with an elaborate ceremony. Usually this ceremony was timed to coincide with the holiday of **Liberalia** which fell of March 17. This festival to **Liber**, Freedom, was appropriate for celebrating the newfound freedoms of a young man. Early in the morning on the day of the celebration, the boy would offer his bulla and toga praetexta to the household gods. His father would then help him into a toga virilis, the toga of manhood. Then the young man and his family (and as many guests a could be assembled) would walk in a proud procession to Forum, where the young man's name would be added to the rolls of citizens. Then the group would make an offering the at the temple of Liber on the Capitoline hill and return home for a party.

Once a young man reached adulthood, he had several options. Young men who had demonstrated a flair for writing and speaking (and had wealthy parents) would likely study with a **rhetor**, a teacher who specialized in the art of public speaking. Often youths would be sent to Greece to study under the finest rhetors and acquire the polish that came with international living and exposure to Greek culture. Such studies were the Roman equivalent of going to college. Young men with less money to spend or a more military bent often joined the army, since eligibility began at age 17.

It is important to bear in mind that all of these customs and possibilities generally pertained to the rich and middle classes of Rome (since we know the most about them.) The poorest children were forced to help their parents earn a living from the earliest possible moment. Such children were probably apprenticed to craftsmen of various sorts at a young age, and often took on adult workloads and responsibilities at a tragically young age.

Terms to know: all bolded item in text

WEDDINGS

The Romans had several different forms of marriage to suit the different needs and circumstances of the different social classes. From the earliest times, Patricians were married in a ceremony known as **confarreatio**. Patricians could only marry other patricians in this rite, and they considered it the only one blessed by the gods. Because of this, certain priesthoods could only be held by men whose

children had been married by *confarreatio*. A *confarreatio* was officiated by high priests and involved a complex ceremony which transferred the woman from her father's household into that of her husband. A woman married in *confarreatio* basically became her husband's possession. This complete power of a husband over his wife and all her possessions was known as **manus**. This aspect of the *confarreatio* later became so unpopular among women that it had to be removed in order to convince women to be married in this way.

Since plebians could not use the *confarreatio* ceremony, they had several of their own. A simple common law marriage, as was common among the poor, and some Plebians, was known as **usus**. It had no particular ceremony and simply consisted of the couple living together as man and wife. It does not appear to have involved **manus**. Many plebians used a slightly more prestigious form of marriage called **coemptio**. The *coemptio* ceremony was almost as old as the *confarreatio*, and was based in ancient practices of purchasing a wife. A *coemptio* ceremony was the fictitious sale of the bride by her father to the groom. It did not really involve the exchange of money for a woman, but it did treat the woman somewhat like a piece of property exchanged between men. The *coemptio* marriage also involved the man having the power of **manus** over his wife.

By our modern standards, Romans often married quite young. Women could be married off when they were as young as 12 or 13 (though late teens was more common), and men were often only a few years older. As shocking as this may seem to us, it makes a certain amount of sense, considering the shorter life span of ancient peoples. The process of engagement is similar to what is still used today. A man sought the permission of his intended bride's father and the future bride and groom took part in a brief ceremony stating their intent, called a **sponsalia**. The ceremony was called a **sponsalia**, because each party used the vow "*Spondeo*" which means "*I promise*". It was customary for the man to give his fiancée, who was then called a **sponsa**, a gift, usually a ring. This is the source of our custom of the man giving his fiancée an engagement ring. The *sponsalia* ceremony was not legally binding, it was merely a statement of intent, and either party could break it off with written notification. Usually, the engaged woman's family (or the bride herself, if she were independent) would give her fiancé a dowry called a **dos**. In marriages with **manus** the whole amount became the husband's, in marriages without, a share of the gift was set aside solely for the woman's use.

Once these arrangements had been made, the marriage could be held. Unlike modern weddings, which require obtaining a license and need to be overseen by a public or religious official, all that a Roman wedding required to be legal was the consent of both parties. The bride and groom stood in the presence of a witness, held hands and swore their consent. But while this was all that was strictly necessary, many ceremonies were much more elaborate, particularly the *confarreatio*.

The first step to holding a successful *confarreatio* wedding was to set a date. This was no easy task, since the Romans were very superstitious. Over half the days in the year were considered unlucky for weddings for one reason or another. Once a day had been set, the families began their preparations. The night before the wedding, the bride-to-be dedicated her *bulla* (special locket) at the *lararium* (shrine to the Lares and Penates) in her father's house. If she was still quite young, she would also bring her dolls and toys to the altar to be laid aside. Then, for good luck, she would try on her wedding dress.

Before sunrise on the day of the wedding, the omens would be taken by an **auger**. An **auger** was a priest who told the future by examining the entrails of animals. The **auger** would oversee the sacrifice of a sheep, and examine his entrails. If what he saw was favorable, the wedding would precede.

On the morning of the wedding, the bride's mother would help dress her daughter one last time. This tended to be a very tender ceremony. First the bride would put on her wedding dress, called a **tunica recta**. A *tunica recta* was a floor length dress that was woven in one piece; it was generally yellow in color. The *tunica recta* was tied at the waist with a wool string knotted into the "**Herculean Knot**" or knot of Hercules. Only the new wedded husband had the right to untie this knot. Over the

dress was draped a brilliant flame colored (orangish) veil called the **flammeum**. The bride's hair was carefully divided into six sections with the point of a spear, **hasta**, or a special comb designed to look like a spear. Each section of hair was coiled and secured with ribbon. This unusual hairstyle was also used by the Vestal Virgins. To complete the ensemble, the bride wore atop her head a wreath made from flowers she had picked herself. The groom's garb was much less elaborate (as is typical today). He wore a formal toga and a wreath of handpicked flowers.

At the appointed time, the groom would go to the house of the bride. Friends, family and clients would accompany him. The bride's house would be festooned with flowers, tree boughs, ribbons of wool and even tapestries woven with happy scenes.

The bride and groom would stand in the atrium of the house. A matron of honor, called a **pronuba**, would lead the bride to the groom, and they would join hands. Ten witnesses, one to represent each of the ten original patrician clans had to be on hand. Then the bride would recite the age old wedding vow, "*Quando tu Gaius, ego Gaia.*" This means, "*Where ever you are Gaius, I am Gaia.*" This was used regardless of the names of the bride and groom. Gaius and Gaia, which in ancient times had been a nomen not a praenomen, were used to represent everyone. The spirit of the vow was that the bride would come into the groom's family (as indicated by using his nomen) and go with him where ever he went.

After they had exchanged vows, the bride and groom would sit side by side near the family altar on stools covered with the hide of the sheep that had been sacrificed for the omen earlier that morning. Priests would use the altar to make an offering to Jupiter. The priests were attended by a small boy, called a **camillus**, who carried all the instruments necessary for the sacrifice in a covered basket. The offering was a piece of special cake made from *far* (spelt). During the sacrifice, the bride and groom would eat some of this cake as the priests recited prayers to Juno, the patroness of weddings and prayers for fruitfulness and health. With that, the marriage ceremony was over, and the guests would congratulate the newlyweds with cries of *Feliciter!* (Good luck!).

After the ceremony, the newly weds and their guests would celebrate with a wedding feast which often lasted until evening. During the dinner guests would be given pieces of the *far* wedding cake to eat for good luck, just as we do today.

Ius Conubii: Right of Intermarriage

In the earliest days of Roman history, only patricians were citizens, and only their wedding ceremony, *confarreatio*, was legal. Once plebians were made citizens, *coemptio* was recognized as legal, but plebians were still forbidden from marrying patricians. Plebians did not gain the right to intermarry, called **ius conubii** until 445 B.C. When patricians and plebians did marry each other, they usually used the *coemptio* ceremony.

After the banquet had ended, one of the most important parts of the ritual began. Although consent before witnesses was the only real qualification for a marriage, *confarreatio* were not valid unless it ended with the bride being escorted to the house of the groom. All the guests, and even simple bystanders in the streets would join the procession to the groom's house. Before leaving the bride's house, everyone would sing the ancient wedding hymn. Then the groom would snatch the bride from the arms of her mother (it was important

to do this with a show of force—as a reminder of how the Romans had once snatched their wives from the Sabines). Then the procession would set out, with men carrying torches and musicians with flutes and lyres leading the way. The bride was attended by three young boys. Two held her hands, and the other carried the bridal torch, which was specially made with hawthorn branches. Other attendants carried symbolic weaving equipment, to represent the bride's role in her new household.

As the procession wound its way through the streets, people would sing bawdy marriage songs called *versus Fescennini* and shout the ancient wedding cry, *Talassio!* This cry was so ancient, not even the Romans had any idea what it meant. The groom distributed nuts, sesame cakes and other sweets to the crowds of onlookers, who perhaps threw some of them back, as we throw rice or birdseed.

When the bride arrived at her new home, the final ceremony of the evening occurred. The bride wrapped wool around the doorway of her new home, to symbolize her role as head of the household, and anointed the door with oil, to symbolize the prosperity she hoped would attend her married life. The groom then lifted the bride carefully over the threshold, since it was considered very bad luck for a bride to stumble while entering her house for the first time. Special guests accompanied the newly weds into the house, where the groom presented his new wife with fire and water, to represent her household duties. Then the bride lit wood that stood ready in the hearth with the special marriage torch. Then she doused the torch and threw it to the guests, who all tried to catch it, since it was considered very lucky.

Then the pronuba led the new bride to the marriage bed, which was placed in the atrium for this occasion. The bride recited a special prayer and the guests left the newly weds alone for their wedding night. The next day, the couple hosted their first party at their new house.

Terms to know: all bolded

Terms to Know:

Ius conubii-right to intermarriage between patricians and plebians

Sponsalia- engagement ceremony

Sponsa- engaged woman

Dos- dowry

Professions in the Ancient World

tonsor - barber (also did basic dentistry); used a curved iron razor called a **novacula**

designator - undertaker

liberarii - personal secretaries, editors or librarians (the term refers to all literate slaves)

notarii- reporters (particularly took notes during court cases); these were written up as articles in Rome's daily newspaper (though it was not written on paper, but instead posted on tablets), the **Acta Diurna** or Daily Record

ornatrix - hairdresser

aquarius - water carrier

pistor - baker

vitrarius -glass maker

mystagogus - tour guide (common at ancient tourist destinations, like the city of Delphi)

myropolides - perfume seller

lecticarii - litter bearer; these men (usually slaves), carried the sedan chairs (chairs on poles) used to carry wealthy people around city streets

sandalarius- shoe maker

gelotopoios or **scurra**- comedian

medicus- doctor

redemptor- builder

fabrius- carpenter; a **fabrii tignuarii** were table makers

urinatores- construction divers (they helped build ports: jetties, docks, sea walls, etc.) or salvage divers (who brought up goods from sunken ships); they could dive down to 90 ft. using lead weights and diving bells

agrimensor- surveyor; they helped lay out roads; they used a piece of surveying equipment called a **groma**

fullonus -fuller, laundryman--would clean clothing using a combination of urine, stomping, fuller's clay and rinsing

argentarius - auctioneer

praeco- town crier (made public announcements)

archimimus- funeral clown who impersonated the deceased as accurately as possible (other mimes performed slap stick routines at the funeral)

Random But Interesting Culture Terms/Facts:

clepsidra - water clock (worked rather like a sundial); they were used in courts to measure the amount of time given to lawyers to speak

fascinum- good luck charm or amulet

electrum - amber (greatly sought after and admired by the Romans for use in jewelry and charms; some believed it was the solidified urine of the lynx)

silphium- rare plant used as a spice and as a birth control; it was so sought after by the Romans they caused it to go extinct (it could not be cultivated, only gathered from the wild)

castella- cistern or water tower used to store water brought in by aqueducts

hydraulis- water organ

stigmata - tattoo (tattoos were applied to soldiers and slaves as a form of ID)

weird fact: the punishment for patricide was being put in a large sack together with a cat, a dog or a snake (or all of the above) and then thrown into the Tiber River