



## FACT SHEET

# ANCIENT ROME

About 753 B.C., Rome was founded as a tiny farming settlement on the banks of the Tiber River. It grew into one of the greatest empires in history. At its height, the Roman Empire spread over all the lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea. It expanded as far north as Britain and as far east as Mesopotamia. Ancient Rome was ruled by emperors. They had the help of the Senate. The Senate was a group of officials who were in charge of the army, laws, and taxes.

Rome was the biggest city in the empire. There was a square in the center of the city called the forum. There was a marketplace, government buildings, and temples in the forum. Every city had a public bath where men and women bathed separately. Theaters and amphitheaters provided plays, gladiator contests, and chariot racing for the citizens.

The Roman people belonged to different classes. Each class had different rights in the Empire. Romans were either citizens or noncitizens. Noncitizens included slaves, freedmen and freedwomen, women, and foreigners. Citizens included wealthy patricians (nobility), equites (businessmen), and plebeians (commoners).

### FOOD

The staple food for most Romans was a type of stew made of wheat, barley, beans, or lentils. Most people bought their food from stalls in the street instead of cooking. Wealthy Romans had their own kitchens and slaves who cooked for them. Romans seasoned their food with a spicy fish sauce called garum. Fish parts were salted, mixed with vinegar and herbs, and left in the sun until they turned into liquid.

When wealthy Romans entertained, they ate in the triclinium, or dining room. Guests reclined on couches arranged to make three sides of a square. The guests propped themselves up on their elbows and ate with their fingers. Throughout the meal, storytellers, musicians, and jugglers entertained the guests.

### SHELTER

Many Romans lived in large cities. The houses, stores, and workshops in the city were adjoined in a block of buildings. Houses were built of brick and cement. Poor people lived in rented rooms in blocks of apartments. Wealthy Romans lived in houses around courtyards and gardens. The houses looked plain from the outside. The insides of the walls were decorated with marble or painted with big murals. The floors were covered with marble or tiles. Romans had neatly laid out gardens with rows of clipped hedges and paths. Fountains, pools, and statues were also part of the gardens.

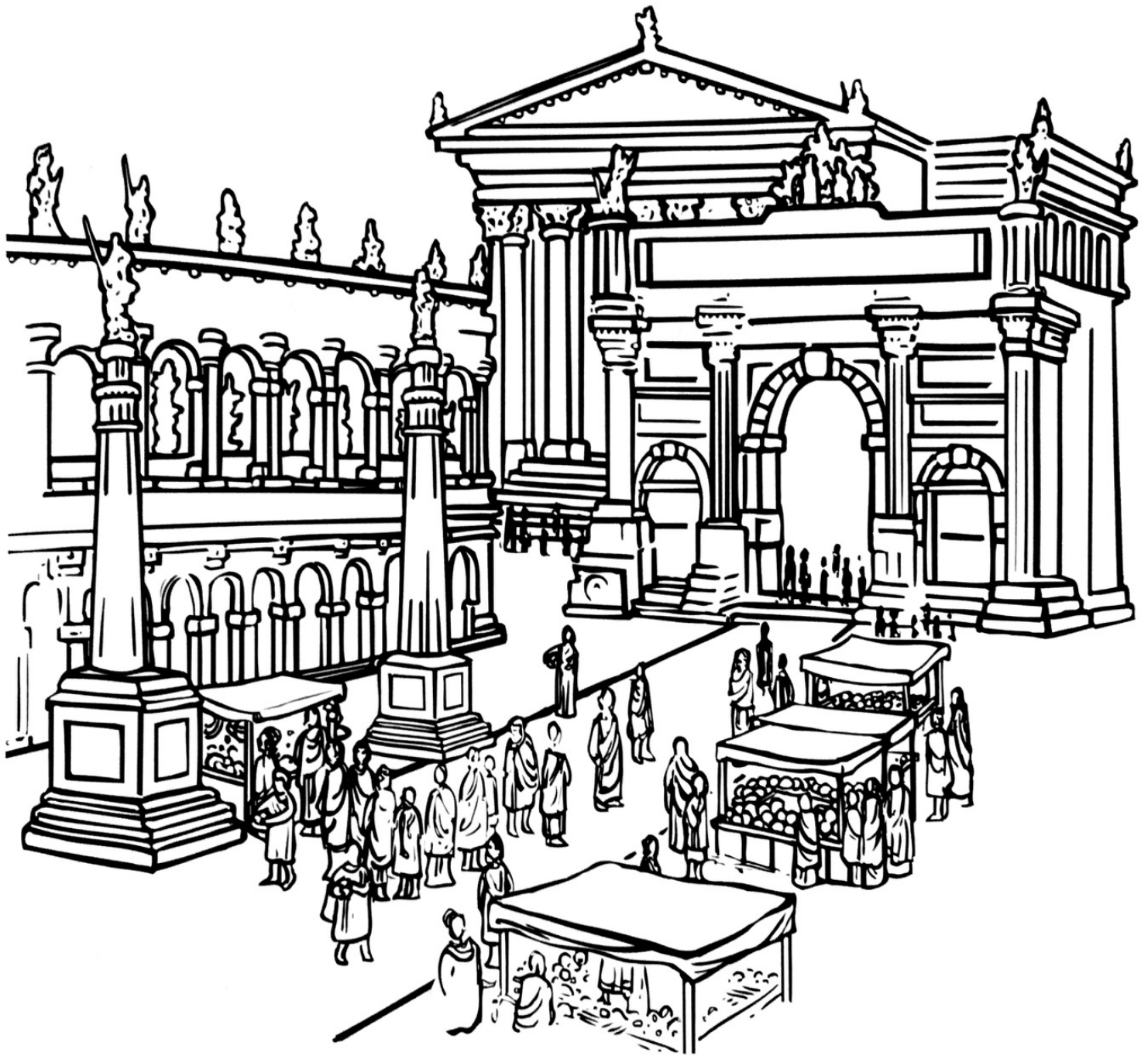
### CLOTHING

Roman men, women, and children wore a simple tunic made of wool or linen with a belt around the waist. Some of the tunics had sleeves and others were sleeveless. Women's tunics reached below the knees; men's were shorter. Roman men wore togas in public. The toga was a huge semicircular, woolen sheet that was wrapped around the body and arranged in folds. Women wore many different kinds of robes and dresses over their tunics. Everyone wore leather sandals. Men wore laurel wreaths on their heads as a mark of rank. The emperor wore one as a crown.

### CONTRIBUTIONS

The Romans copied many architectural styles from the Greeks. But they did invent concrete roads, the arch, vaulted domes, and aqueducts. The largest arena in the empire was the famous Colosseum where gladiators competed. The Latin language had influence on the Romance languages. The capital letters in the English alphabet are formed from the Roman alphabet. Roman numerals are used on clocks and on the cornerstones of major buildings and monuments. The names of the months also came from Rome. The names of the Roman gods and goddesses are seen in the naming of such things as the planets.

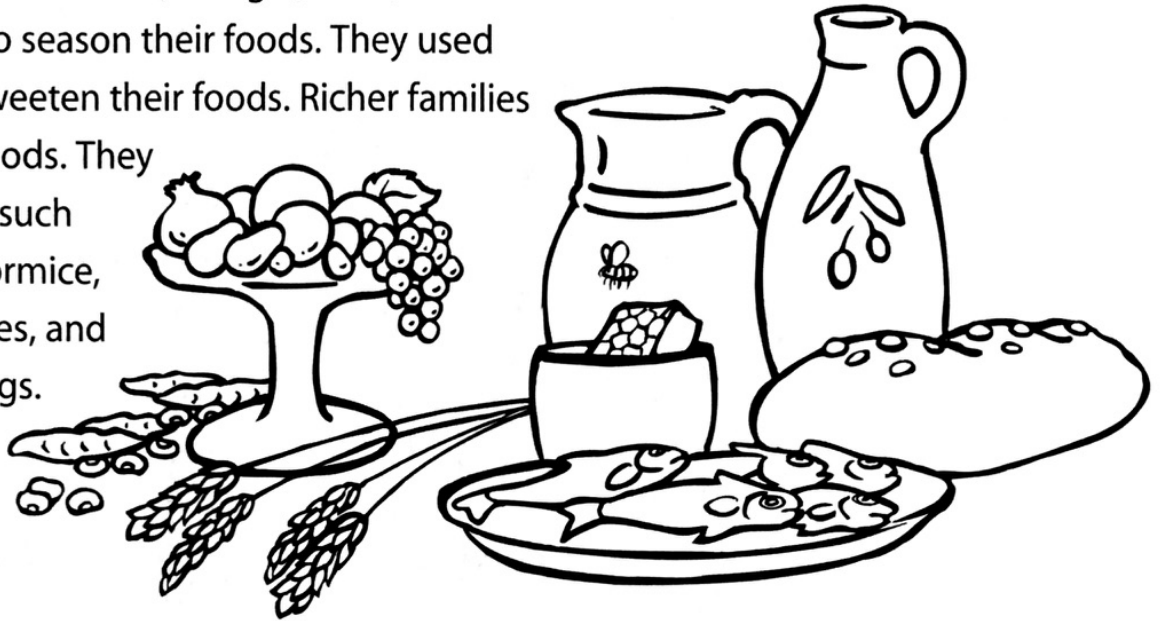
# ANCIENT ROME



Ancient Rome became a big empire in A.D. 117. An **empire** is when one nation takes control of other nations. The main part of the empire was the city of Rome. In the center of the city was the forum. The **forum** had a marketplace, government buildings, and temples.

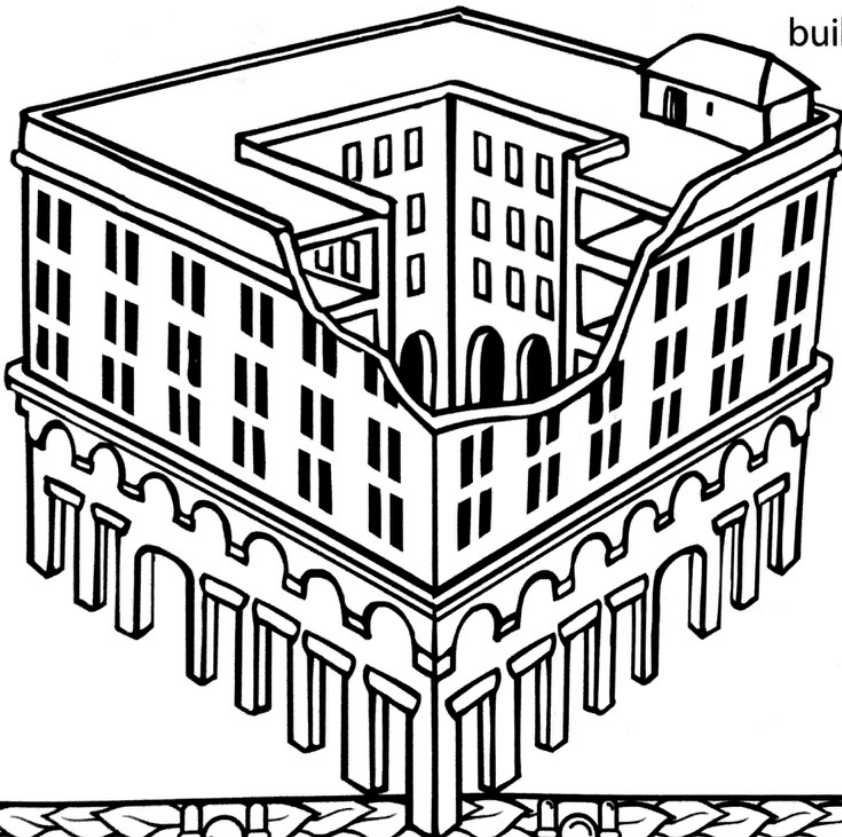


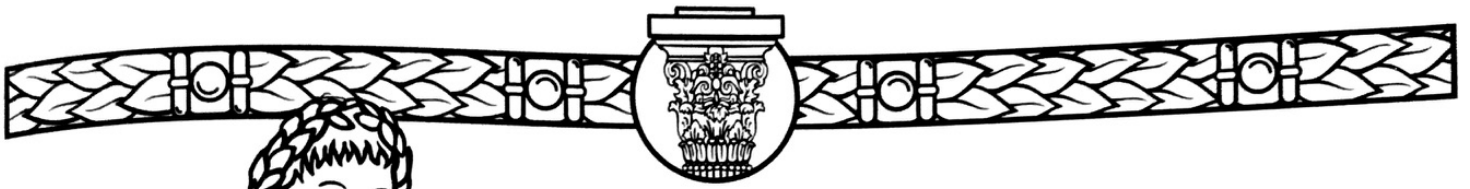
Romans started their meals with eggs and ended with fruit. They ate a type of stew made from barley, wheat, beans, and lentils. Families used olive oil, vinegar, wine, and fish sauce to season their foods. They used honey to sweeten their foods. Richer families ate fancy foods. They liked foods such as snails, dormice, stuffed olives, and peacock eggs.



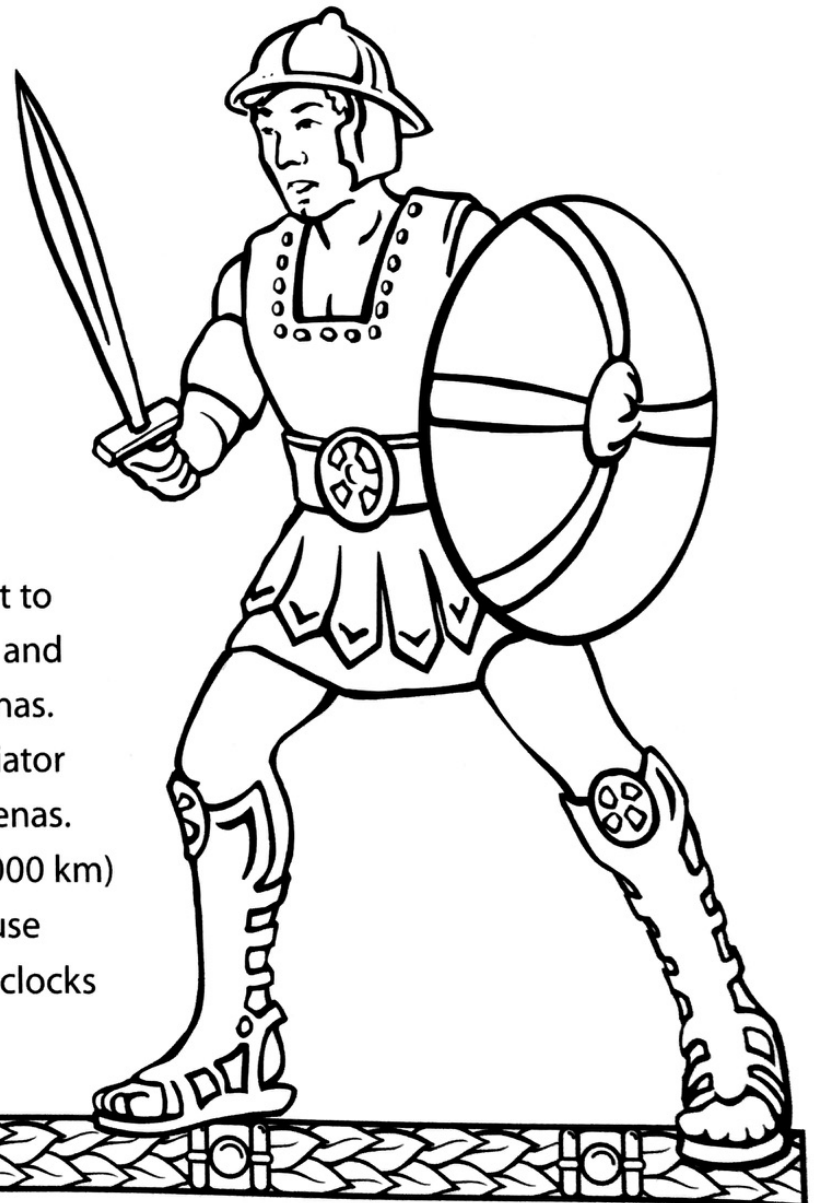
The streets of ancient Rome had large apartment houses. Many of them were six stories high. They were built of brick and cement. They were dark, hot, and smoky. Rich Romans lived in large houses built of stone or brick.

The houses looked plain from the outside. Inside they had big rooms filled with furniture and art. Courtyards and gardens surrounded these homes.





All Romans wore white tunics. Tunics were simple short or long gowns. They were made from wool or linen. Women wore dresses over their tunics. Rich women wore wigs, makeup, and jewelry. Some men wore togas. **Togas** were long white robes. People wore leather sandals.



The Romans were the first to use concrete to build arches and buildings. They built big arenas. They had chariot races, gladiator contests, and plays in the arenas. They built 50,000 miles (80,000 km) of paved roads. People still use **Roman numerals** for some clocks and watches.

