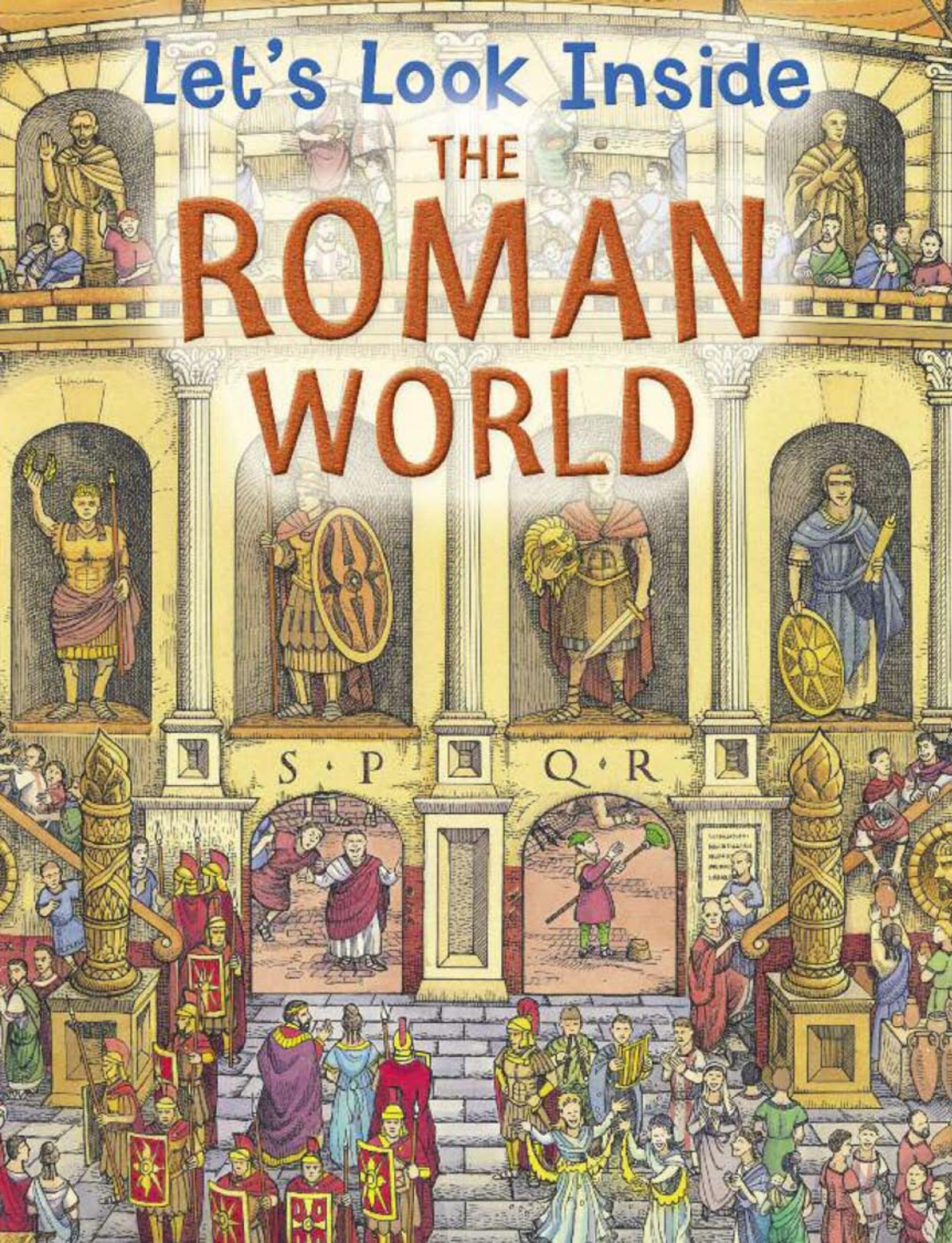


# Let's Look Inside

## THE

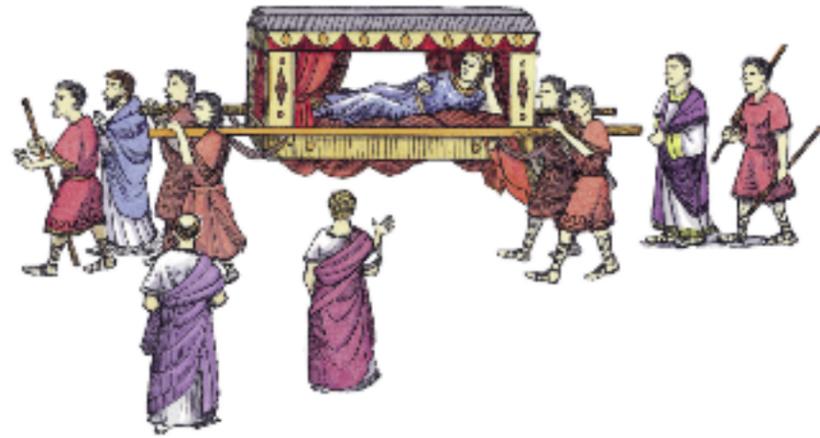
# ROMAN

# WORLD



Let's Look Inside

# ANCIENT ROME



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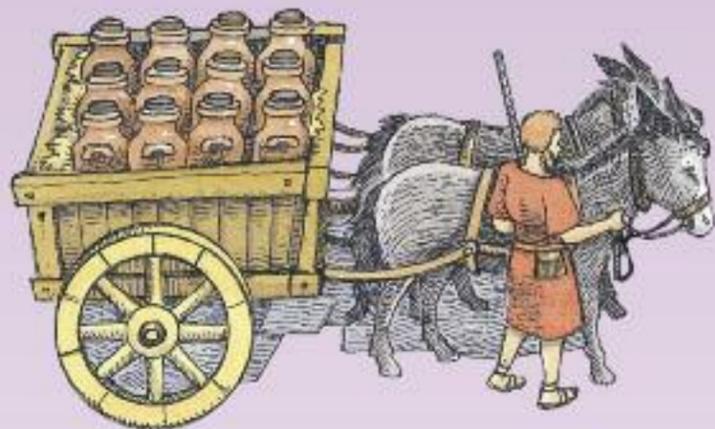
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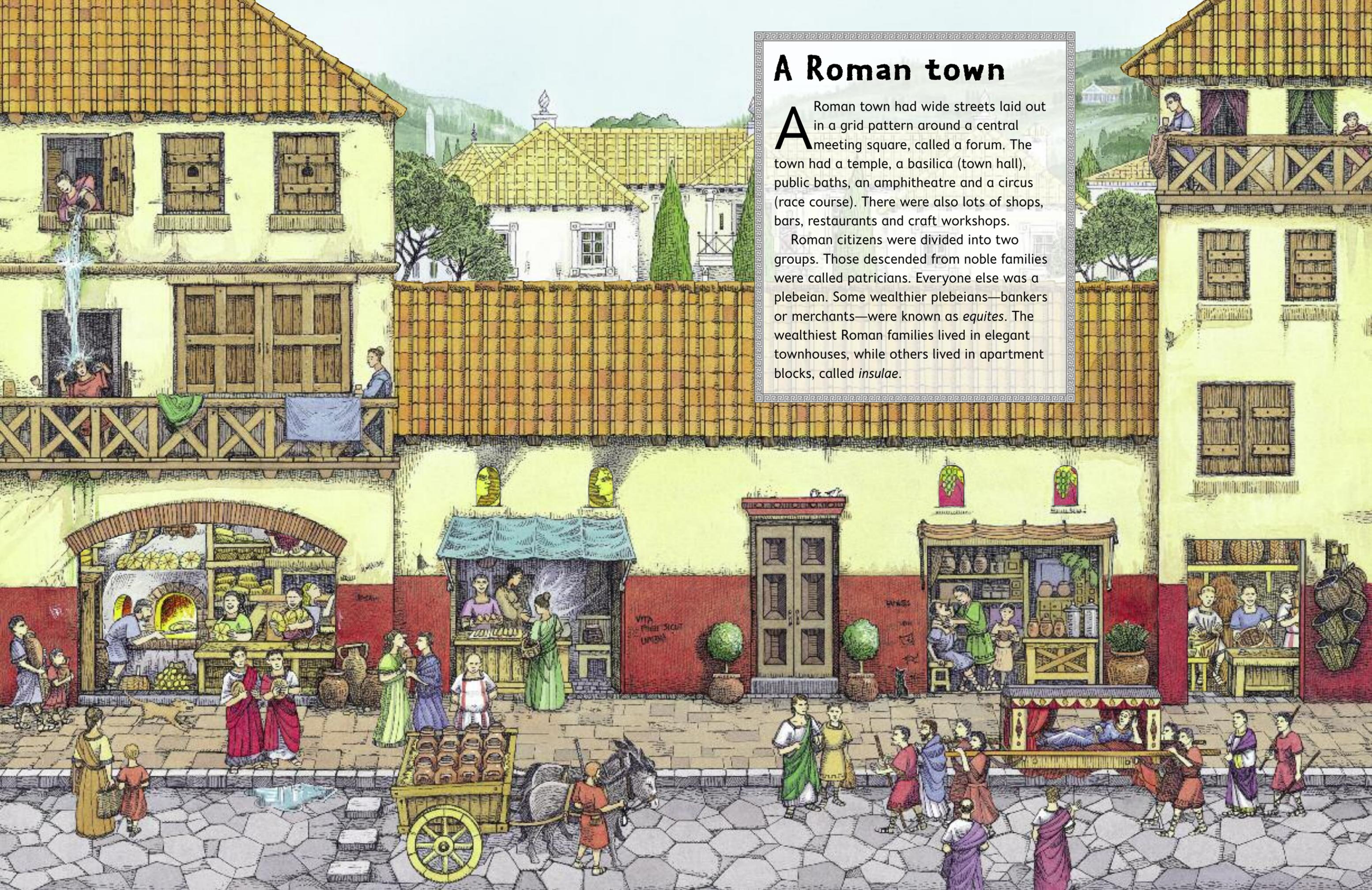


# Let's Look Inside ANCIENT ROME



Illustrated by Brian Lee

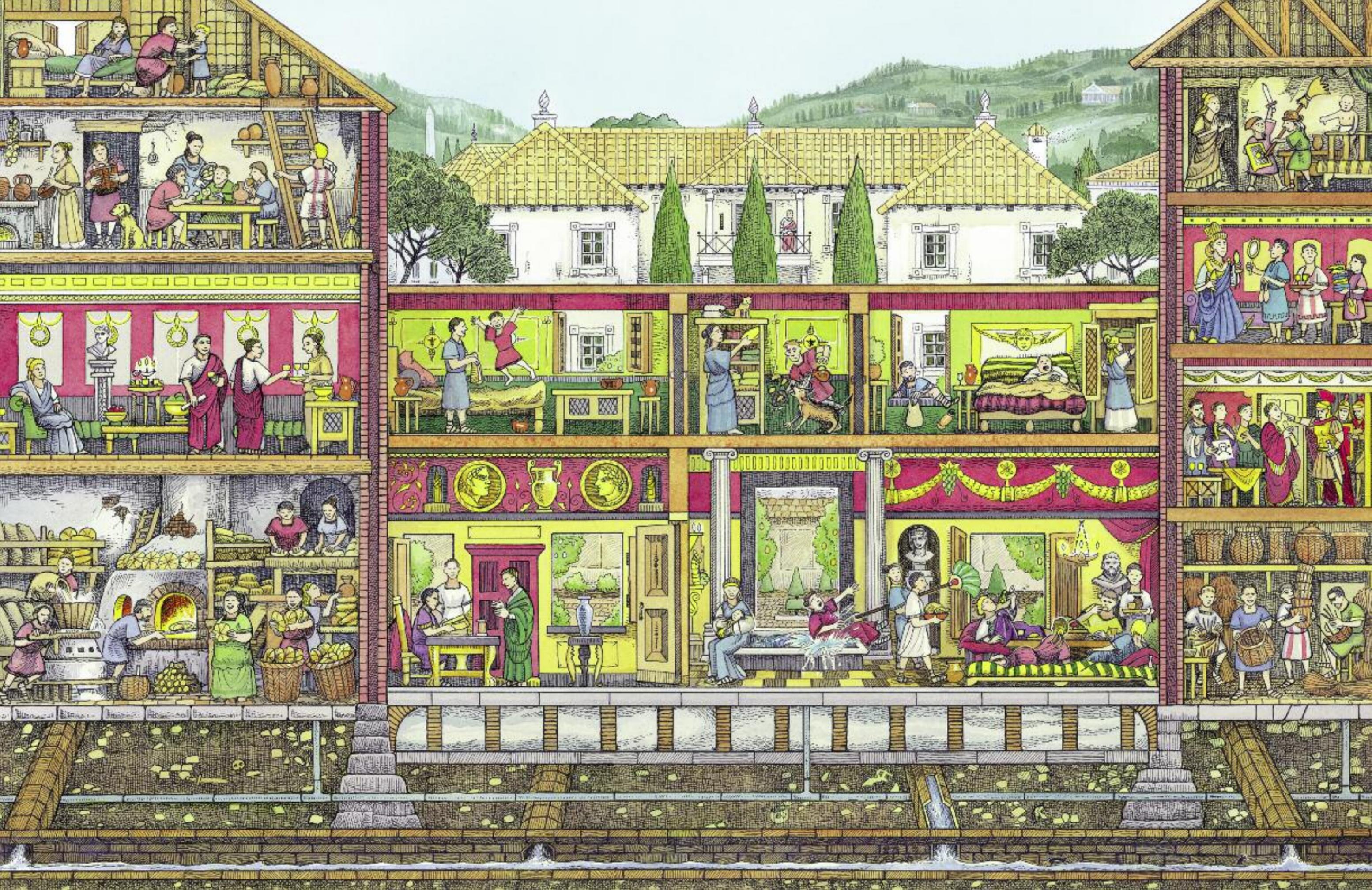
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## A Roman town

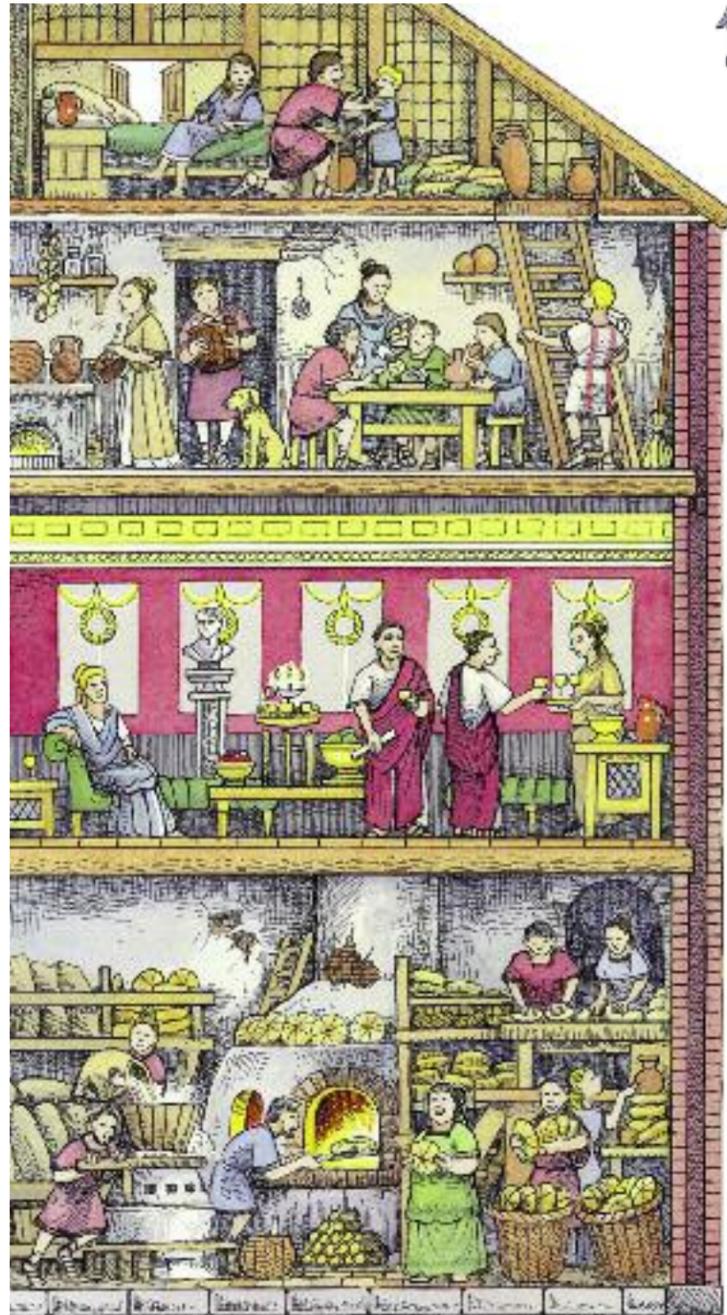
A Roman town had wide streets laid out in a grid pattern around a central meeting square, called a forum. The town had a temple, a basilica (town hall), public baths, an amphitheatre and a circus (race course). There were also lots of shops, bars, restaurants and craft workshops.

Roman citizens were divided into two groups. Those descended from noble families were called patricians. Everyone else was a plebeian. Some wealthier plebeians—bankers or merchants—were known as *equites*. The wealthiest Roman families lived in elegant townhouses, while others lived in apartment blocks, called *insulae*.

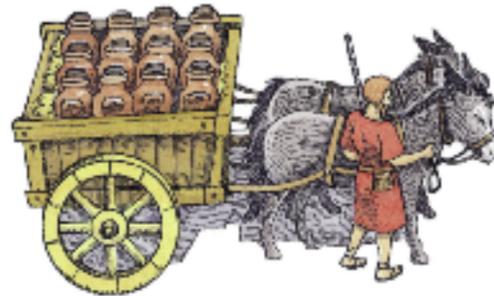


# How Romans lived

Apartment buildings (*below*) were several storeys high. Poorer families lived in small rooms at the top, while the better-off had large, comfortable rooms on the lower floors. Shops and bars occupied the ground floors. Most apartments had no running water or toilets, so people used public baths and lavatories, and fetched fresh water from public fountains on street corners. Apartments had no stoves for cooking either, because the risk of fire in these buildings was too great. For a hot dinner, Romans bought takeaways from a *thermopolium* (snack bar, *above right*).



The Romans took three meals a day. The poorer families might have a breakfast of bread or biscuits. Better-off Romans enjoyed fresh meat, fish, fruits and vegetables. They used honey to sweeten their food. Lunch was often a cold meal, eaten in the late morning. It usually consisted of bread, fruit, nuts, cheese, olives and salad. After lunch, the Romans enjoyed a midday rest, or siesta. Dinner was eaten at sunset. For the poor, this meal might be a hot wheat porridge, vegetables, fruit and—very rarely—meat. For the rich, dinner was a lavish three-course meal with a variety of meats and fish, accompanied by fine wine.



Bread was a very important part of a Roman's diet. Roman bakers (*left*) not only baked and sold bread, but they also ground the grain to produce their own flour. The grain was poured into the funnel at the top of the mill. The upper stone was turned by pushing against a wooden beam. The grain was ground between the turning stone and a fixed one. The flour then fell on to a circular shelf ready for making dough and baking.

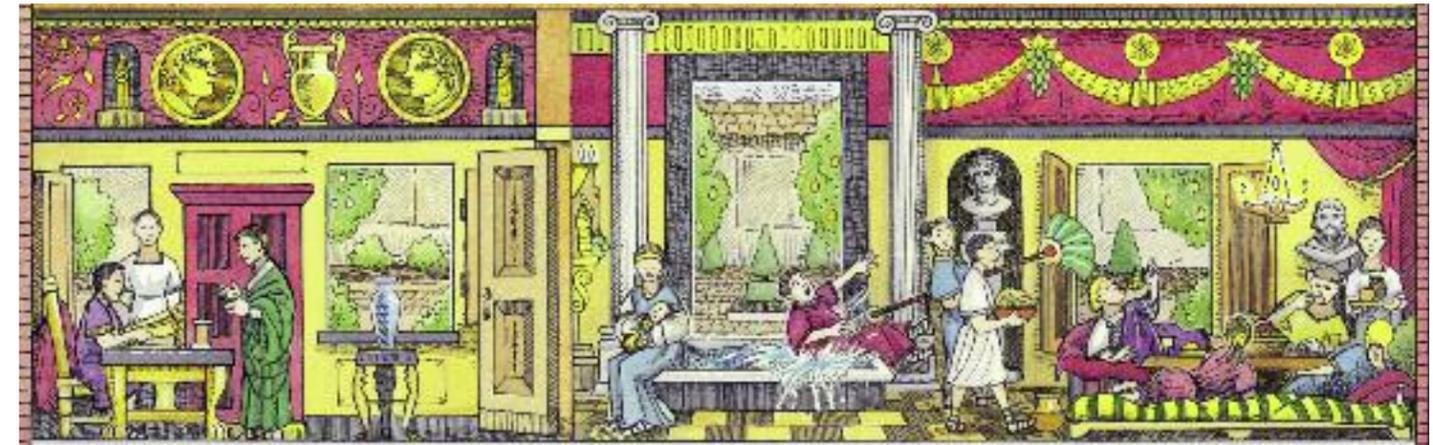
Wealthy Romans rented out the parts of their houses that fronted the street to shops, called *tabernae*, and craftworkers. They had separate doors and did not connect with the rest of the house.



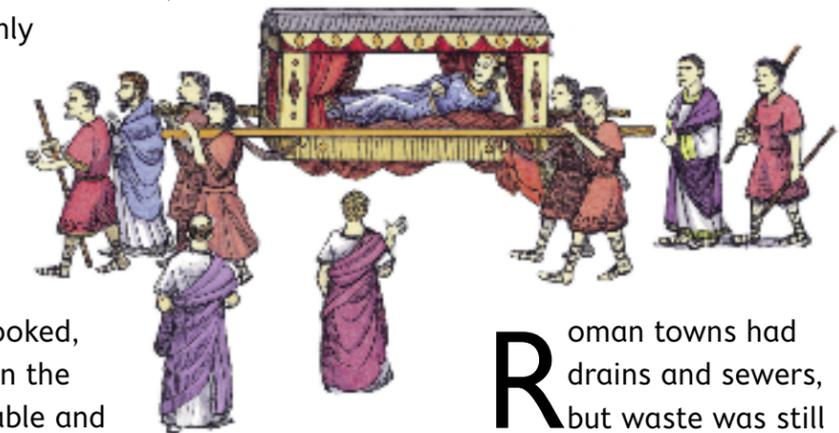
Slaves did all the labouring work in a Roman town, so most ordinary Roman citizens earned their living as shopkeepers or craftworkers. Craft shops, such as this basketweaver's (*above right*), were run as family businesses. They produced a wide range of goods and included clothmakers, carpenters, potters and blacksmiths. Skilled Roman craftsmen also produced luxury goods from glass, gold and silver.



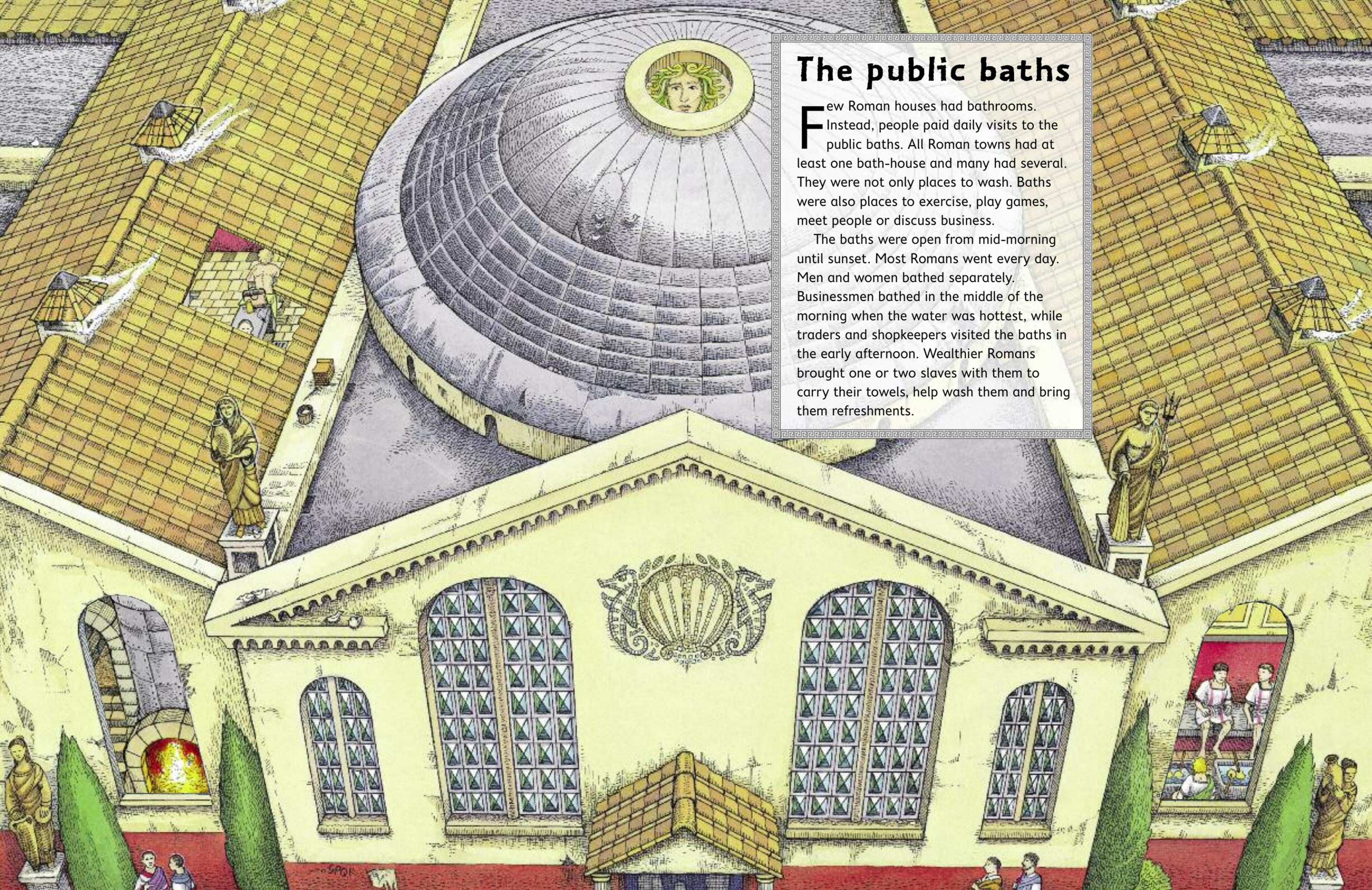
Because no one knew what caused diseases, Romans blamed evil spirits. Pharmacists (*below*) made medicines from herbs and minerals. Keeping healthy and clean from frequent visits to the baths was the best remedy.



Very rich Roman citizens lived in a town house, called a *domus* (*above*). It was richly decorated and furnished. The rooms were arranged around an atrium, a central area with an open roof. This had a rainwater pool called an *impluvium*. There was also a peaceful walled garden, or *peristyle*, where the owners could relax. Slaves cooked, cleaned, and looked after the children. In the dining room, instead of a table and chairs, there were cushioned couches, where the owners and their guests lay and ate with their fingers. On the menu might be such luxuries as pig's udders, snails, dormice and flamingoes' tongues.



Roman towns had drains and sewers, but waste was still dumped straight into the street. People crossed them by stepping stones to avoid getting too dirty. The wealthiest Romans travelled around in litters carried by slaves (*above*).



## The public baths

Few Roman houses had bathrooms. Instead, people paid daily visits to the public baths. All Roman towns had at least one bath-house and many had several. They were not only places to wash. Baths were also places to exercise, play games, meet people or discuss business.

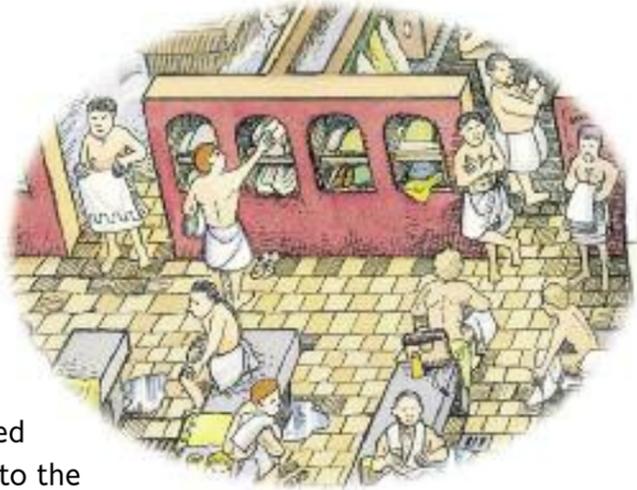
The baths were open from mid-morning until sunset. Most Romans went every day. Men and women bathed separately. Businessmen bathed in the middle of the morning when the water was hottest, while traders and shopkeepers visited the baths in the early afternoon. Wealthier Romans brought one or two slaves with them to carry their towels, help wash them and bring them refreshments.



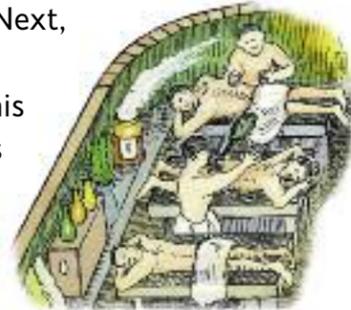
AQUA

# At the baths

The baths had several rooms and the bathers passed through each one. They undressed and left their clothes in the *apodyterium* (changing room, *right*). From here they might have visited the *sudatorium*, a hot, steamy room quite

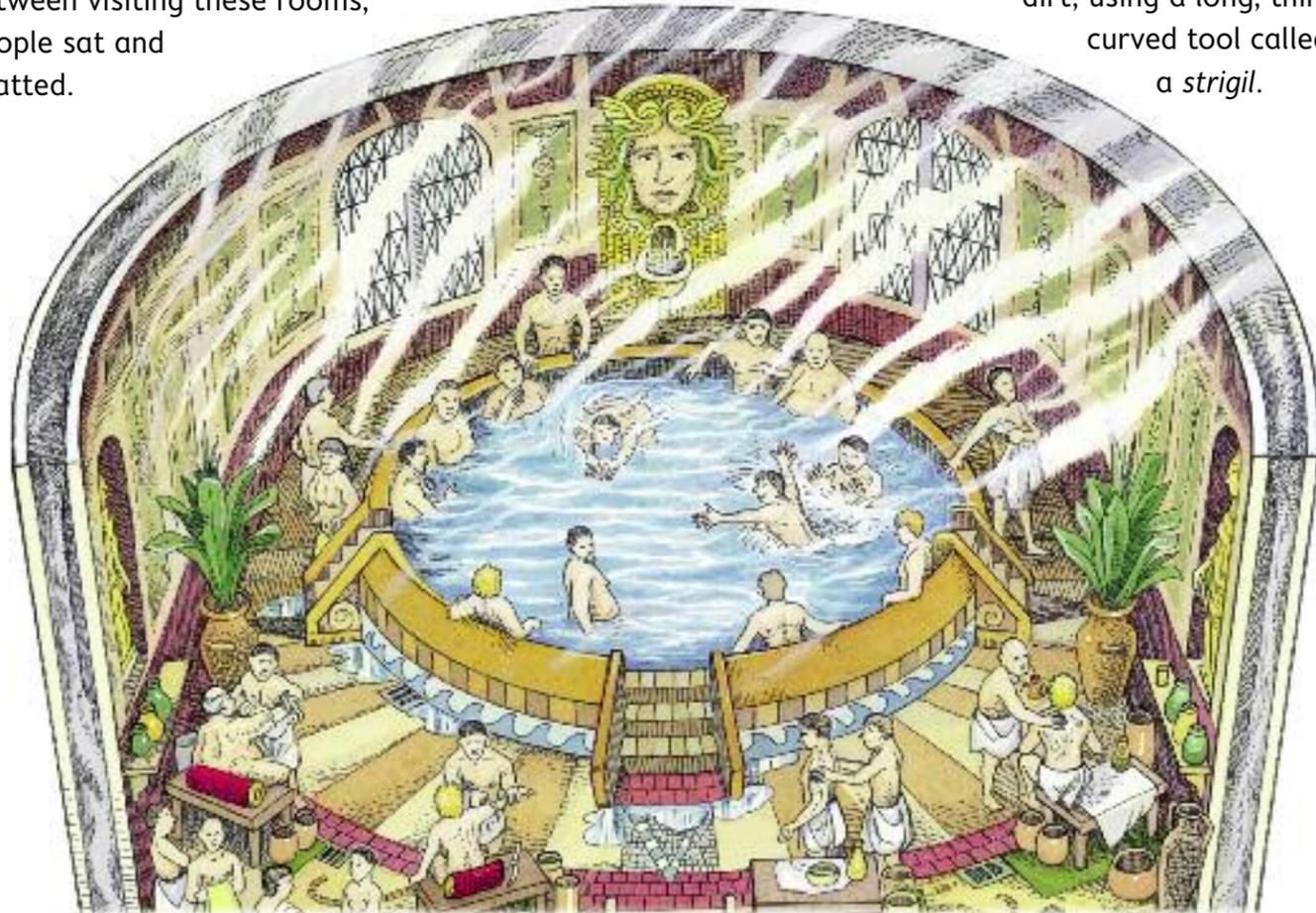


like a sauna. They could also enjoy a massage (*below right*). A door led from the *apodyterium* to the *tepidarium*, a warm room where the bathers could relax and get used to the heat. Next, they moved to the *caldarium* (*bottom*). This had a hot pool and was

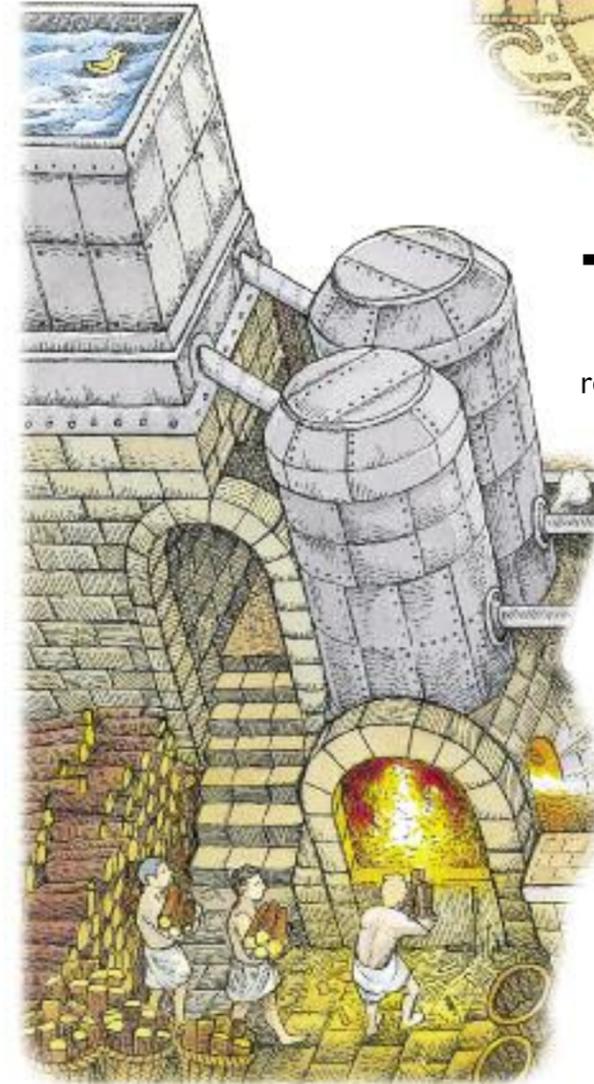
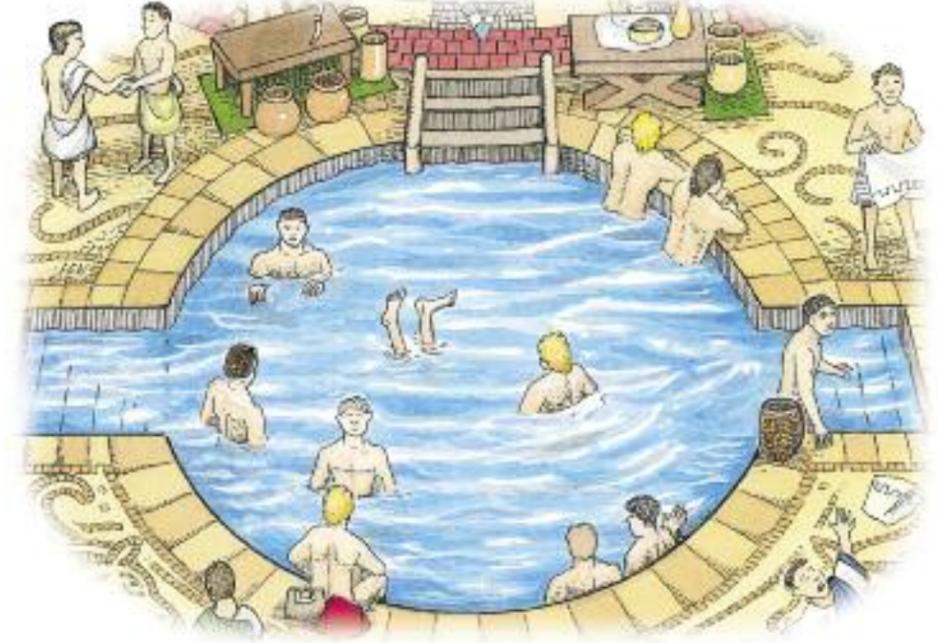


the place where people cleaned themselves. Finally, the bathers entered the *frigidarium* where there was a cold bath to plunge into. Cold water closed the pores of the skin. In between visiting these rooms, people sat and chatted.

The Romans did not have soap. Instead, while in the *caldarium*, a slave smeared his master's body with perfumed oil, then scraped it off again, along with any dirt, using a long, thin, curved tool called a *strigil*.



The *tepidarium* (*right*) was the central room in the baths. It had elaborate mosaics on the floor. The pictures and patterns were made up of many small pieces of stone or marble embedded in the floor. The room was warmed from underneath.



The Romans invented an underfloor heating system, or *hypocaust*, for heating their baths. The floor was raised on pillars of tiles.

Hot air, heated by a furnace in the basement (*left*), flowed around the empty spaces between the pillars. The furnace also heated the water for the baths.



Servants kept the furnace alight with firewood. Some of the floors were so hot bathers wore wooden clogs to protect their feet.



There was also a public toilet at the baths. Instead of using separate cubicles, people hiked up their togas or tunics, sat down together on long wooden benches with holes cut out, and chatted! Afterwards, they wiped themselves clean with wet sponges on sticks. The waste was carried away to a nearby river by underground sewage channels.





## The amphitheatre

Most large Roman towns had an amphitheatre. This was a large stone-built stadium with an oval arena in the middle. The largest was the Colosseum in Rome itself. It could hold up to 50,000 people. The amphitheatre was the place where the games were held.

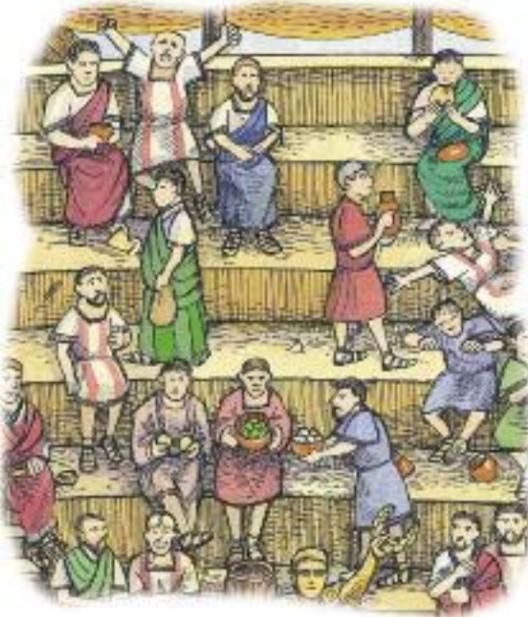
The main events at the games were contests between gladiators. These were men trained to fight for public entertainment. Roman citizens enjoyed watching gladiators and animals fight—sometimes against each other. The more bloodthirsty the contest, the more popular they were!



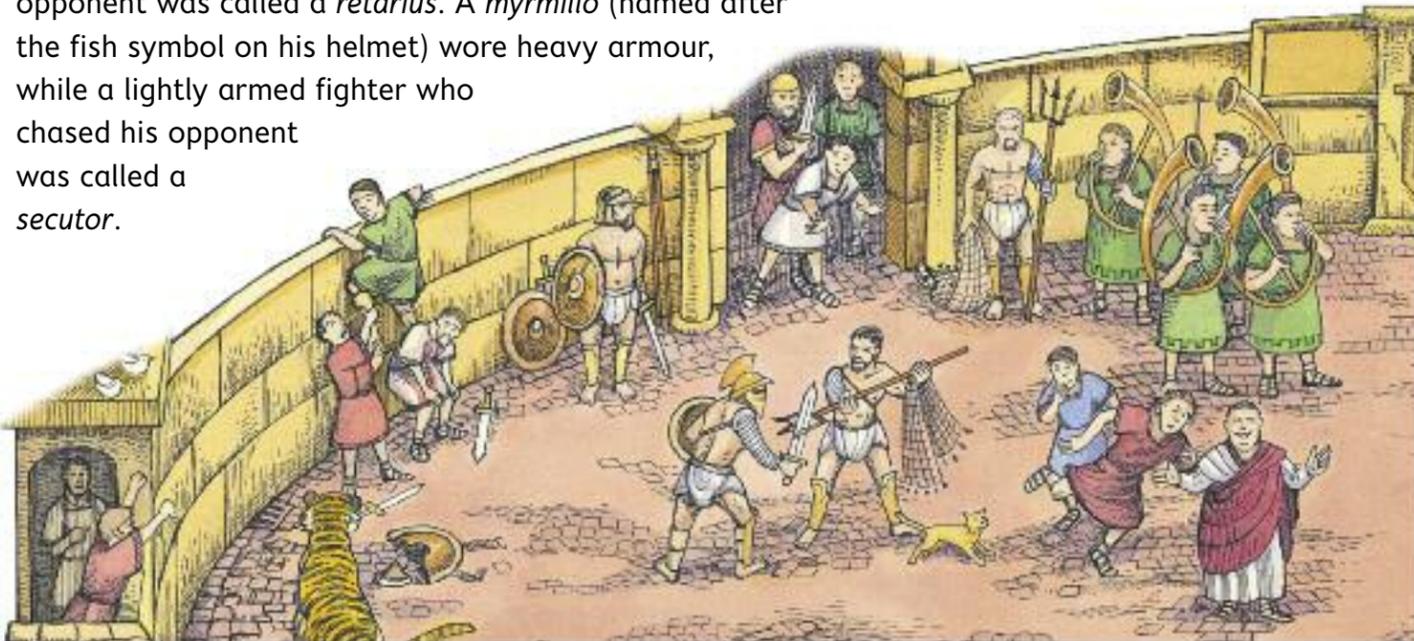
# At the games

The games were very popular among the Romans. Anyone could watch them, but they had to sit in the correct seats.

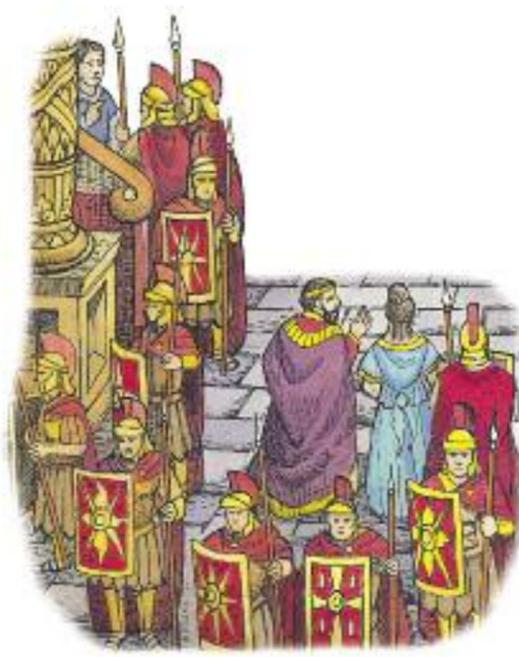
The lowest seats closest to the action, were reserved for the most important citizens: senators and other patricians. The higher the seats, the less important you were. Women were not allowed to sit with men. They had to watch from behind a wall at the top of the amphitheatre.



and a large shield, and wore a helmet with a visor. A Thracian had a curved dagger and a small shield. A gladiator who carried a net which he used to trap his opponent was called a *retarius*. A *myrmillo* (named after the fish symbol on his helmet) wore heavy armour, while a lightly armed fighter who chased his opponent was called a *secutor*.



The games began with a grand parade of gladiators, accompanied into the arena by trumpeters, jugglers, musicians and dancers. The gladiators stood before the emperor and called out these words: "*Ave, Caesar! Morituri te salutamus!*" (Hail, Caesar! We who are about to die salute you!) Then, wild animals such as lions, tigers, bears and elephants, would be brought out. They were put on display or made to perform circus tricks.

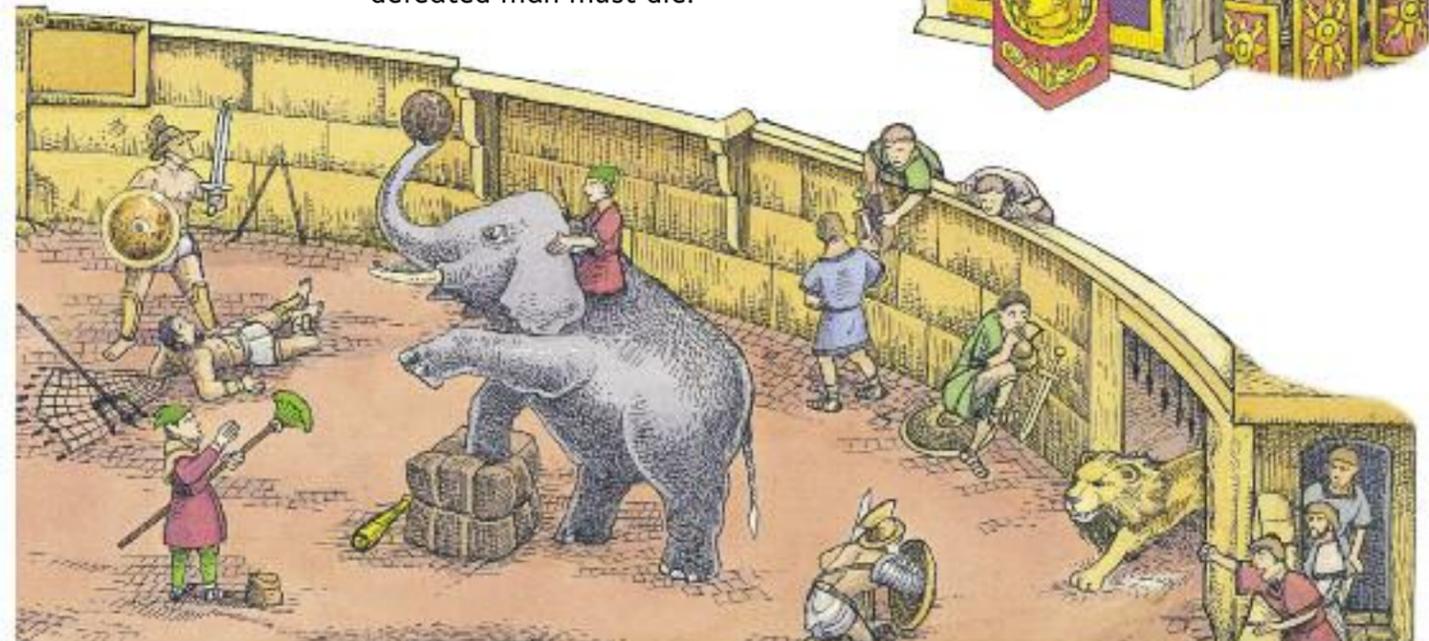


Some gladiators were volunteers who agreed to fight for prize money. But many were slaves, condemned criminals or prisoners of war. They were forced to undergo training as gladiators and were treated harshly. Like the animals (*below*) these men were kept in cages before their contests began. Sometimes, criminals were dragged into the arena to face hungry tigers or bears unarmed.



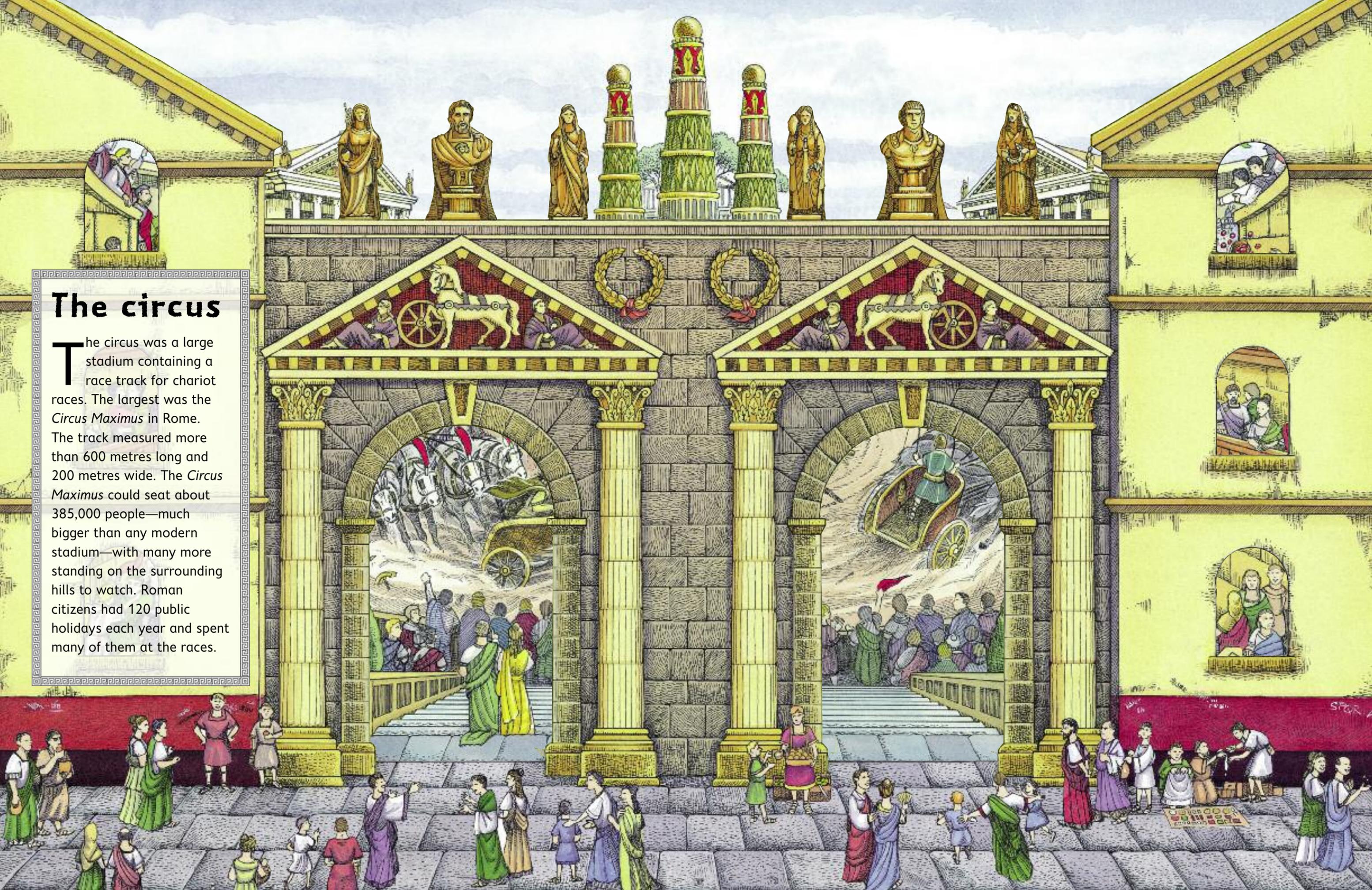
The wild animals were kept in cages in the tunnels under the arena. They were made to fight each other, or to be hunted by a gladiator called a *bestiarius*.

Many gladiators fought to the death. But if he was badly injured or threatened with a fatal strike, a gladiator could appeal to the emperor for mercy. He did this by raising a finger from his left hand. The emperor would ask the crowd what they wanted. If the crowd appreciated the gladiator's skill or bravery, they might hold their thumbs up and wave handkerchiefs. Then the fallen gladiator would be spared. If they turned their thumbs down, the emperor would deliver his verdict: the defeated man must die.



## The circus

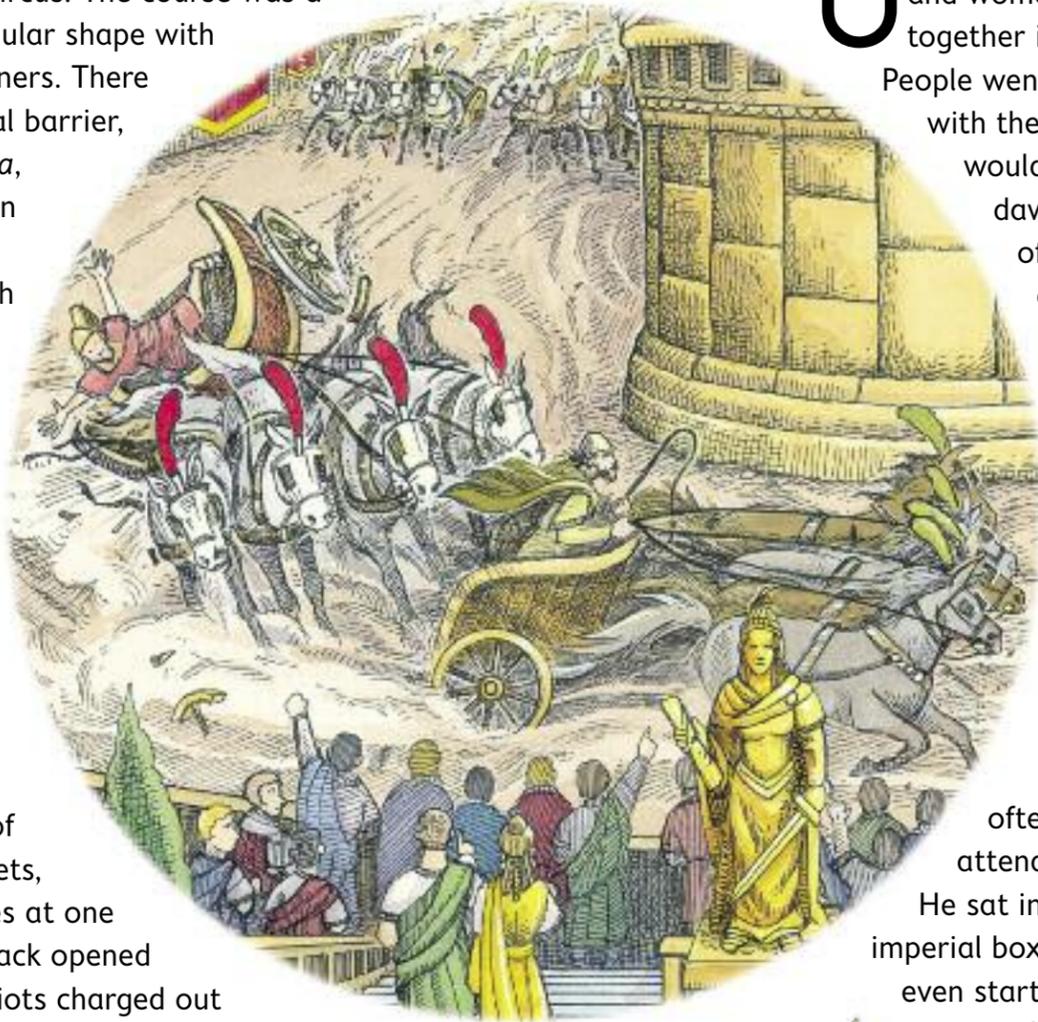
The circus was a large stadium containing a race track for chariot races. The largest was the *Circus Maximus* in Rome. The track measured more than 600 metres long and 200 metres wide. The *Circus Maximus* could seat about 385,000 people—much bigger than any modern stadium—with many more standing on the surrounding hills to watch. Roman citizens had 120 public holidays each year and spent many of them at the races.





# At the races

Chariot racing were the most important events to take place at the circus. Up to twelve chariots could take part. Each was drawn by a team of four horses. Chariot-drivers belonged to one of four teams: red, blue, white or green. Each race was seven laps of the circus. The course was a long rectangular shape with rounded corners. There was a central barrier, called a *spina*, running down the middle, around which the chariots raced.



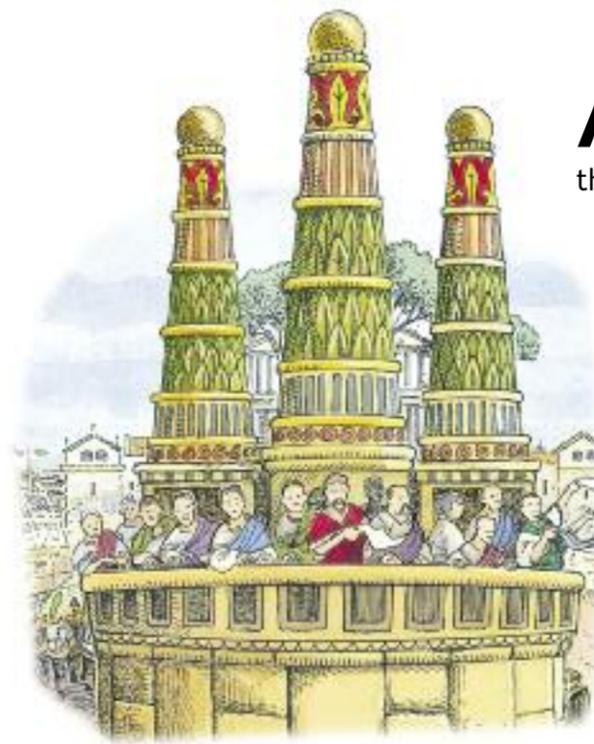
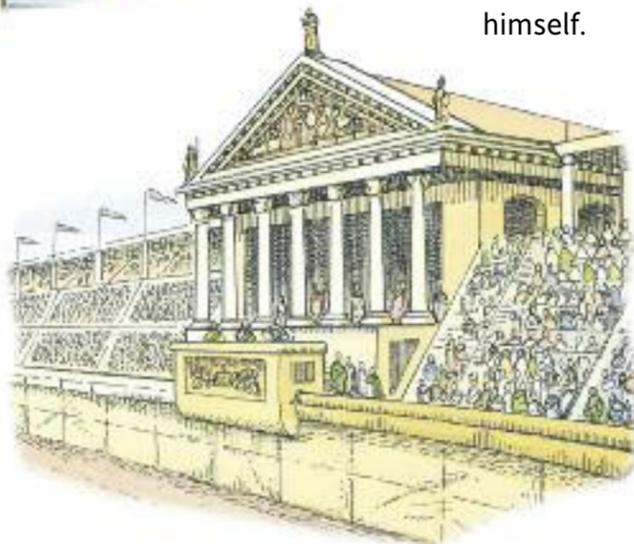
At the blast of trumpets, starting gates at one end of the track opened and the chariots charged out on to the course. They hurtled round the track in an anti-clockwise direction. Chariot-racing was extremely dangerous. The chariots were allowed to ram and bump into one another and they often overturned. Rounding the tight corner at the end of the track, while trying to stay as close as possible to the *spina*, often resulted in the most spectacular crashes. Even though the drivers wore protective clothing, many were injured or even killed during a race.



Unlike at the games, men and women could sit together in the circus. People went to the races with their families and would arrive at dawn to be sure of getting a good seat.



The Emperor would often be seen attending the races. He sat in a special imperial box. He might even start the race himself.



At either end of the *spina* was a three-pillared turning post, called a *meta* (left). On top of the *spina* in the *Circus Maximus* there were statues of various Roman gods and an Egyptian obelisk, a tall, thin stone monument with a small pyramid at the top. Also on the *spina* were counters to show how many laps had been run. A large wooden egg was removed from a column and a metal dolphin (below) was turned over every time a lap was completed. Each race usually lasted about eight or nine minutes.



There were sometimes as many as 24 chariot races a day. The best chariot drivers had an enthusiastic following from their supporters. People placed bets on their team before the race began and cheered them on noisily.

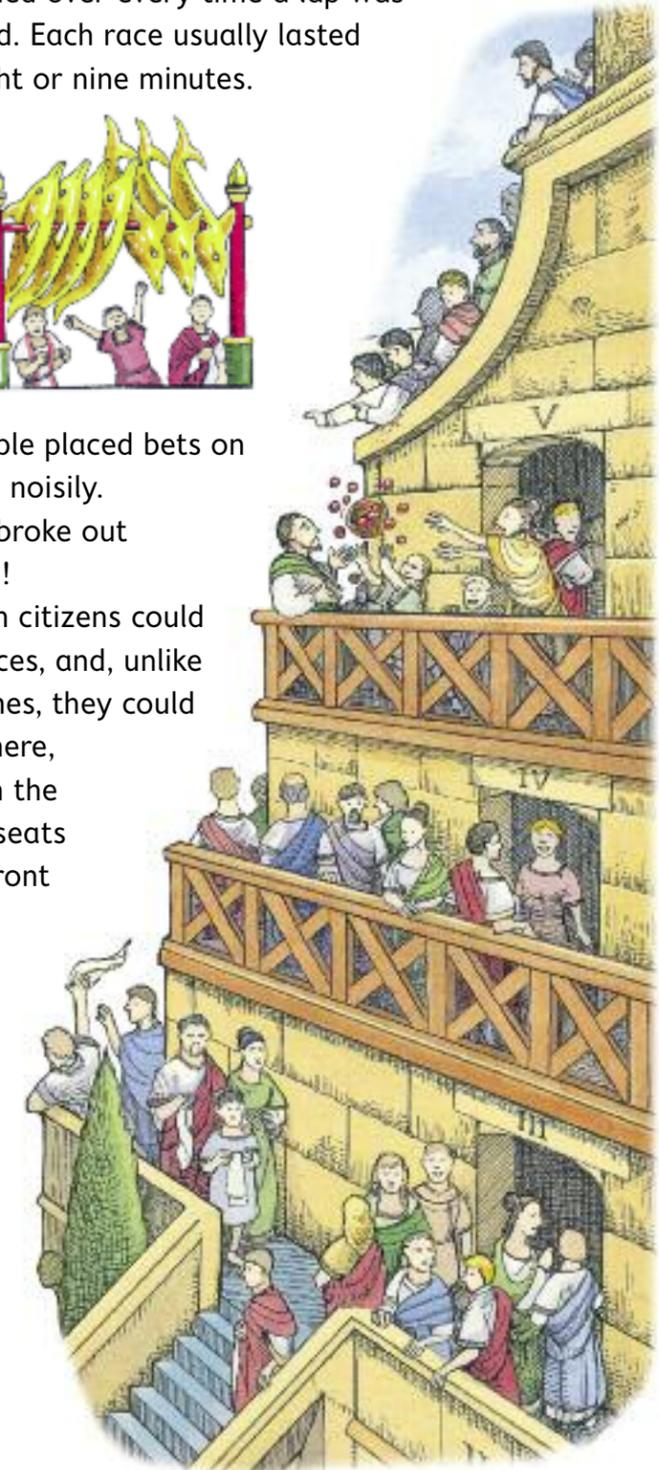


Sometimes fights even broke out between rival fans!

Only Roman citizens could go to the races, and, unlike at the games, they could sit anywhere, although the marble seats at the front were reserved for senators.



Most chariot drivers were slaves, but some, like gladiators, were volunteers who were paid to race. Winners were guaranteed fame and riches, but, because the races were so dangerous, their lives were often short.



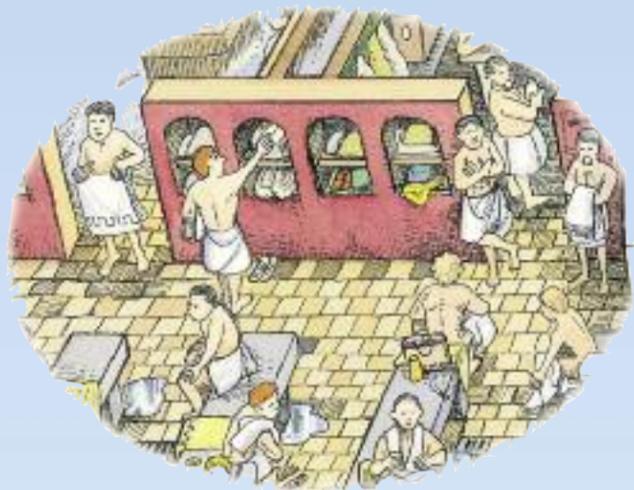
# Glossary

**Amphitheatre** A circular building with an **arena** at its centre. It was a place where Romans went to watch entertainments such as **gladiator** contests and wild animal hunts.

**Aqueduct** A system of pipes and channels which brought clean water into towns from natural springs and rivers.

**Arena** The central area of the **amphitheatre**, covered in sand.

**Atrium** The central reception area in a **domus**, with an open roof.



**Barbarian** A person who lived outside the Roman Empire. Barbarians were regarded by the Romans as rough and uncivilized.

**Basilica** A large public building, often built in the town's central square, where important local business was carried out—much like a modern town hall.

**Caldarium** The hot room in a bath-house.  
**Centurion** Commanding officer of a century.

**Chariot** A cart with two wheels pulled by horses. The Romans used chariots for transport and racing.

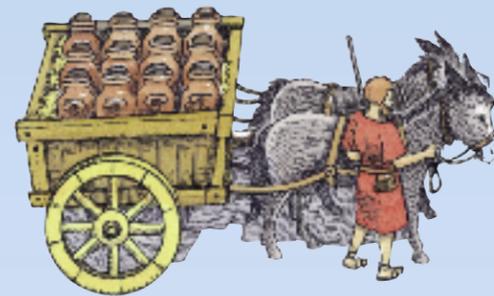


**Circus** A race course where chariot races were held.

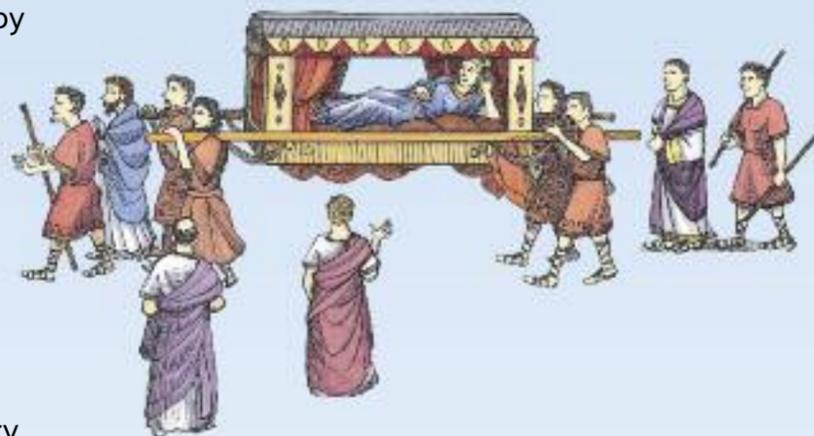
**Citizen** A person born in Rome with parents who were themselves Roman citizens. Later, citizenship was granted to everyone in the empire except slaves.

**Denarius** A silver coin.

**Domus** A large town house owned by a rich Roman **citizen**.



**Empire** The lands and people controlled by Rome for about 400 years from 27 bc. The Empire was ruled by an emperor.



**Emperor** The supreme ruler of the empire, the territories conquered by the Roman army.

**Equites** Roman **citizens** who were mainly bankers and merchants.

**Forum** An open space in the centre of a Roman town that was used for markets and meetings.

**Frigidarium** The cold room in a bath-house.

**Gladiator** A slave, criminal or prisoner of war who was trained to fight other gladiators or wild animals in games held at an **amphitheatre**.

**Hypocaust** A central heating system in which hot air from a furnace was channelled under floors and inside walls.



**Insulae** Apartment blocks in a town.

**Latin** The official spoken and written language of the Roman Empire.

**Mosaic** A pattern or picture made from coloured pieces of stone, pottery or glass set into cement. Mosaics were often used to decorate floors.

**Patrician** A Roman **citizen** who was descended from a noble Roman family.

**Peristyle** A garden or courtyard in a **domus** surrounded by columns.

**Plebeian** A Roman **citizen** who was not a **patrician**.



**Senator** A member of the Senate, a group of men who governed Rome.

**Slave** A person who was owned by someone else and who was used as a worker or servant. Slaves had no rights and could be bought or sold. They could be granted their freedom by their master.

**Spina** The central barrier that ran down the middle of a **circus**.

**SPQR** Initials standing for **Senatus Populusque Romanus**: "The Senate and People of Rome".

These letters were found on Roman coins and many public buildings.

**Villa** A large house in the countryside.

**Strigil** A curved tool used for scraping oil and dirt from the skin.



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