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# Ancient Rome

*Mr. Donn and Maxie's Always Something You Can Use  
Series*

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# ROME WAS NOT BUILT IN A DAY

## Introduction

**Subject:** Ancient Rome

**Level/Length:** This unit was written with sixth graders in mind, but can easily be adapted for grades 5–9. The unit is presented in seventeen sections; some sections are mini-units and will take longer than one class period to complete. Lessons are based on a 55-minute class period or they can be adjusted to fit any time frame. As written, time frame needed to complete this unit: 4–6 weeks.

**Unit description:** This unit explores the rise and fall of ancient Rome. It is built on the theme: Rome was not built in a day. Activities are varied and include classifying, abstracting, map work, dramatizing, writing, reading, speaking, researching, interpreting, and other higher level thinking activities. A final activity is built over the course of the unit, a Roman Festival with entertainment, including an original play: *Gossip at the Forum*.

**Rationale:** In view of the latest Government guidelines on education with “no child left behind,” this unit was developed to meet standards applicable in most states. Lessons are designed to address various learning styles and can be adapted for *all* students’ abilities.

**Ongoing Project/Graphic Organizers:** Using bulletin boards or wall space as graphic organizers supports critical thinking activities and fits the theme of the unit. At the end of the unit, each “board” (graphic organizer) should be completed and will support the final activity. To complete each, students will need to be directed to add information as it is discovered in your unit study.



## ANCIENT ROME

### Setting up the Room

**GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS:** Using bulletin boards or wall space as graphic organizers supports critical thinking activities and fits the theme of the unit: Rome was not built in a day. At the end of the unit, each should be completed and will support the final activity. To complete each, have students add information as it is discovered in your unit study.

#### WORD WALL

*Design:* This is a consistent for all units, but each has its own look.

*Use:* Once a week, have the kids pick a word, any word, and define it, use it in a sentence. Use the word wall to fill in short periods of time throughout the unit. Direct the kids to select any five words from the word wall, and create a news article. Or select any six words to form a group and be able to define the group. (Examples: buildings, words that begin with A.)

#### THE FORUM

*Design:* The forum was the city center, the plaza. Every Roman city had a forum. Put a sign above an open wall area marked “The Forum.” Add a small table to hold handouts. If you position the forum between your word wall and your timeline, it will give the forum a look of surrounding buildings.

*Use:* Use the Forum as the Romans did, as an information dispersal center. This is where you can post papers with no names, stack copies of reproducibles and homework assignments for pick up by students who were absent, post information about school happenings such as a school play or concert.

#### SOME ROMAN GODS & GODDESSES:

*Design:* 10 circles composed of one large yellow circle, with nine smaller circles. The smaller circles should be proportioned to represent the nine planets in our solar system.

### ROMAN GIFTS

*Design:* Flat pieces of cardboard wrapped in bright, solid-colored wrapping paper, in a variety of colors. Arrange in a scatter. Keep it bright and colorful, but this is background. Do not label the “gifts.” Add labels as you identify the inventions and other gifts from the ancient Romans. You don’t need a wrapped flat package for every “gift”. Use a few for background design. Allow students to use their crayons, add bows, and/or dress up this board as you go along.

*Gifts:* Romance languages (English, Italian, Spanish, French are all based on Latin); big government—our legislative branch, the Senate and House of Representatives is based on the Senate and Assemblies of ancient Rome; city planning; public sewers; invention of concrete, grand architecture; aqueducts; arches; roman numerals; many holidays and more.

ROMAN TIMES: Timeline. With Rome, I like to put the dates up before the unit begins. That way, students have a seek game going – what events go with what dates.

DOOR INTO THE CLASSROOM: On the hallway side of the door into your classroom, use construction paper to frame your doorway, creating an entrance to ancient Rome, if space allows.

## SECTION I: WELCOME TO ANCIENT ROME!

Time frame: 1 class period (55 minutes)

Includes:

Introduction Room Boards

Map

Jupiter

### Preparation:

- Daily Question. Use overhead or write question on the blackboard.  
(This is a student writing activity. Students are to write answers to daily questions in their notebooks upon arrival.)
- Reproducibles:
  - Application to Become a Roman Citizen*
  - Map of Early Rome*
  - Jupiter*

**Daily Question:** What is a peninsula?

**MEET YOUR CLASS AT THE DOOR:** “WELCOME TO ANCIENT ROME!”

This is your application to become a Roman citizen!”

Hand out *Application to become a Roman Citizen*.

### Room Boards (Graphic Organizers)

Briefly introduce each wall section, the Boards (graphic organizers), to the class.

Transition: *There is an old saying:* Rome was not built in a day. What does that mean?

### ACTIVITY: Map of Early Rome

- Say: Today, you are going to be in charge of city building. There are enemies everywhere. But you must feed, shelter, bathe yourself and water your animals.
- Hand out *Map of Early Rome*
- Say: **Using a pencil**, pick the best location for your city and mark it with an x, on this map. On the back of this map, list three reasons you put your city where you did. Remember—there are enemies everywhere.
- Give them a few minutes to do this. Discuss their answers first.
- Tell them where Rome was built and why.

Background: The early Romans built on the seven hills on the Tiber for protection and for water. Flatland, on the other side of the Tiber River, was perfect for farmland. The area offered what they needed. They started their city on the top of one hill. They walled around it. As they expanded, they also expanded their wall. Slowly, they expanded to all seven hills with one wall encircling them all.

**Label maps:**

- Use the overhead (make a transparency of *Map of Early Rome*).
- *Ask*: What is a peninsula?
- Point to places on the map they need to label, and provide the names. seven hills of Rome, Palatine Hill, Tiber River, Mediterranean Sea, marshes, farmland. Add other information you feel pertinent.
- Let them color their maps.

**ACTIVITY: It's Time for Pantomime!**

*Say*: Whenever the ancient Romans went to see a play or hear a story, they did not sit quietly and enjoy the performance, as did the ancient Greeks. The Romans chatted and talked and moved about and visited. The actors had to say their lines and pantomime the story, so that people could understand them. What does **pantomime** mean?

**Today, you are all actors.** Our story is a popular one. It's a story about Jupiter, king of the Roman gods. (Explain the rules.) **NO SPEAKING.** Students must stay in their seats. No flailing wildly. Gestures must be pertinent to the story.

Hand out *JUPITER*

Give them a few minutes to read the story quietly. Then, do a little acting yourself. Look towards the back of the room as if hoards of noisy Romans have gathered to hear you. Clear your throat. Look nervous. Then say loudly: **THE STORY OF JUPITER!** In a more normal voice—because already you'll have enough acting going on in your classroom - read the story aloud to your class, while the students pantomime.

Add Jupiter to your Roman God & Goddesses wall. Be sure the word Jupiter is positioned on the fifth circle from the sun. (But don't tell the students why you put it in that position.)

**CLOSE CLASS: Tell the students:** Please complete section three of your Application to Become a Roman Citizen KWL chart by tomorrow (now, if time permits). That's all for today. See you tomorrow, at the forum!





NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
CLASS: \_\_\_\_\_  
PERIOD: \_\_\_\_\_

---

## JUPITER

Jupiter, Neptune and Pluto were the three sons of Saturn. When Saturn retired, the boys divided the world up between them. Jupiter took the sky, Neptune took the sea, and Pluto ruled under the earth, the home of the dead. At first, it was great fun. But things had been just a bit slow lately.

Jupiter thought about what he could do.

He could turn himself into an octopus and visit his brother Neptune under the sea, but he didn't feel much like a swim.

He could visit Pluto under the earth, but Pluto was such a gloomy fellow.

He could hurl thunderbolts, but it wasn't much fun without a target.

He could hunt up one of the other gods. But the truth was, all the other gods were terrified of Jupiter. He did have a terrible temper, but only when someone lied to him. Since the gods often lied, they mostly avoided Jupiter.

He could call for his wife, Juno. But the truth was, he was a little frightened of his wife, Juno.

He could find a beautiful woman. But he couldn't let Juno catch him. She was very very jealous.

Jupiter flew down to earth and looked around for something to do. He spotted two men walking along a lane. Jupiter cast his voice to make it sound like somebody else was speaking. He was very good at that.

"Hey stupid," Jupiter cast his voice loudly, hoping to start a fight.

One man turned to the other angrily. "What did you say?" And before you could say Jupiter, the two men were fighting. Jupiter found that very funny.

A glint on the river caught his eye. It was Io, a lovely river nymph.

"What a lovely young woman," Jupiter said. He promptly fell in love.

Hoping to hide himself from the eagle eye of his jealous wife, Jupiter covered the world with some really thick clouds. But Juno was not stupid. The thick coat of clouds made her suspicious immediately.

Jupiter looked up. "It's Juno!" he gulped.

Quickly, Jupiter changed Io into a cow. When Juno landed, all she found was an innocent looking Jupiter standing next to a little white cow.

"This little cow appeared out of nowhere," he told his wife, acting surprised.

Juno wasn't fooled. "What a beautiful cow," she gushed admiringly. "May I have it as a present?"

Jupiter had to agree. Juno sent the cow away under guard.

Jupiter arranged for Io to be rescued and set free. He sent his son to sing the guard asleep. When the guard closed his eyes, Io ran away.

When Juno heard about it, she sent a gadfly after Io. A gadfly is a fly that bites.

"Moo moo," Io screamed, when the gadfly found her.

Io swam across a sea, hoping the gadfly would drown on the trip. No such luck, although Juno did name the sea after Io. Perhaps you've heard of it - the Ionian Sea? It's the sea between Greece and Rome. No matter.

Feeling very sorry for herself, a dispirited Io traveled next to Egypt.

It was then that Juno decided that Io had suffered enough. First, she made Jupiter promise that he would never see Io again. Then she changed Io back into human form, and left her in Egypt. Egypt was a dismal place for a river nymph. There are no crocodiles in the Tiber as there are in the Nile.

Jupiter sighed. It was getting to be a bit boring. What could he do . . . .

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
 DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 CLASS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 PERIOD: \_\_\_\_\_

## MAP OF ANCIENT ROME

Circle T or F (true or false)

T	F	The Tiber River runs through Rome
---	---	-----------------------------------

Choose the most correct answer

<p>Geographically Italy is</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. a peninsula</li> <li>b. an island</li> <li>c. a river</li> <li>d. a continent</li> <li>e. in North America</li> </ol>	<p>Rome was founded on Palatine hill because</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. the surrounding hills gave it protection</li> <li>b. there was flat land nearby to grow crops</li> <li>c. the Tiber river provided water for drinking and irrigation</li> <li>d. the Tiber river gave access to the sea</li> <li>e. all of the above</li> </ol>
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