

The romans loved entertainment essay



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Indeed Emperors used entertainment deliberately in order to stop them rebelling against bad government. The theatre was fundamental to the Roman way of life. There were two types of theatres, a theatre and an amphitheatre. Towns of even modest size usually had theatres. They were horseshoe shaped with a stage at the front, seating was arranged in tiers in a semi-circle around the orchestra.

In these theatres plays were performed, political and religious speeches as well poetry were recited and occasionally, circus acts, bear bating and wrestling even took place. In larger towns a larger version of the theatre was found, the amphitheatre. The more dramatic events were held here. The most famous amphitheatre is the Coliseum in Rome itself.

The largest amphitheatres could hold in tens of thousands of people. They were oval in shape and looked similar to modern day football stadiums. Crowds went to amphitheatres to watch chariot races; gladiator fights and bloody spectacles, like unarmed humans fighting Wild animals to the death. Source A shows a plan of the theatre found in Verulamium.

The orchestra is in the centre surrounded by a semi-circle of seating in tiers. The stage is at the front of the theatre. By using the scale provided you could determine that the diameter is 40 metres. Source B is an extract from ‘The Romans and Their Empire’; it is all about where the idea for the Roman theatre originated. The horse shoe shape originated from the Greeks. The Romans adapted the Greek idea to make it their own; they built bigger stages and fixed backdrops with pillars, statues and entrances.

They also invented a stage-curtain; spectators at Pompeii had a canvas awning stretched above them to keep the sun off. This type of awning would be necessary in Verulamium, as it would be more likely that the rain would bother the audience, not intense heat from the sun. According to the Oxford dictionary trade is 'the exchange of goods for money or other goods.' In Rome, barter and swapping led to a completely new concept of currency. By introducing currency the Romans themselves even more sophisticated than they already were. The idea of money entirely changed the nature of Roman Labour, industry and trade.

The simple innovation of money increased the amount of food and goods that were bought. Coined money was originally a Greek idea but like many other ideas was adapted by the Romans. For all of its major accomplishments, Ancient Rome never developed a complex economy. The Roman economy was mainly concerned with feeding the vast number of citizens and soldiers who lived throughout the Mediterranean region. Therefore, agriculture and trade dominated the economy, supplemented by small-scale industry. The farmers in Italy grew grains, olives, and grapes.

Olive oil and wine were some of Italy's leading exports. However, Roman farming methods were fairly primitive and not very productive. Roman farms produced few crops and required many people to do the work. Farmers were also heavily taxed. The emperors forced farmers to donate most of their surplus grain to the government as a tax so they could distribute it free to poor citizens. While this made the emperors popular with the masses, it left the farmers with little to sell for a profit.

It also left no incentive for farmers to increase productivity, since more products equalled more taxes. As a result, farmers didn't raise enough food for all Rome's citizens, and they had little money to spend and contribute to the local economy. The Roman Empire was very good for trade, for numerous reasons, not just the introduction of coinage. The large Roman army needed to be supplied with food, clothes, pottery and weapons.

Soldiers and other people who worked for the government were paid in coins and so they wanted something to spend their newly earned wages on. Most of the trade originated through supplying the army with what it needed.

Roman merchants, called *Negotiatores*, organised the transport of goods to the army and they also helped the government buy grain to feed people living in Rome. Roman citizens depended upon the large volume of trade throughout the Roman Empire. Providing enough grain for its entire people was a constant challenge that the emperor took very seriously. The leading imports were grains, because they formed the backbone of the Roman diet.

Civilians and the thousands of soldiers stationed throughout the Empire needed wheat, barley, and corn. Grains were imported from Egypt, Sicily, Tunisia and other areas around the Mediterranean. Shippers were required to take the grain directly to Ostia, the official port of Rome. Penalties for stopping along the way included deportation or even execution. In Ostia the grain was weighed, checked for quality, and then sent up the river on barges to Rome, where it would be repacked for distribution throughout the Empire.

Although foods dominated the trading industry, there was also a vast exchange of other goods from all parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa. As the

young Roman Empire prospered, so grew the demand for luxury items only obtainable from distant lands. Items such as silks from China, cotton and spices from India, ostrich products and ivory from Africa, and mysterious blonde slaves from Germany found their way to Rome via a vast network of trade routes. Trade routes were established on land and sea. The roads built by the Ancient Romans are one of their lasting achievements, and many are still in use today.

These ancient highways were not built with trading in mind, however. They were originally built to help swiftly transport huge numbers of soldiers in times of war. They were also intended to carry news from one region of the Empire to another as quickly as possible. Even the best roads had to contend with bandits and poor weather.

Transporting goods by land was slow and expensive. Lumbering oxen pulled large loads in wagons and carriages. Horses were faster, but they could only pull light carriages or be ridden. Caravans of camels or donkeys carried loaded baskets called panniers.

Slaves, who provided cheap labour, hauled some goods. Trade by land was only profitable if goods were going short distances or if the cargo was small, expensive luxury items. Most heavy, bulky, large-volume goods, such as food, wine, oil, and building supplies, were shipped by water. Waterways provided cheap and easy access to all parts of the Mediterranean. Travel was fast if the winds were favourable, but they were also unpredictable and often dangerous.

At times the winds stopped, stranding cargo and crew. Ship captains lacked accurate charts and navigational equipment. Therefore, they stayed close to the coastline to navigate, and many vessels were shipwrecked.

Archaeologists have found many sunken ships laden with trade goods that offer valuable clues about the lives of people of the Roman Empire.

Rome lived off its imports, and importers were among the wealthiest citizens of the Empire. Many traded goods for goods in a barter system, while others used the silver coins minted by each emperor. In fact, the trade network became so vast that silver Roman coins could be found as far east as India. Far behind agriculture and trade in importance to Ancient Rome was its industry. The largest was mining. Greece and northern Italy provided marble for the grand building projects commissioned by the emperors.

From Spain and Africa came the gold and silver to mint coins and create jewellery, while mines in Britain produced lead and tin for making weapons. Within Italian communities, small-scale manufacturing plants turned out pottery, glassware, weapons, tools, and textiles. In spite of the Empire's flourishing economy it is very important not to exaggerate Roman prosperity, for the Roman Empire had its weaknesses as well. The poor were miserably poor and the magnificence of Rome was built on the backs of sweating peasants. Source C is an extract from 'The Roman Empire' by Christopher Culpin. It is a map of Europe, showing the areas with which Rome traded.

It shows that wide ranges of materials are imported from all over the world. Places like Gaul, Germany, Spain, Africa, Sicily, Egypt, Arabia, India, China,

the Black Sea area and Greece imported everything from perfume to slaves. Source D is an extract from a letter by Aelium Aristides in 150. He is praising the accomplishments of the Romans in the areas of trade and transport.

He says how the Romans made it possible to travel across the world. He also says how Rome is the centre of trade; ' anything that cannot be seen in Rome does not exist.' He mentions that skilfully made articles from Greece and other foreign lands are part of a ' constant flow of goods which pour into Rome.' Evidence from Verulamium to prove the importance of trade is the pottery and other articles that were found.

A specific type of pottery found was only made in Gaul at the time of the Romans, which proved that trade did occur. Many more archaeological finds similar to this have proved that Rome relied on the imports to sustain its way of life. In conclusion, I have found that trade is of the uppermost importance to Rome. It is the infrastructure of the entire empire. Trade was so essential because Romans needed the imports; the items that were necessary for a comfortable life were sometimes unable to be produced in Rome itself. This could have been due to climate, the number of skilled craftsmen and the amount of raw materials available.

Trade links in will all other aspects that made Rome so unique. Money originated because of trade and transport flourished because of it. Trade made Rome even more sophisticated, never before had a country traded with other countries on such a large scale. Flourishing overseas trade not only had an impact on the empire's establishes economy, but also promoted the exchange of ideas.

Which, as a result contributed to the dispersal of science, architecture and crafts, consequently having an enormous effect on Roman life, and the Roman Empire as a whole as seen by the disproportionate influence of the Greek civilisation.