

LARARIUM For Student Tours

1. Use comparisons and humor
2. Place about 6 of the pieces on the alter before you start
3. Hand out only 4 pieces and get them back (hold them by the base with two hands)
4. Start with the model of the Roman house
5. Show little Lararium in the atrium of the model house

HOUSE

Wealthy Roman houses would have a very large entry room (an Atrium), (like Luddington court) with a large open area at the top for sunlight and rain to come in. They would have a pool and a fountain and mosaic floors. Kids would have played here when the weather was cold. The windows of the houses were very high to keep out thieves, and there were gangs of teenagers who roamed the city painting graffiti on the walls of houses. Roman families had slaves who waited on them, and cut up their food. The Romans ate lying down on couches around a table, and they often had great feasts where guests would eat for hours and then go to another room where they would tickle their throats with a feather so they could throw up and could go back and eat more. These rooms were called vomitoriums. After parents of young girls of 12 consulted the gods, they were often married to much older men of 35 and older that were picked out for them by their parents.

RELIGION

Romans were very superstitious. The Romans ran their lives by their gods, and most of them had human forms. They prayed to many different gods for different reasons such as to guard the house, the family and the nation, and for things such as for good weather, and good crops. There were priests that prayed in the public temples, and made animal sacrifices to the gods. The priests worshiped the big important gods such as Venus, Cupid and Hercules for the good of the state and all the people. These gods were represented as very large statues that were in the big public temples. Also the Emperor was the head of the religion, and when the emperor died, he was also often worshipped as a god. Most of the gods were taken from earlier Greek gods and renamed. The Greek god Hermes became Mercury (the messenger god and god of travel), the god Zeus (the king of the gods) became Jupiter, Aphrodite (the god of love) became Venus, and Athena (the god of wisdom) became Minerva, etc.

The Romans believed in astrology and fortune telling. They had priests that cut out animals' livers and told people their fortunes by them. Our months of the year are named after Roman gods and emperors. (See Attachment) Our planets are also named after the Roman gods Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, and Neptune. (See attachment) (These are easy to quiz the kids about)

LARARIUM

A home altar. Every home had one usually kept in the atrium. It was a special shrine or Lararium to the Lar, or the god of the house. Originally the Lar was a dead relative, but over time they developed into gods. The Lar was depicted (painted on the walls of the Lararium or in statue form) as a young man in a tunic who had wine in one hand and a bowl in the other. Every family had Lares who were gods who watched over the house, and at crossroads. Some were gods who lived in the cupboards, and some were dead relatives who lived in the house. They also had a specific Lar who was the special god of that family. The Romans prayed at the shrine to the Lar and to the Lares. They burned incense for the gods, so the smoke would go up to them, and they would put food, and wine on the altar as offerings for the gods. The Roman families prayed daily at the shrine by offering things to the gods in order to get things back. They prayed "If you give this to me, I will give this to you." The rules of prayer were very strict, and if they didn't say them correctly, they felt the prayer wouldn't come true. If food fell on the floor, it was burned in front of the shrine. And often times they had little puppets of the family members and slaves, so if a dead relative came to take them to the land of the dead, they would hopefully take a puppet instead.

BRONZES

Labeled by the museum as the Rozsa Bronzes, they were donated in 1995 by Rozsa, a Hungarian composer in Hollywood who collected them over many years. We have many little Bronze figures that were probably kept by ordinary Roman families as offerings to the gods, statues of the gods themselves, or as decorative works of art. The statues were made by casting methods such as "lost wax", or they were made from "cold working" which was a process of hammering the bronze into shapes with hammers. They are very old; the oldest one we have is from 300 BCE (2300 years old). Most are from the 1st and 2nd Century CE. (Hand out four of them) Discuss the ones I hand out. The most popular of the house gods was Hercules who evolved from the Greek god Heracles who was both human and a god, and is usually depicted as a strong man with a lion skin around his neck.

MONTHS

January-Janus Roman god
February-Februaris (Roman purification feast)
March-Mars, Roman god
April-Aprilis, opening
May-Maia, Roman goddess
June-Juno, Roman goddess
July-Julius Caesar, Roman Emperor
August-Augustus, Roman Emperor
September- 7th month
October-8th month
November-9th month
December-10th month

PLANETS

Mercury-	god of travel
Venus-	goddess of love
Earth-	(not a Roman name)
Mars-	god of war
Jupiter-	King of the gods
Saturn-	god of farming
Uranus-	Greek god
Neptune-	god of the sea
Pluto-	god of the underworld