

The Lives of Women in Ancient Rome

Physical Traits of Roman Women

Rich and Poor Women's Roles and Expectations

- *Marriage and Divorce*
- *Clothing, Makeup, and Hair Styles*
 - *Education*
- *Birth and Contraception*
 - *Legal Rights*

Roman Women's Physical Appearance (Ideal)

- Height about 5' 2"
- Brown eyes
- Narrow shoulders with pronounced hips.
- Wide thighs and small breast



Roman Marriages

- Two Kinds of Marriages
 - **“With The Hand”**
- Woman had no legal rights with a dowry given to the husband.
 - **“Without the Hand”**
- No dowry but were not under the control of her husband as much.



Marriage Ceremony Vows

- **Men**

- Promised not to mistreat his wife.
- Not to Throw her out of the house
- Bring home another woman

- **Women**

- Not to be away from home for more than 1 night without her husband's permission.
- No sexual relations with any other man.

Ancient Marriage Ceremony (video)10



Wedding Activities

- Pig or a sheep would be sacrificed
- Torchlight procession to the groom's house singing to **Hymen**.
- Wedding participants would shout obscenities to ward off evil.
- Groom would carry the bride over the threshold.
- **Fire and water** was presented to her.
- Guests would sing to **Hymen**
- on the couples way to the bedroom



Marriages

- Fathers would arrange the marriage
- In wealthy families for alliances
- Age for women was between 15 -20
- Men were usually older



Roman Women's Roles

Wealthy Woman

- Have at least three children
- Manage the household staff and stay at home.
- **Augustus** believed his wife should stay home and weave clothing.
- *Maintain characteristics of chaste, obedient, friendly, frugal, and pious*

Poor Women

- Have at least three children
- Not restricted to be home as much
- Wet Nurse, midwife, basket weaver, hairdresser, perfume producer, seamstress, street vendor, waitress, barmaid, cook, prostitutes

Wealthy Roman Women

- The father had absolute power over the family
 - Had to survive the Father's evaluation of fitness otherwise **Exposed**
- **Education** was limited to **the basics** but sometimes they were allowed to
 - Study Literature and Philosophy.
- Unlike the Egyptians the Roman women were subordinate to a male.

Poor Roman Women (video)7



Roman Divorce

- Divorce in Roman Times was **simple**.
- **Either Party** could initiate divorce
- A declaration was made ***but needed seven witnesses***
- Divorce was common for the upper class.
 - The Dowry would be returned.
- **Justifications for divorce were adultery, infertility, and wine consumption**
 - Women who committed adultery might not get the dowry back

Roman Divorce

- Divorce was quite common and often private.
 - Fathers would retain the children
- If a woman was independent prior to the divorce then she could retain her independence.

Roman Makeup

- **Coal** for extending eyelashes
- **Squid Ink or Toasted Ants** for eye shadow
- **Lip stick** in many different colors mostly red (lead)
- **Foundation Cream** a (honey, fat, ceruse for luminous sheen



Wealthy Roman Hairstyles

- Elaborate Styles were assembled by highly trained slaves.
- Styles often imitated those of the upper class.
- Real Hair was used for the wigs including red hair, blondes, and brunettes.



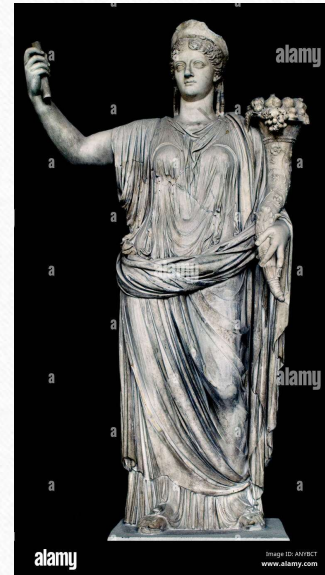
Ancient Roman Fashion (Video)6



Famous Women

Antonia Minor an example of Roman Virtue

- **Antonia Minor**
- Mother of Emperor Claudius
- Niece of Augustus
- Daughter of Mark Anthony
- Brother in Law was Tiberius



Famous Women- Cornelia

- Famous mother of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus
- First mortal living to be commemorated with a public statute in Rome.
- Unfortunately both sons were considered radical and killed.



Roman Women's Legal Rights

Could not Vote

Could not hold office

Could own property in some circumstances

Women's Extension of legal Rights
During the Imperial Period (video)3



Roman Contraception and Abortion

- Silphium
- Was a morning after type birth control.
- Large quantities were harvested in distributed throughout the empire.



Other Forms of Birth Control

- Honey and Acacia (Egyptian-1850 BCE)
 - Crocodile Dung
- Queen Anne's Lace (similar to hemlock in appearance)
 - Olive Oil
 - Lemon and Douches
- **The a head of large hairy spider cut open to retrieve two worms and wear these on her body, she would good for a year !!!**
 - **(Pliny the Elder)**

Birthing in Rome

- Midwives-provided
- Oil , warm water, sponges, and bandages for the newborn.
- Sometimes used instruments
- **C- Sections** were used when the mother died.
- Honored “**Lucina**” goddess
- **Powered sow’s dung to help with pain**



Ovid

- Lived 43BCE-17CE
- Exiled by Augustus to the Black Sea
- Famous for his *Ars Amatoria* (The Art of Love)
- Ovid according to Augustus was promoter of adultery.



Methods of Courting Women by Ovid (video)10



Roman Birthing

- **Midwives** are usually present. Male doctors did not participate because it was not appropriate to touch his wife's private parts.
- **Gestational Chairs** are used
- No anesthesia or sterilized instruments



Women' Dress

