**Rome and the Roots of Western Civilization**

**BEFORE YOU READ**

In the last section, you read about the fall of Rome. In this section, you will learn about the contributions of Rome to Western civilization.

**AS YOU READ**

Use the web below to take notes on Rome’s influence on the western world.

**TERMS AND NAMES**

- **Greco-Roman culture**: Culture developed from the blending of Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman cultures.
- **Pompeii**: Roman town covered by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius.
- **Virgil**: Roman poet who wrote the Aeneid.
- **Tacitus**: Roman historian who recorded the good and bad of imperial Rome.
- **aqueduct**: Pipeline or channel built to carry water.

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**The Legacy of Greco-Roman Civilization** *(pages 178–181)*

**What is Greco-Roman culture?**

Rome took aspects of Greek and Hellenistic culture and added ideas of its own. The mixing of Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman culture produced a new culture called **Greco-Roman culture**. This is also often called classical civilization.

Roman artists, philosophers, and writers did not just copy Greek works. They created a style of their own for their own purposes. Much of Roman art had practical purposes. It was aimed at educating the public.

One example of the mixing of cultures occurred in sculpture. Romans borrowed Greek ideas but made their sculptures more realistic. The Romans also developed a kind of sculpture in which images stood out from a flat background.

Romans were skilled at creating pictures made from tiny tiles, a process called *mosaic*. But Romans were perhaps most skilled at painting. The best examples of Roman painting are found in the Roman town of **Pompeii**. Pompeii was covered with ash after a volcanic eruption. The ash preserved many works of art and culture.

In both literature and philosophy, Romans were inspired by the Greeks. The poet **Virgil** wrote the...
most famous work of Latin literature, the *Aeneid*. It was modeled on the Greek epics of Homer.

The Romans also produced some important histories. *Tacitus* is an important Roman historian. Among ancient historians, he is known for presenting accurate facts. He described the good and bad parts of imperial Rome in his *Annals* and *Histories*.

1. Name three Roman cultural achievements.

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**The Legacy of Rome** (pages 181–183)

**What were Rome’s most major contributions to Western culture?**

The Roman language, Latin, was important in European history. It was the official language of the Roman Catholic Church into the 20th century. Many European languages developed from Latin, including French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Romanian. And many Latin words are used in other languages, including English.

Romans also became famous for their skill at engineering. They used arches and domes to build large, impressive buildings. Many of these forms are still used today. They also built an excellent system of roads and several aqueducts. Aqueducts carried water from distant lakes or rivers to large cities.

But Rome’s most lasting influence was in the field of law. The Roman government set standards of law that still influence people today. Some of the most important principles of Roman law were:

- All persons had the right to equal treatment under the law.
- A person was considered innocent until proven guilty.
- The burden of proof rested with the accuser rather than the accused.
- A person should be punished only for actions, not for thoughts.
- Any law that seemed unreasonable or unfair could be set aside.

2. What important standards of law were set by the Romans?

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