

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
ART MUSEUM

Artful Adventures

ANCIENT

ROME

An interactive guide for families



Your
Roman
Adventure
Awaits You!

See inside for details



ANCIENT ROME

Today we are going to go on a pretend journey to Ancient Rome. We will travel back in time almost 3,000 years. Rome was the longest continuous empire in human history, lasting 1,200 years, from 753 B.C. to 476 A.D. At its height it spanned an area from present-day England to Iraq. The Roman Empire was powerful and wealthy. Roman leaders built large architectural structures, such as palaces, temples, and tombs, and decorated them lavishly with sculptures, mosaics, and paintings. Amazingly, many of these works have survived.

We are very fortunate to have some of these objects at the Princeton University Art Museum. By examining these ancient treasures, we can learn about what life was like in Ancient Rome. The Roman gallery is on the lower level of the museum. Walk down the stairs and turn to your right. Then make a left and walk through the doorway into the Roman gallery.

ROMAN EMPIRE, AD 117



MOSAICS

The mosaics in this gallery come from Antioch-on-the-Orontes. Today this area is part of Turkey, but in the third century A.D. it was a large, wealthy Roman city in Syria. Mosaics are made of tiny pieces of stone or glass, called tesserae, that are put together like a puzzle to create a picture or design.

The Romans used mosaics to decorate the floors of their homes the way we use carpets. The mosaics you see came from a villa in Antioch that was buried for more than a thousand years. The site was carefully uncovered by a team of archaeologists from Princeton University and other institutions. The villa was probably owned by a wealthy Roman who could afford to furnish his home with the finest things.

Close your eyes and imagine what it would be like to get out of bed on a hot, sticky morning—no air conditioning, no electric fans—and put your feet down on a nice, cool mosaic floor. The Romans believed that gods and goddesses, divine beings with special powers, controlled their world. They told myths, or stories, about the gods to explain everything that happened. Roman art often includes scenes from these myths.



Roman, Turkey, Antioch on the Orontes. Mosaic pavement from Antioch (Daphne): Winter, mid-2nd century A.D. Stone; h. 135.0 cm., w. 132.0 cm. Gift of the Committee for the Excavation of Antioch to Princeton University (y1965-210) (photo: Bruce M. White)



Let's take a look at the mosaic on the floor at the far end of the gallery. This is a scene from the story of Apollo and Daphne.

Roman, Turkey, Antioch on the Orontes. Mosaic pavement from Antioch: Apollo and Daphne, late 3rd century A.D. Stone; h. 190.0 cm., w. 592.0 cm. Gift of the Committee for the Excavation of Antioch to Princeton University (y1965-219) (photo: Bruce M. White)





The god Apollo was in love with Daphne, a beautiful nymph, but she was not interested in him. Daphne enjoyed hunting and wandering in the forest and did not want to be bothered by Apollo.

She ran away from him, and he chased her. The faster she ran, the faster he ran after her. Finally, she called out to her father, Peneus, the god of the river, and asked him to help her by disguising her body. Just as she finished calling to her father, she felt her legs go numb, and a smooth layer of bark began to wind its way around her body. Her hair transformed into leaves, her arms became branches, and her feet turned into roots.

She had turned into a beautiful laurel bush that would be forever green and young. The leaves from this tree would be used to make wreaths for the heads of heroes and the winners of athletic contests. Apollo, who was a god, would never age—and now neither would his beloved “tree,” Daphne.

Now let’s look at the large mosaic on the floor in the center of the room.

This mosaic came from what would have been a dining room in the villa. It was called a triclinium. The Latin word triclinium is formed from the ancient Greek words tri–(three) and kline (couch). It was a room with three couches placed around the mosaic floor. The Romans did not eat at a table. Instead they reclined on couches while they ate and drank.

SCULPTURE

As we walk around the room, we see many sculptures of heads. Ancient Romans didn’t have cameras, so when they wanted to remember someone, they had a sculpture made.

These sculptures were painted in very bright colors. Close your eyes and imagine what they would have looked like with dark brown hair, blue eyes, and red lips. They also would not have had broken noses in A.D. 300—that happened many years after they were made. During earthquakes and wars the sculptures fell off their pedestals, and the noses were broken off. The paint and noses are gone, but otherwise they are in pretty good shape for something that is almost 2,000 years old.



CAN YOU FIND A SCULPTURE OF THE HEAD OF A SMALL CHILD?

This sculpture might have been made to commemorate or remember a special occasion.

CAN YOU FIND A SCULPTURE OF THE HEAD OF A CHARIOTEER?

Chariot racing was very popular in ancient Rome. A charioteer was someone who raced these horse-drawn carriages. After he died, this sculpture was made to remember him.

CAN YOU FIND A SCULPTURE OF THE BODY OF A MAN IN ARMOR?

This was originally a full-length sculpture of a soldier in armor. Roman men wore armor made of leather and metal. He probably had a helmet, shield, and sword.

CAN YOU FIND A SCULPTURE OF THE HEAD OF A GRANDMOTHER?

(Look in the case at the other end of the gallery.) This sculpture is made of bronze, not stone like the others we have looked at. She is wearing a hairnet to hold her hair back.

CAN YOU FIND THE HEAD OF OCTAVIAN/AUGUSTUS?

This head would have been attached to a larger-than-life, full-length sculpture. Are you wondering why he has two names? This is because he changed his name. When he was younger, he was called Octavian. Later, for political reasons, he changed his name to Augustus. He was a famous, powerful, and well-liked leader of the Roman Empire. Thousands of sculptures were made of him.



Roman, Italy, Trajanic. Portrait head of a woman, A.D. 98–117. Bronze with silver inlay; h. 32.8 cm., w. 17.4 cm., d. 20.4 cm. Museum purchase, Fowler McCormick, Class of 1921, Fund (y1980-10) (photo: Bruce M. White)

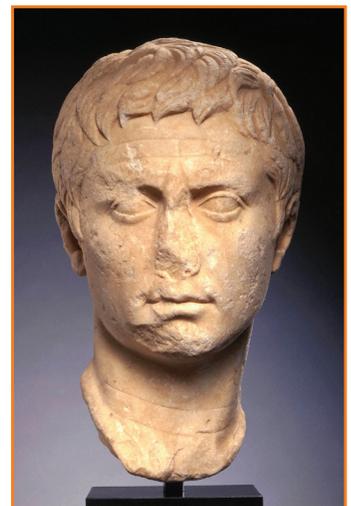
CIRCLE THE ADJECTIVES BELOW THAT YOU THINK BEST DESCRIBE THIS MAN.

strong young old happy serious sad

WHICH OTHER ADJECTIVES WOULD YOU USE?

WHICH ONE OF THESE FIVE PEOPLE WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO HAVE AS A FRIEND?

WHY?



Roman, Augustan: Portrait of the Emperor Augustus, ca. 27–1 B.C. Carrara marble, h. 40.5 cm., w. 23.2 cm., d. 24.0 cm. Museum purchase, Fowler McCormick, Class of 1921, Fund (2000-308) (photo: Bruce M. White).



On the side wall is a small case with a piece of painted fresco—the Roman version of wallpaper. Fresco was actually painted on the plaster when the walls of the villa were made. Close your eyes and imagine a room with a painting like this all over the walls and a mosaic on the floor.



Roman. Section of wall painting with landscape, 1st century A.D. Fresco; h. 32.2 cm., w. 45.6 cm., d. 1.4 cm. Museum purchase, Fowler McCormick, Class of 1921, Fund (1999-149) (photo: Bruce M. White)

WHAT DO YOU USE TO DECORATE THE WALLS AND FLOORS OF YOUR HOME?

Thank you for joining us today to explore the art of Ancient Rome. Don't forget to stop by the information desk to collect a sticker for your Artful Adventures Passport. We hope you enjoyed your visit to the Princeton University Art Museum, and that you will come back soon for another Artful Adventure!

On the next two pages are suggestions for ways that you can continue your Roman Adventure at home.



ART PROJECT: MAKE YOUR OWN MOSAIC!

You will need:

Colored construction paper, cut (with scissors) or ripped into squares and sorted by color

A sheet of 8¹/₂" x 11" paper

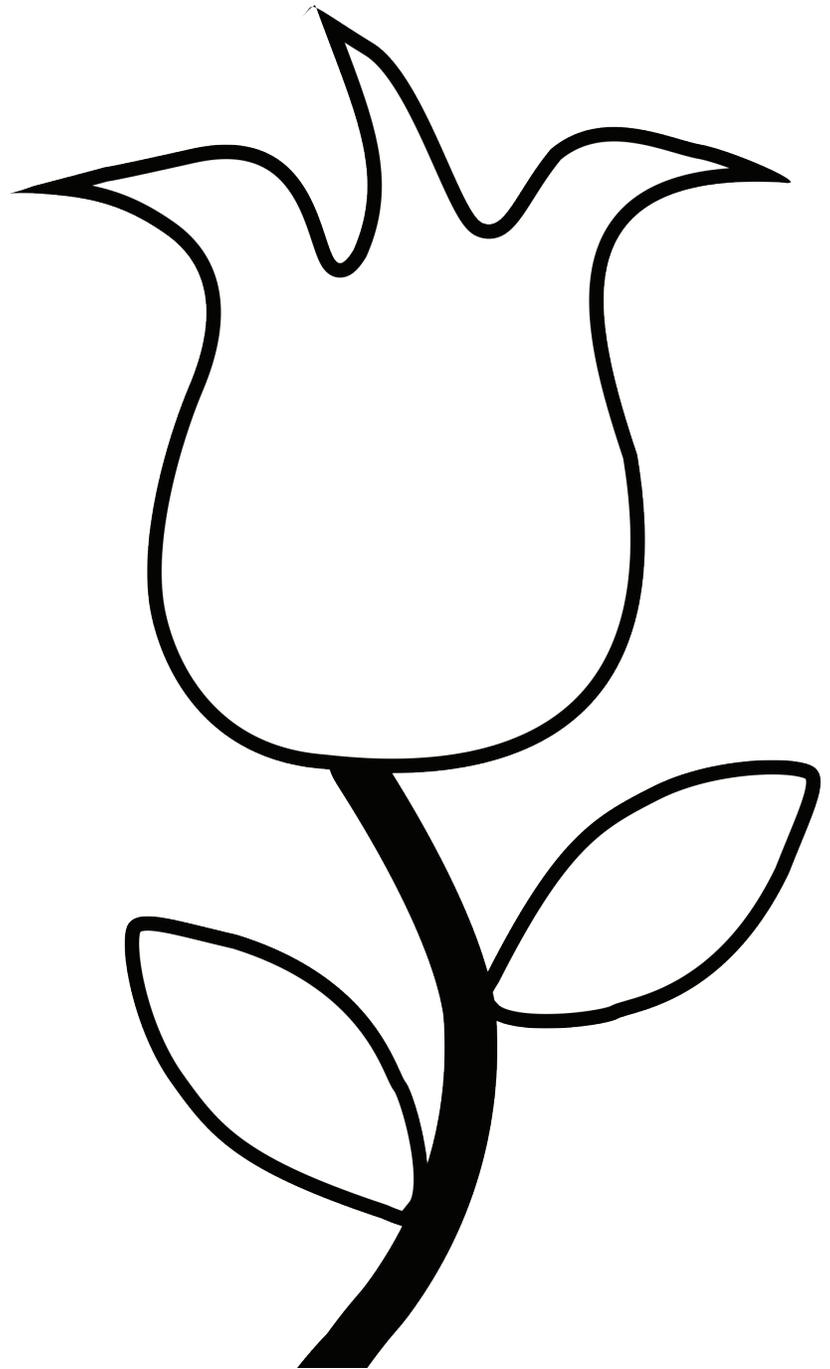
Tape or glue (glue-sticks work best)

A pencil to trace the image of the flower (shown to the right).

Directions:

Using paper and pencil, draw the outline of your mosaic. Keep it simple! Use the image of the flower seen here as an example.

Fill in the shapes of the outline with the construction paper squares and glue or tape them onto the paper. Sometimes, taping more than one square with one piece of tape is easiest. Be sure that each section includes only one color so that you can tell which shape is which!





SUGGESTED READING

Non-fiction for young children

Romans: Dress, Eat, Write, and Play Just Like the Romans
by Fiona MacDonald

Fiction for older children

Galen: My Life in Imperial Rome: An Ancient World Journal
by Marissa Moss

Non-fiction for older children

Ancient Rome by Lucia Raatma

How to Be a Roman Soldier

by Fiona MacDonald; illustrated by Nicholas Hewetson

**All of these books can be found in the children's section
of the Princeton Public Library.**

