

Roman Names 1: Men and Boys – Teacher’s Notes

To support:

KS3 Students in their study of Roman culture or Latin language, e.g.:

- GCSE Classical Civilization (OCR): Unit A351: City Life in the Classical World: Rome – the Roman Household
- GCSE Classical Civilization (AQA): Unit 2: Greece and Rome: Drama and Life
- GCSE Latin (OCR): Unit A405: Sources for Latin
- Cambridge Latin Course I, Stage 4 (where characters’ names are revised)
- WJEC Certificate in Latin and Roman Civilisation: Topic 9.1. Daily Life in Roman Society and Literature
- Revision of adjectives

This topic may be followed by:

- AshLI – Roman Names 2: Women and Girls

- **Warm-up**

Q. What Roman names do the students already know? Who were they?

e.g. *Julius Caesar*, Roman general
Tacitus, Roman historian
Virgil (Vergilius), Roman poet
Livia, wife of the emperor Augustus
Agrippina, mother of the emperor Nero
Caecilius, Pompeian Banker

- **Worksheet : Roman Names 1: Men and Boys**

Note: Roman naming practices could be extremely complicated. The practices described here were most common in the third century BC to the first century AD, a period that your students may well be studying. There were many exceptions to these rules, but they represent a “classic” and common format among the upper classes which may be a useful starting point for students.

A. Name a Roman

Extra information: The *cognomen* of Publius Ovidius Naso (the poet we call Ovid) means “Nose”. His branch of the Ovidius family must have had big or interesting noses. The *cognomen* of the poet we call Virgil, Publius Vergilius Maro, comes from an old word meaning “thoughtful”. Marcus Tullius Cicero (the orator Cicero)’s *cognomen* means “chickpea”. Perhaps his family were small, or had tiny bald heads!

Q. Do any of the students use a *cognomen* to tell the different branches of their families apart? Do they describe cousins or grandparents by where they live, or what they look like?

Extra information: A Roman man or boy may have been called any one or any two of his three names by his friends. This can make keeping up who's who in Roman history very tricky!

B. Reading Latin Inscriptions

Extra information: The study of inscriptions is called *epigraphy* (*pron.* 'e-PIG-graphy'), and someone who studies them is called an *epigrapher* or *epigraphist*.

Answers:

1. Marcus Mattienus Firmus ('Steadfast')
2. Lucius Pontius Helenus (note the tiny *-us* on the end of 'Helenus')
3. Gaius Julius Oecogenes (note C for G, and I for J. 'Oecogenes' is Greek for 'born at home'.)
4. Gaius Ennius Felix ('Lucky'. Note, not all inscriptions are neat!)
5. Gaius Pomponius Hymnus ('Song of Praise')

C. Choose Your own Roman name:

Note: In this activity, students should create three-part **male** names (they will have the chance to make two-part female names in the next worksheet). You might get the ball rolling by using your own name. If you prefer not to use your first name, you could use M. (for Marcus) in place of Miss/Mrs/Ms/Mr or D. (for Decimus) in place of Doctor. Your *cognomen* might be *Scholasticus* ('teacher', 'scholarly'), *Doctificus* ('who makes people learn') or you could ask your students to make suggestions(!) This exercise is a good opportunity to discuss or revise **adjectives**.

D. *Quis est?* Who is it?

To set your students a real challenge, encourage them to use a Latin dictionary to look up words. You could even withhold part of the name until the last minute, if you think it will give the game away. The basic rules are *first name, second name, description*.

Suggestions:

- **Easy:** Harrius Potterus Magicus. **Hard:** H. Plastes Magicus (Harry Potter-Magician)
- **Easy:** Petrus Parcerus Araneus. **Hard:** P. Paradisiacus Araneus (Peter Parker-Spiderlike)
- B. Bagginsianus Parvulus (Bilbo Baggins-Very Small)
- D. Quis Temporalis (Doctor Who-Concerned with Time)
- P. Ursus Fuscus (Paddington Bear-Brown, n.b. he was also a member of the Brown family)
- L. Hamiltonius Celer (Lewis Hamilton-Fast)