

Roman Names 2: Women and Girls – 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, 1. Work and domestic life (women)
- 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 3: Slaves and Freedmen

Notes:

- Naming practices for women in the Roman world were often very complicated, and the simplified rules presented here are intended as a useful introduction.
- Women’s names are often good illustrations of Rome’s *patriarchal* society, and this topic would be a good opportunity to reflect on the role and place of women. It may be interesting to note that Roman women did not, as a rule, change their name when they married. A married woman might be *referred to* as *Claudia Metelli* (“Claudia, wife of Metellus”), but the name she was born with remained her official one.
- The study of personal names is called *onomastics*.

A. Fathers and daughters

ANSWERS:

The brackets refer to the descriptions on the front of the worksheet.

- Marcus Livius Drusus - Livia Drusilla (2b, with the “little” *-illa* ending)
- Lucius Caecilius Metellus - Caecilia Metella (2b)
- Quintus Mucius Scaevola – Mucia Tertia (2a, probably distinguishing her from two aunts)
- Gaius Laelius Sapiens – Laelia Minor (2a, distinguishing her from an older sister)
- Quintus Pompeius Rufus – Pompeia Sulla. (2c. Her name combines the nomen of her father with a second name in honour of her maternal grandfather, the Roman dictator Lucius Cornelius Sulla. If the relative was famous enough, there was no shame in giving a child a second name in honour of someone from the mother’s side.)
- Publius Clodius Pulcher – Clodia Pulchra (2b)
Lucius Cornelius Sulla – Cornelia Postuma (2d. Sulla died at the age of 60. Cornelia Postuma’s mother was his fifth wife!)

B. Reading Latin Inscriptions

Let the students study these two funerary reliefs. There is a woman's name (in the nominative case) in each one. Can they read them?

Note: A red box highlighting the woman's name will appear after one click. Your students may be able to find the woman's name without this box, but it may be used to help those who find it difficult.

ANSWERS:

1. **Clodia Helice** (pronounced "Hellikay", and means "Willow"). She set this stone up for her son Decimus Aemilius Vitalis, who lived for 25 year and 48 days.
2. **Arria Marcellina**. She set this up for Popsius Severus, her "excellent husband".
3. **Mussia Athenais** (pronounced "Athen-ah-ees, and means "Athenian"). She set up this stone for her son, Lucius Mussius Dexter, who died at the age of 28.
4. **Flavia Marcellina** and **Pompeia Catullina** (feminine of "Catullus"). This mother and daughter set up this grave stone for Lucius Pompeis Marcellinus, a Roman soldier who died in Greece.
5. **Manilia Tyche** (pronounced "Ty-key", and means "Lucky"). She set this up for her husband, Gaius Julius Fortunatus, and her son Gaius Manilius Fortunatus.

C. Choose your own Roman name:

Note: Most will need to use options a) and c) (unless they come from a family with a "branch" name!). Once they've had some time to create their names, put some up on the board, and ask the students to explain their choices.

e.g. a student whose father is called *John Smith*, and who has one older sister, might be *Smithia Minor*. Or if they would like to be named in honour of their Aunty Susanna, they might be *Smithia Susannilla*.

Extension Projects:

Roman History:

Do Roman naming practices help us to understand the place of women in Roman society?

Humanities:

How do Roman naming practices for women compare to those in other cultures? How are girls' names chosen? And do women change their names?