



# THE ROMANS

## 1. SOCIETY AND CULTURE

JULIA: I'm in Rome, which is the capital city of Italy. And you've arrived just at the right time!

This is a mosaic, which is a decoration made of lots of little coloured tiles. We find many mosaics on the floors of ancient Roman buildings. They often show scenes from well-known stories, or even just pictures from everyday life at the time...and if I'm not mistaken, this is the head of a wolf, a wolf that plays a very important role in the story of Rome and the Roman Empire.

According to legend, she's the wolf that saved twin baby boys and fed them after they were abandoned and left floating down the river Tiber, the river that runs through Rome. A shepherd called Faustulus found the wolf looking after the boys. He took the boys home, where he and his wife raised them like they were their own children. But these were no ordinary boys, they were Romulus and Remus...and, according to the story, their real father was none other than...MARS, THE GOD OF WAR!

They built a town right on the spot where they had been saved by the wolf. But one day Romulus and Remus argued and started fighting. Remus was killed, leaving Romulus in control of what was now a city. A city that bore his name. THE CITY OF ROME!

The story of Romulus and Remus is an exciting one, but historians think it was made up – to help explain when and how the city came to be built.

According to the Roman scholar, Marcus Terentius Varro, Rome was founded on April the 21st 753 BCE...but he wrote about the story of Romulus and Remus around six hundred years later, so we can't really be sure this is true. But we do know the city of Rome grew to be the biggest city the world had ever seen.

By the 4th Century CE, it spanned seven hills, covered 25 square kilometres, and was protected by nearly 18 kilometres of walls. The wealthier people lived in houses called domus which had plenty of space. They had rooms like the triclinium, where people would eat together, while lying down. Or the atrium, where the family would entertain guests.

But if you didn't have that kind of money, you might live in an insulae, where lots of families lived in a building with multiple floors. Wealthier families lived on the bottom floors, with poorer residents living higher up, which could be risky if there was a fire.

MAN: FIRE!!!

JULIA: But Rome did have a fire brigade (of sorts)...



In fact, it had many things a modern city has - like markets, bakeries, libraries and schools, but only for boys from families who could afford it. There were public baths and even public toilets and sewers. All that water had to come from somewhere, so aqueducts were built to carry water to this thirsty city.

For entertainment, there were theatres where you could watch plays or listen to music.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: SSSSHHHHH!

JULIA WHISPERING: Sorry!

JULIA: There were arenas like the Colosseum - where gladiators fought, sometimes to the death. And the Circus Maximus - where chariots raced in front of two hundred thousand people.

The Romans had their own gods, like Neptune, god of the sea, and Venus, the goddess of love... although they were very similar to the Ancient Greek ones. People could worship their gods at the many temples around the city.

Ancient Rome certainly was a bustling, busy place full of people from all over the world and we know this because of things like the writings of Roman scholars, items archaeologists have found and extraordinary buildings that still remain today, centuries later.

No wonder Ancient Rome has fascinated and amazed us for over two thousand years!