

Jobs and occupations

Upper-class Romans did not respect physical work, and would consider only a few careers, such as the army, politics, or some forms of financial work. Skilled jobs like architecture (see pages 70-73) or medicine (see pages 68-69) were done by educated members of the middle class, foreigners, or freed men (see opposite). Most poorer citizens worked as craftsmen or shopkeepers; those in rural areas owned or worked on farms (see pages 46-47). Manual work like building or mining was done almost entirely by slaves (see opposite).

Most craftsmen worked in small workshops at the back of houses, selling their goods at the front. Others bought their goods from wholesale markets and then sold them to the public. A Roman street might have contained some of these stalls.

Meat from specially bred cattle was sold wholesale to butchers at a market known as the *forum boarium*. The butcher then sold to the public. Some butchers sold poultry as well.

Carpenters made furniture or worked in the building trade. The workshop was equipped with many types of tools still in use today.

Potters designed and made crockery of all kinds. They cast pots on wheels and baked them in kilns over wood fires.

Bakers ground flour and baked bread, then sold it over a counter to the public. The loaves had distinctive patterns.

Metalworkers made tools, weapons, and household goods out of bronze, iron and copper, as well as brooches, rings and ornaments out of gold, silver and jewels (see page 41).

Working women

The lives of Roman women depended on how rich they were. Rich families thought it inappropriate for women to go out to work.

Wealthy women were expected to have babies and organize the running of the home. Slaves helped them bring up their children.



In ordinary families women had to spin and weave wool cloth to make clothes. All women were taught these skills, but most rich families bought ready-made cloth.



Poorer women worked in markets, as needlewomen, or as attendants at the baths. Some served customers, as shown in this relief.



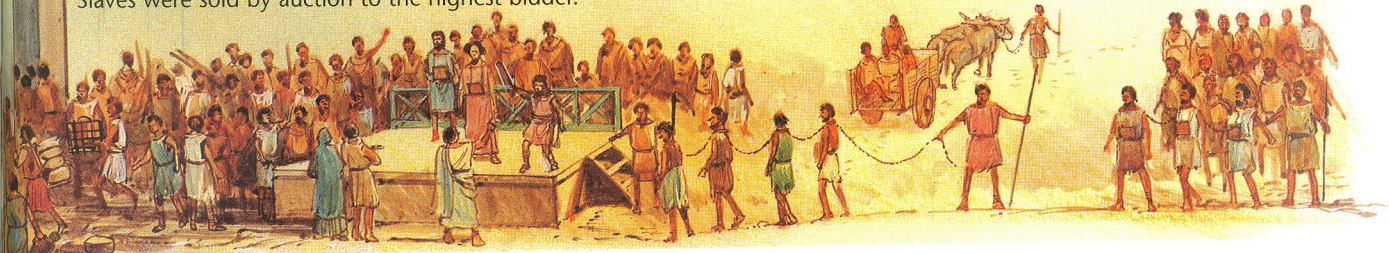
In the country, women worked on farms and as shepherdesses. A farmer's wife worked on the land with her husband.

Slaves and slavery

Slaves were workers with no rights who were owned by Roman citizens, or by the state. They were bought and sold like any other property, and their lives were controlled by their owners.

There were few slaves during the early republic, but after the 3rd century BC the number grew as Rome conquered other countries. After each new victory prisoners of war were brought back to Rome.

Slaves were sold by auction to the highest bidder.



A slave's life

In imperial times there was a vast workforce of slaves. Their lives varied depending on the jobs they did and whom they worked for. Many slaves suffered terribly at the hands of cruel masters, but others lived well. Here are some of the jobs that slaves did.

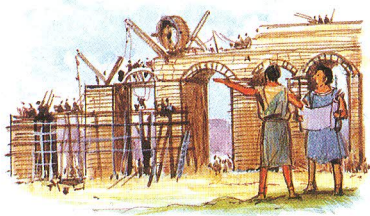


Greek slaves were thought to be the cleverest. They worked in richer Roman houses as doctors, tutors, artists and librarians.

Other slaves worked as hairdressers, butlers, maids and cooks. Some helped their owners in workshops or factories.



Slaves owned by good masters in the country often lived better than poor citizens in towns. They worked in pleasant surroundings, and could marry and have children. Many also ran small farms of their own.



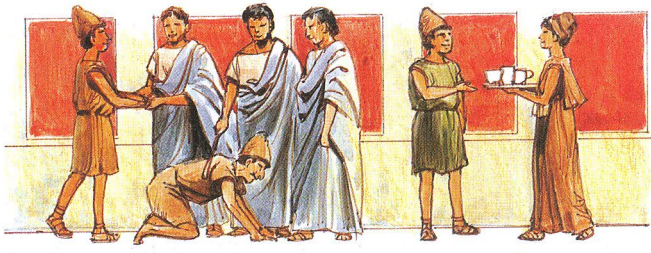
The government owned many slaves, who maintained buildings, bridges and aqueducts. Others worked as civil servants, helping the administration of the empire. Some became very powerful and important.



Slaves who worked in mines suffered particularly bad conditions. They were harshly treated and forced to work constantly in mines that were often unsafe. Many died as a result of injuries or beating.



There were several rebellions by discontented slaves. The most famous was led by Spartacus, who formed a huge army of slaves in 73BC. It was defeated by the Roman army two years later.



At the freedom ceremony the slave wore a special cap and was given a *toga praetexta*.

Some slaves were paid wages. If they saved enough money, they could pay their masters to set them free. Others didn't have to pay, as some owners freed slaves who had served well.

By imperial times freed slaves were a large, rich group. Many owned businesses. Others became important administrators or civil servants (see page 27).