

Name _____

Romans in Their Own Words

(Source: *As the Romans did : a sourcebook in Roman social history*, Oxford University Press, 2nd edition, 1997.)

Directions: Read the passages below. The passages are taken from writings composed during the time of the Roman Empire. After reading the passages write down the ideas or thoughts from the passage that could have been written today and then write down the ideas or thoughts that would probably only have been written in ancient Roman times.

1. Leaving a child out to die

I send you my warmest greetings. I want you to know that we are still in Alexandria. And please don't worry if all the others come home but I remain in Alexandria. I beg you and entreat you to take care of the child, and if I receive my pay soon, I will send it up to you. If you have the baby before I return, if it is a boy let it live, if it is a girl, expose it [leave it out to die]. You sent a message with Aphrodisias, "Don't forget me." How can I forget you? I beg you then, not to worry.

Ideas that are modern _____

Ideas that are Roman _____

2. An adoption agreement

Aurelius Heracles and Aurelia Isarion, both of the city of Oxyrhynchus, acknowledge that we have given to you, Aurelius Horion, for adoption, our son, Patermouthis, who is two years old.

I, Horion, acknowledge that I hold and consider him as my true son with regard to maintaining for him the rights of succession to my estate. It shall not be lawful for me to cast aside and reduce him to slavery because he is well-born and the son of well-born and free parents.

Ideas that are modern _____

Ideas that are Roman _____

3. Duties of a Roman wife

Stranger, I have only a few words to say. Stop and read them -- This is the unlovely tomb of a lovely woman. Her parents named her Claudia. She loved her husband with all her heart. She bore two sons; one of these she leaves here on earth, the other she has already placed under the earth. She was charming in speech, yet pleasant and proper in manner. She managed the household well. She spun wool. -- I have spoken. Go on your way.

Ideas that are modern _____

Ideas that are Roman _____

4. A divorce agreement

Zois and Antipater agree that they have separated from one another and severed their arrangement to live together. . . . And Zois agrees that Antipater has returned to her, handed over from his household, the items he received as her dowry, namely clothing valued at 120 silver drachmas and a pair of gold earrings. Both parties agree that henceforth the marriage contract will be null and void . . . and from this day it will be lawful for Zois to marry another man and for Antipater to marry another woman, with neither party being liable to prosecution.

Ideas that are modern _____

Ideas that are Roman _____

5. Renting a slave

Glaukios . . . has rented out to Achilles . . . for a period of one year his female slave Tapontos to work at the weaver's trade. Glaukios, who has rented her out, will make sure that she is absent from him neither day nor night, and that she will be fed and will receive other necessities, except clothing, from Achilles; she will be clothed by her owner. The rental fee for the whole year is 420 silver drachmas, which I, Achilles, will pay Glaukios, once the rental contract has been ratified in monthly installments. The slave Tapontos will have four days off in the month of Tybi and similarly four days off in the month of Pachon for holidays, a total of eight days, for which nothing will be deducted from the rental fee.

Ideas that are modern _____

Ideas that are Roman _____

6. A marriage contract

Thermion and Apollonius agree that they have come together for the purpose of sharing their lives with one another. The above-mentioned Apollonius agrees that he has received from Thermion, handed over from her household as a dowry, a pair of gold earrings . . . from now on he will furnish Thermion, as his wedded wife, with all the necessities and clothing according to his means, and he will not mistreat her or cast her out or insult her or bring in another wife; otherwise he must at once return the dowry and in addition half as much.

Modern Ideas _____

Roman Ideas _____

Miscellaneous Roman graffiti:

- A benevolent god dwells here in this house.
- Burglar, watch out!
- This is no place for idlers. On your way-lazy
- Stronius is a know-nothing.
- I don't want to sell my husband.
- Let anyone who invites me to dinner prosper.
- Epaphra is not a ball player.
- Learn this well. While I am alive, you are my enemy, Death.
- On April 19 I baked bread.
- Marcus loves Spendusa.
- Serena hates Isidore.
- Sarra, you're not acting very nicely, leaving me all alone.
- When you are dead, you are nothing.