



Garlands of myrtle were traditional at Roman weddings.

...AND FUNERALS

Death was commonplace in Roman families. Many women died in childbirth, and lots of diseases that are curable today were fatal in Roman times. When an important Roman died, the body was washed and covered in oil. If the person was a senator, he was dressed in his official robes. Then, the body lay on display for several days, so visitors could pay their last respects.

On the day of the funeral, the body was carried in a procession to the forum, where a speech was made in praise of the dead person. The body was then either buried or cremated. It was against the law to bury a person's body or ashes inside the city, so Roman tombs were always built outside the city walls.

When a body was cremated, the ashes were placed in an urn like this before being taken to the family tomb.

The night before her wedding, the bride offered her childhood toys to the gods at the household shrine. The next morning, she was dressed in a white tunic, a saffron-yellow cloak and shoes, and a flame-red veil. On her head, she wore a garland of flowers. When the bridegroom and guests arrived, an animal was sacrificed and a priest examined its insides to find out if the gods approved of the marriage.

Then, the marriage contract was read and signed - this gave details of the dowry to be paid by the bride's father to the groom. The bride and groom joined hands and made their vows. After a party at the house of the bride's family, the bride and groom led a procession of flute-players and torch-bearers to the groom's house. The groom carried his bride over the threshold, and the couple began their life together.

