

# SLAVES AND FREEDMEN

Most Roman families relied on slaves to help them run their homes, keep their businesses going and farm their land. Slaves were usually bought from dealers or were born into a slave family - they had no rights and belonged entirely to their master or mistress.

## HOUSEHOLD SLAVES

Many slaves worked in private homes, doing the household shopping, cooking and cleaning. They also served at meals and helped their mistress with her hair, her clothes and her makeup.

*In this painting, you can see a slave arranging a girl's hair.*



## A HARD LIFE

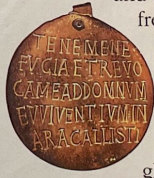
For many slaves, life was very hard. Some were made to work in appalling conditions in the mines, while others had to stoke the burning-hot furnaces in the public baths. Many worked on building sites, where they were given all the most dangerous jobs, and some trained as gladiators and had to fight to the death in the arena against wild animals or other gladiators.



*A statuette of a slave cleaning a boot*

In many Roman homes, slaves were treated kindly, and sometimes the children of a trusted slave were brought up as companions for their master's children. In the country, slaves worked as labourers on farms, and in towns they helped in shops and workshops.

*Slaves wore an identity tag inscribed with the name and address of their master.*



## BECOMING FREE

Slavery wasn't always for life, and some slaves were granted freedom as a reward for loyal service. Other slaves managed to save small amounts of money and buy their own freedom. Very occasionally, a gladiator was freed because he had fought bravely and survived many fights.

## EDUCATED SLAVES

Many slaves from Greece had a good education and were expensive to buy. They worked in wealthy Roman homes as private tutors, doctors and librarians, or were employed by the government. Well-educated government slaves helped run the empire, and they often rose to important positions.

Freed slaves were given the status of 'freedmen' and could buy property and keep their own slaves. Under some emperors, freedmen could even become Roman citizens. Some of the emperor's freed slaves worked as his personal secretaries and gained great power in the Empire.