

**Pre- and Post-Visit Lesson Plan
Paterfamilias Role-Play**

Grades: Adjustable for middle school or high school.

Time Needed: 45 minutes pre-visit, minimum of 75 minutes post-visit.

Objectives (Pre-Visit):

- Students will discuss their assumptions about what daily life was like in the Roman Empire.
- Students will analyze the differences between modern and ancient Roman families.
- Students will explore the concept of the paterfamilias and develop a list of pros and cons related to it.

Objectives (Post-Visit):

- Students will review characteristics of life in ancient Rome, including family structure, trade, and religion.
- Students will discuss the role of the paterfamilias in the context of the role-play.
- Students will write fictional biographies of a character, based on research.
- Students will read their biographies for the class.

Materials:

- Whiteboard/markers or chalkboard/chalk
- Paper and pens/pencils (or computers with word processing)
- Research materials (textbooks, encyclopedias, internet, etc.)

Key Vocabulary: paterfamilias, haruspex, omen, villa

Background:

During your visit to the Higgins Armory Museum, your students will have the chance to explore the life of a merchant family in ancient Rome. Things worked very differently back then: superstition was an enormous factor in decisions; trade and wealth were tremendously important; and the paterfamilias, or father, had ultimate control over his family. As the students immerse themselves in the rich culture of ancient Rome, they will see first-hand the variety of events that shaped the daily life and culture of the ancient Romans.

Religion during this time period was based largely upon superstition. Ancient Romans would often consult a *haruspex*, or oracle, when faced with a crucial decision in order to see if the omens favored their choice. Only if the gods were favorable would they undertake a project or venture.

Trade and wealth were the tools for attaining power and status. In the role-play, the paterfamilias helps fund a business venture, sending a ship to trade goods in foreign lands and hoping to make a profit upon its return. The importance of wealth and status are seen in many of the decisions he makes, especially those involving his family.

When dealing with his family, the paterfamilias had ultimate control. He had power of life and death over his wife and children, and controlled what they were to do. In this role-play, the paterfamilias demonstrates this power by controlling whom his daughter is to marry.

Lesson Implementation and Procedure (Pre-Visit):

In this lesson students will be introduced to ancient Roman social structure. They will express their ideas of what they believe life was like in ancient Rome and will begin to examine the similarities and differences it has with modern society.

1. (5 minutes) Ask students what they think life was like in ancient Rome. Prompt class using background information provided above. (Such as: Did Romans worship many gods? What types of clothing did Romans wear? Did Romans have contact with other cultures?) Focus on similarities and differences with modern life. Allow for broad discussion, but try to lead it towards focusing on the family.
2. (15 minutes) Ask students what they think family life was like several thousand years ago, in ancient Rome. Prompt with questions such as: What does a typical family look like? Who makes up a family? What is expected of each person? Write the results on the board, in the form of a list or web. Bring up concept of the paterfamilias in relation to family, as well as to daily life in Rome. Briefly compare and contrast with modern family life. Introduce vocabulary and explain. Use the background information above as needed.
3. (15 minutes) Divide classroom into two groups. Have one group brainstorm reasons why the power of the paterfamilias was a positive influence on the family, while the other group brainstorms reasons why the power of the paterfamilias was a negative influence on the family. (Such as: The power of the paterfamilias was positive because it allowed for decisions to be made quickly and without discord. Or: The power of the paterfamilias was negative because he didn't take others into consideration or allow for their input.)

4. (10 minutes) Reconvene and list the positives from one group and the negatives from the other. Introduce the Museum trip and emphasize the role-play, explaining how it relates to the daily life in ancient Roman times as well as to the collection of the Higgins Armory Museum.

Lesson Implementation and Procedure (Post-Visit):

In this continuation of the lesson students will delve deeper into the background of the role-play by doing brief research and writing a fictional biography of one of the characters. They will then present their biographies to the class, demonstrating knowledge of the setting and the other characters that the role-play involved.

1. (10 minutes) Using the information from the pre-visit lesson, review what family life was like in ancient Rome and examine the positive and negative aspects of the paterfamilias that the class developed. Ask students to compare their original thoughts to what they know now. Allow for discussion of other important areas of life, such as trade and religion.
2. (10 minutes) To apply their new knowledge, present the idea of creating a biography for a character in the role-play and review the basic details of the role-play. Break up class into five groups and assign each group a character (father, mother, daughter, merchant, oracle). Emphasize that while this biography is fictional, it must be realistic. Encourage them to briefly discuss the role-play but to work individually on developing a background for their assigned character through research.
3. (25 minutes) Have each student work on developing a written biography of his or her character. This can be done as a homework assignment if there are time constraints, or it can be expanded to provide more time, if necessary.
4. (30 minutes) Have a selection of students present their biographies by sharing them in front of the class. This can be expanded over more than one class, if necessary.

Assessment

At the end of the lesson, students should:

- Understand the differences between modern families and families in ancient Rome.
- Understand the role of the paterfamilias.
- Understand the impact of trade and religion on the paterfamilias and the family.

- Know and use vocabulary related to the role-play.
- Conduct research that will help them construct a fictional biography of a character from the role-play.
- Apply their understanding by writing a biography of a character from the role-play.

Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks

English Language Arts Standard 1: *Students will use agreed upon rules for informal and formal discussions in small and large groups.*

As part of formulating and presenting the positive and negative aspects of the paterfamilias, students will discuss their opinion within their group and between groups.

English Language Arts Standard 2: *Students will pose questions, listen to the ideas of others, and contribute their own information or ideas in group discussions in order to acquire new knowledge.*

Students will have the opportunity to ask and listen during the discussion of ancient Roman life, and will ultimately contribute their opinion to group discussions in the creation of the biography.

English Language Arts Standard 3: *Students will make oral presentations that demonstrate appropriate consideration of audience, purpose, and the information to be conveyed.*

Students will present their biographies in the form of an oral presentation for the class.

English Language Arts Standard 4: *Students will understand and acquire new vocabulary and use it correctly in reading and writing.*

While learning about the paterfamilias and the connection he had with trade, religion, and decisions regarding the family, students will obtain new vocabulary. They will use their new vocabulary when writing their biographies.

English Language Arts Standard 8: *Students will understand the basic facts and main ideas in a text and use them as the basis for interpretation.*

Students will take part in or observe the role-play during the field trip and use the information they gather to write a biography of a character.



English Language Arts Standard 9: *Students will deepen their understanding of a literary or non-literary work by relating it to its contemporary or historical background.*

While at the Higgins Armory Museum, students will fully grasp the role-play by seeing it in context of the historical time period in which it is set.

English Language Arts Standard 13: *Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the purposes, structure, and elements of nonfiction or informational materials and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.*

The role-play serves as informational material that provides a basis for students to build on as they write their biographies.

English Language Arts Standard 17: *Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the themes, structure, and elements of drama and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.*

Students will observe the role-play as a dramatic presentation of facts, and will use these facts, as well as their research, when writing the biography.

English Language Arts Standard 19: *Students will write with clear focus, coherent organization, and sufficient detail.*

In order to present their biographies well and have them be understood, students must write clearly with focus and detail.

English Language Arts Standard 23: *Students will organize ideas in writing in a way that makes sense for their purpose.*

Students will organize their ideas in the form of a biography and present it in a way that makes sense.

English Language Arts Standard 24: *Students will gather information from a variety of sources, analyze and evaluate the quality of the information they obtain, and use it to answer their own questions.*

Students will research ancient Rome with an emphasis on a specific character from the role-play in order to write a realistic biography of that person.