

# A-Z glossary

## Additional resource

This glossary explains some of the words and phrases that we use in the course. It's a work in progress, so if there's anything you think is missing, let us know in the comments and we'll add them to the document for next time.

Term	Description
<b>A</b>	
<b>Aeneas</b>	refugee from the sack of Troy, and legendary founder of the Roman people.
<b>Aetiology</b>	the study of how things came to be the way they are; for example, explaining how a particular temple or sacred site gained its significance.
<b>Aggrandise</b>	make more splendid.
<b>Annona</b>	the grain supply of ancient Rome; also used of the handout of free or subsidised grain to the people.
<b>Antiquity</b>	the ancient past.
<b>Aurelianic</b>	dating to the reign of the Roman emperor Aurelian (reigned AD 270-275). In this course, refers to the brick and concrete city wall circuit that he began.
<b>Augurs</b>	a group of Roman priests who interpreted signs from heaven, especially the patterns made by flying birds.
<b>B</b>	
<b>Balneae</b>	smaller Roman bathhouses, run as private commercial businesses (unlike the great imperial thermae).

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<b>Term</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Borromini</b>	Francesco Borromini (1599-1667), an Italian baroque architect who built several important churches in Rome.
<b>Bernini</b>	Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598 – 1680), an Italian baroque sculptor and architect.
<b>C</b>	
<b>Cambered</b>	the downward curve of a road surface, which enables rainwater to run off.
<b>Chasm</b>	a hole in the ground.
<b>Citadel</b>	the fortified upper part of an ancient town.
<b>Civic</b>	relating to the city as an official community.
<b>Colonnades</b>	a row of columns as part of a building.
<b>Columbaria</b>	literally 'dovecot' or 'pigeon holes' – used of a communal tomb structure with numerous niches to hold the ashes of people who could not afford a grand tomb of their own.
<b>Consecrated</b>	dedicated to a god; made holy.
<b>Consular</b>	relating to the consuls, the chief magistrates of the Roman state.
<b>D</b>	
<b>Desecrating</b>	damaging or disrespecting a sacred site.
<b>Deified</b>	made into a god after death; an honour given to some of the more successful emperors.
<b>Deities</b>	gods; divine beings.
<b>E</b>	
<b>Earth rampart</b>	a sloping bank built to support a wall.

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<b>Term</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Epochs</b>	ages or periods of history.
<b>Etruscan</b>	the civilisation of Etruria, Rome's neighbour to the north and for a while its rival.
<b>F</b>	
<b>Frieze</b>	the continuous band of carving above the columns of a temple.
<b>G</b>	
<b>Gaius Gracchus</b>	a politician of the late second century BC who, with his brother, tried to introduce measure to advance the cause of the common people, but who was killed.
<b>Gazetteer</b>	a geographical list or index.
<b>Gnomon</b>	the pointer on a sundial.
<b>Grandstanding (politicians)</b>	playing to the public, showing off.
<b>H</b>	
<b>Hellenistic</b>	relating to the Greek east in the period of rule Hellenistic kings, successors to Alexander the Great (conventional dates: 323-31BC).
<b>Hinterland</b>	the area around a city that belongs to its territory or provides it with the goods it needs.
<b>Honorifics</b>	acts of honour or prestige offered to an important figure; the titles of (for example) an emperor.
<b>L</b>	
<b>Lacus Curtius</b>	a sacred site in the Roman Forum, believed to be the spot where a brave Roman offered himself as a sacrifice to heal up a huge chasm that had opened in the earth.

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<b>Term</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Lordly sovereignty</b>	ruling like an aristocrat or king.
<b>Lupercal</b>	the cave under the Palatine Hill where Romulus and Remus were raised by a wolf.
<b>M</b>	
<b>Mercantile</b>	relating to trade or merchants.
<b>Mithraeum</b>	a shrine to Mithras, a mysterious eastern saviour-god whose secretive cult became popular in Rome.
<b>Monumentalisation</b>	the act of commemorating an event, person, or phenomenon with a monument.
<b>N</b>	
<b>Numinous</b>	relating to the sensation of religious awe one might experience in a holy place.
<b>Nones of June</b>	The 5th of June. The Romans did not number the days of their months, but counted from certain key days in each, the Kalends, Nones, and Ides.
<b>O</b>	
<b>Obverse</b>	The portrait side of a coin.
<b>P</b>	
<b>Papacy</b>	the rule of the Christian Popes, in succession from St Peter.
<b>Praetor</b>	a Roman magistrate.
<b>Peribolos</b>	the outer structure surrounding (for example) a Roman bathhouse.
<b>Plautus</b>	a Roman comic playwright of the third to second century BC.
<b>Pomerium</b>	the ancient sacred boundary of the city of Rome.

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<b>Term</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Porticoed</b>	having a portico, a porch with columns.
<b>Principate</b>	the rule of Rome by emperors who, having no official title of 'emperor', claimed at first to rule as princeps inter pares or 'first among equals'.
<b>Prohibitions</b>	bans on certain acts, substances, or behaviours.
<b>Propinquity</b>	closeness, nearness.
<b>Provincials</b>	the inhabitants of the provinces of the Roman empire.
<b>Publius Clodius</b>	a late republican gang-leader and populist politician; enemy of Cicero.
<b>Pullulating</b>	teeming, densely populated.
<b>Pyre</b>	the stack of wood on which a body was cremated at a funeral.
<b>R</b>	
<b>Rostra</b>	the speaker's platforms in the Roman Forum; named after the captured enemy bronze ship's beaks which decorated it.
<b>S</b>	
<b>Sesterces</b>	a basic unit of Roman coinage. One sestertius was worth a quarter of a denarius, and might buy a couple of loaves of bread. Roman soldiers were paid one denarius a day in the first century AD.
<b>Siphon</b>	a system for allowing water in (say) an aqueduct to flow downhill, then rise up again under pressure to reach a point at or below the hydraulic gradient. Useful for crossing a steep valley.
<b>Soothsayers</b>	individuals who interpreted the future from portents, the entrails of sacrificed animals, horoscopes, etc.
<b>Spoils and booty</b>	the treasure captured in wars of conquest and brought back to Rome.
<b>(Hill) Spurs</b>	fingers of Rome's hills, part of a plateau partly eroded away by streams flowing down to the river Tiber.

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<b>Term</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Synoecism</b>	the process by which villages gather together to form a city-state.
<b>T</b>	
<b><i>Thermae</i></b>	the large imperial bathhouses of Rome.
<b>Thickets</b>	dense clusters of trees or shrubs.
<b>Topography</b>	the natural features of the terrain (or their study).
<b>Trapezoidal</b>	shaped like a trapezoid, a four-sided shape whose sides are not parallel.
<b>V</b>	
<b>Vedius Pollio</b>	a notoriously cruel Roman aristocrat of the late first century BC, famed for his luxurious villa and unpleasant personality; sometime friend of the emperor Augustus.
<b>Vis-à-vis</b>	relating to.
<b>Vistas</b>	Views.
<b>W</b>	
<b>Waystations</b>	places that mark stages in a journey, and offer facilities to travellers.