# 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aeneas</td>
<td>refugee from the sack of Troy, and legendary founder of the Roman people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aetiology</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggrandise</td>
<td>make more splendid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annona</td>
<td>the grain supply of ancient Rome; also used of the handout of free or subsidised grain to the people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiquity</td>
<td>the ancient past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurelianic</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augurs</td>
<td>a group of Roman priests who interpreted signs from heaven, especially the patterns made by flying birds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balneae</td>
<td>smaller Roman bathhouses, run as private commercial businesses (unlike the great imperial thermae).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borromini</td>
<td>Francesco Borromini (1599-1667), an Italian baroque architect who built several important churches in Rome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernini</td>
<td>Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598 – 1680), an Italian baroque sculptor and architect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambered</td>
<td>the downward curve of a road surface, which enables rainwater to run off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chasm</td>
<td>a hole in the ground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citadel</td>
<td>the fortified upper part of an ancient town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic</td>
<td>relating to the city as an official community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonnades</td>
<td>a row of columns as part of a building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbaria</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consecrated</td>
<td>dedicated to a god; made holy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consular</td>
<td>relating to the consuls, the chief magistrates of the Roman state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desecrating</td>
<td>damaging or disrespecting a sacred site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deified</td>
<td>made into a god after death; an honour given to some of the more successful emperors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deities</td>
<td>gods; divine beings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth rampart</td>
<td>a sloping bank built to support a wall.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Term Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epochs</td>
<td>ages or periods of history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etruscan</td>
<td>the civilisation of Etruria, Rome’s neighbour to the north and for a while its rival.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frieze</td>
<td>the continuous band of carving above the columns of a temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaius Gracchus</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gazetteer</td>
<td>a geographical list or index.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gnomon</td>
<td>the pointer on a sundial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandstanding (politicians)</td>
<td>playing to the public, showing off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hellenistic</td>
<td>relating to the Greek east in the period of rule Hellenistic kings, successors to Alexander the Great (conventional dates: 323-31BC).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinterland</td>
<td>the area around a city that belongs to its territory or provides it with the goods it needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honorifics</td>
<td>acts of honour or prestige offered to an important figure; the titles of (for example) an emperor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacus Curtius</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lordly sovereignty</td>
<td>ruling like an aristocrat or king.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lupercal</td>
<td>the cave under the Palatine Hill where Romulus and Remus were raised by a wolf.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercantile</td>
<td>relating to trade or merchants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mithraeum</td>
<td>a shrine to Mithras, a mysterious eastern saviour-god whose secretive cult became popular in Rome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monumentalis</td>
<td>the act of commemorating an event, person, or phenomenon with a monument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numinous</td>
<td>relating to the sensation of religious awe one might experience in a holy place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nones of June</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obverse</td>
<td>The portrait side of a coin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papacy</td>
<td>the rule of the Christian Popes, in succession from St Peter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praetor</td>
<td>a Roman magistrate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peribolos</td>
<td>the outer structure surrounding (for example) a Roman bathhouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plautus</td>
<td>a Roman comic playwright of the third to second century BC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pomerium</td>
<td>the ancient sacred boundary of the city of Rome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porticoed</td>
<td>having a portico, a porch with columns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principate</td>
<td>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’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prohibitions</td>
<td>bans on certain acts, substances, or behaviours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propinquity</td>
<td>closeness, nearness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincials</td>
<td>the inhabitants of the provinces of the Roman empire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publius Clodius</td>
<td>a late republican gang-leader and populist politician; enemy of Cicero.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pullulating</td>
<td>teeming, densely populated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyre</td>
<td>the stack of wood on which a body was cremated at a funeral.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rostra</td>
<td>the speaker’s platforms in the Roman Forum; named after the captured enemy bronze ship’s beaks which decorated it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sesterces</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siphon</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soothsayers</td>
<td>individuals who interpreted the future from portents, the entrails of sacrificed animals, horoscopes, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoils and booty</td>
<td>the treasure captured in wars of conquest and brought back to Rome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Hill) Spurs</td>
<td>fingers of Rome's hills, part of a plateau partly eroded away by streams flowing down to the river Tiber.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synoecism</td>
<td>the process by which villages gather together to form a city-state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>T</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thermae</td>
<td>the large imperial bathhouses of Rome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thickets</td>
<td>dense clusters of trees or shrubs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topography</td>
<td>the natural features of the terrain (or their study).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trapezoidal</td>
<td>shaped like a trapezoid, a four-sided shape whose sides are not parallel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>V</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vedius Pollio</td>
<td>a notoriously cruel Roman aristocrat of the late first century BC, famed for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>his luxurious villa and unpleasant personality; sometime friend of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>emperor Augustus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vis-à-vis</td>
<td>relating to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vistas</td>
<td>Views.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>W</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waystations</td>
<td>places that mark stages in a journey, and offer facilities to travellers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>