**UNIVERSITY OF 8 MAI 1945, GUELMA**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**Lecture in Culture and Civilization**

**First year, LMD**

**The Legacy of Rome**

**Roman Culture:** Greece was the dominant civilization in the Mediterranean before the Romans. The Romans conquered the Greeks but were deeply influenced by their culture. The Romans picked up Greek ideas about writing and the artistic ideal of perfect beauty. In addition, Roman artists and writers created their own styles. The result was a culture that blended Roman practicality with elements of Greek idealism.

**Art:** The Romans popularized an earlier type of art called mosaic. A **mosaic** is a picture made by placing small, colored pieces of stone, tile, or glass on a surface. Examples of mosaics can be found in churches and other buildings around the world.

Romans learned about sculpture from the Greeks but did not follow the Greek tradition of showing only perfect human forms. Instead, the Romans created sculptures that were realistic portraits in **bas-relief**. In a bas-relief, slightly raised figures stand out against a flat background.

**Literature:** The Greeks also influenced Roman literature. Roman writers adopted the form of the **epic**, a long poem about a hero’s adventures. The *Aeneid* by Virgil is a well-known Roman epic. Virgil modeled his poem on two Greek epics, the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*. The *Aeneid* tells the adventures of the hero Aeneas, who survived the Trojan War and sailed to Italy.

**Language:** Latin, the language of Rome, is another lasting aspect of Roman culture. Over time, Latin evolved into a group of languages called the Romance languages. (The word *romance* comes from

the word *Roman*.) Today, Romance languages are spoken in many countries whose lands were once ruled by Rome.

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| **Language** | **father** | **good** | **life** | **mother** |
| Latin | pater  | bonus | vita | mater |
| Spanish | padre  | bueno | vida | madre |
| French | père  | bon | vie | mère |
| Portuguese | pai  | bom | vida | mãe |
| Italian  | padre  | buono | vita | madre |
| Romanian | tatã  | bun | viatâ | mamâ |

**Architecture and Engineering**

The arch, the dome, and concrete were combined to build spectacular structures, such as the Colosseum.

**New Styles of Architecture:** Roman builders were excellent engineers. They found new ways to improve the structure of buildings. These ideas included arches, **vaults**, and domes. A vault is an arch that forms a ceiling or a roof.

Roman developments in building construction made it possible to build larger, taller buildings. Many modern buildings borrow Roman elements of design and structure. The dome of the U.S. Capitol building is a well-known example.

**Aqueducts:** that the Romans built **aqueducts** to bring water to cities. Eleven major aqueducts brought water to the city of Rome. The longest stretched for 57 miles. Aqueducts can still be found in France and Spain, lands that were once part of the Roman Empire.

**Roads:** The Romans are especially famous for the quality of their roads. In 312 B.C., Romans built the first of many roads. It was called the Appian Way, and it ran southeast from Rome. In time, a system of roads extended across much of the empire. Rome was the center of this network.

Many Roman roads were built so that soldiers could move quickly to places in the empire where they were needed. The road system also increased trade because merchants and traders could move their goods more easily. Although the road system helped hold the Roman Empire together, it also made it easier for the empire’s enemies to invade.

**Religion and Law**

Great civilizations leave their mark through ideas as well as through things we can touch and see. The Roman Empire made lasting contributions in the areas of religion and law.

**Spreading Christianity:** The Roman Empire played a major role in the spread of Christianity. Christian missionaries converted many people within the empire. And although Roman leaders resisted Christianity early on, they later embraced its teachings and made it an official religion. As the most powerful empire in the world at the time, Rome helped Christianity develop into a major religion.

When the Western Roman Empire fell, Christianity continued to prosper in the former lands of the empire. Germanic kings and queens became Christians. In addition, the Byzantine Empire promoted Christianity in the East. All of this enabled Christianity to become the force it is today. Currently, about one-third of the people in the world are Christians.

**Roman Law and Government:** Roman laws promoted principles as equal treatment under the law and the presumption of innocence for those accused of crimes. The principles of Roman law endured to form the basis of legal systems in many European countries and in the United States.

Finally, Rome established aspects of a representative government that many nations use today. Rome began as a republic in which average citizens held great power. During this time, the Romans established various assemblies, including a senate, to make laws and represent the views of the people. Today, assemblies exist in countries around the globe. In the United States, for example, the House of Representatives and the Senate are the nation’s two main representative bodies. The nation’s citizens elect the members of the House and Senate. The members of each body work to create and pass laws that address the needs of the people they represent.