

SKIT

Life in the Ancient World: Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome

To the Teacher:

We strongly suggest that you assign the parts below and practice in class in advance of your visit. The vocabulary is somewhat complex and a cold reading can be challenging for students of differing reading skills. Students without the named parts should read the part of the Greek chorus at the end in which all students can participate.

We hope that your class will enjoy performing this skit, written by docents from the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum as part of the ancient tour. Feel free to use it again in the classroom after your tour, or even expand on it. We would love to see your work.

Vocabulary words

There are many vocabulary words highlighted in the skit. You may want to work on these words with your class and have your students define them and identify which culture they came from:

patrician	amulet
market day	Hippocrates
forum	Olympic games
mummy	Circus Maximus
mummification	chariot
canopic jars	legion
Horus	Etruscan
Pharaoh	gladiator
Jupiter	legion
Athena	Etruscan
Parthenon	Colosseum
city-states	Emperor
Minerva	Nile River
bullae	Bastet
scarab	sweet meats
	stola

SKIT

Time: 100 C.E. Market Day

Place: Rome, the Forum

Cast of Characters:

NARRATOR

Romans: **LIVIA**, patrician girl (age 13) Daughter of Antoninus

PUBLIUS, male slave (age 14) Etruscan

Egyptians: **WIA**, girl (age 10) Daughter of Imenhotep, a trader

KAHA, boy (age 12) Brother of WIA

Greeks: **DIMITRI**, boy (age 14) Athenian

STAVROS, boy (age 18) Tutor, specialist in architecture

Chorus: A group that speaks together and offers background and summary information to help the audience follow the story. This can be the entire class that does not have named parts.

(TEACHER: divide class into two groups):

INTRODUCTORY (Prologue) CHORUS- provides and supports the Narrator's introduction to the story and the theme of the play

ENDING (Epilogue) CHORUS-repeats the theme of the play and summarizes what has happened.

NARRATOR: Today is market day in ancient Rome. The year is 100 C.E., which stands for “common era.” Once a week on market day, farmers and merchants set up stalls in the town square, also known as the forum.

Children especially love market day because they don’t have to go to school. The streets are noisy; there’s lots to buy and lots to see. It’s really crowded – people come from all over, even from other lands.

OPENING CHORUS & NARRATOR:

Our story is of youth today
 From many lands. Hear what they say!
 To Rome, they come from far and near
 To see, explain, converse, and hear.
 Each has a different tale to tell
 Of customs, lands they know so well.
 The games they play, the foods they eat
 It’s by the well our group does meet.

The Egyptian siblings are with their dad.
 They’ve lost their mother and are sad.
 They’re here to sell the grain he’s raised
 And look for things to fill their days.

The Roman girl is here to wed.
 Her slave, a captive, it is said,
 Will help to buy her wedding gown
 And accompany her throughout the town.

The Greek is a student of building art.
 His tutor is here to play his part.
 Together they will observe and see
 How different architecture can be.

On market day, they chance to meet.
 The forum’s bounty fills the street
 Let’s listen to the things they say
 On this quite busy market day.

ENTER WIA and KAHA:

KAHA: Look; Wia, we can get a drink of water at this well. Aren’t you thirsty?

WIA: Oh, Kaha, look at all there is to see. I want to see everything.

ENTER LIVIA and PUBLIUS

LIVIA: Let's stop for a minute, Publius, at this well. It is such a hot day and we are not far from the dressmaker's. My wedding dress should be ready today and we can take a few minutes to look around.

PUBLIUS: It certainly is busy today!

ENTER DIMITRI and STARVOS

DIMITRI: Stavros, you've kept me busy looking at so many buildings this morning, I'm getting tired, hot and thirsty. Let's get a drink here.

STAVROS: Dimitri, we can take a few minutes to relax but then you have to get busy again. I promised your father not to neglect your lessons while we are here in Rome. After we've had a break, you need to spend some time studying. (He bumps into Kaha). Oops, sorry. I didn't mean to bump into you.

KAHA: Well, it's really crowded here – it's hard not to bump into people. Are you from Rome?

DIMITRI: No. We're from Athens. We've come to Rome to study architecture. My name is Dimitri and this is Stavros, my tutor.

LIVIA: Hello. I'm Livia, the daughter of Senator Antoninus; I live here in Rome. I was admiring your jewelry. It is very well beautiful.

WIA: Thank you. It was a gift from my mother before she died last month. My father brought my brother, Kaha, and me to Rome on his boat. He didn't want to leave us home alone when he came to Rome to sell his grain.

DIMITRI: I'm sorry about your mother. My mother died when I was born.

KAHA: Was your mother mummified?"

STAVROS: What do you mean?

KAHA: When someone dies in Egypt, we prepare the body for the afterlife. The process is called mummification. First, the brain is removed through the nose and the skull is washed out. Then a cut is made on the left side of the body and the organs are removed and placed in canopic jars. The body is then dried out with special salts, wrapped carefully in linen strips and placed in a series of coffins and finally placed in a tomb. The entire process takes 70 days.

PUBLIUS: What are canopic jars and what are the organs that are put in them?

WIA: Canopic jars are stone containers with the heads of different gods on them. The lungs are placed in the jar with a baboon head on it. The stomach goes in the jar with the jackal; the intestines in the one with the hawk; and the liver with Horus's son's head on it. All of the jars are placed in the tomb with the mummified body.

STAVROS: I think I've heard that in Egypt, Horus is the god who is the protector and symbol of the pharaohs and the patron of young men. I guess he must be very powerful.

LIVIA: In Rome, Jupiter is the god who protects us. I've been to his temple with my father.

DIMITRI: It looks like we all have gods that take care of us even though they have different names. The city of Athens, where I come from is protected by Athena, the goddess of wisdom. Her temple is called the PARTHENON.

LIVIA: Minerva is our goddess of wisdom.

WIA: Where did you learn all these things?

LIVIA: My brother goes to school but I am tutored at home.

KAHA: I have a tutor, too. Wia doesn't go to school or have a tutor. She learns by working with the women in our home.

WIA: That's all right with me. I learn by asking questions. For instance, what do you have around your neck, Livia?

LIVIA: This is my BULLA. Do you like it? My parents gave it to me. It keeps away the evil spirits and all children have one.

KAHA: We wear something to protect us too. It is a beetle made out of stone or pottery and is called a SCARAB. It's like a lucky charm or amulet. But you have to be very careful of live scarabs; some of them are poisonous.

PUBLIUS: I got bitten by something last week and had to go the chemist. He mixed an ointment to put on the bite so I didn't get sick.

STAVROS: When we get sick, we go to our doctor. We're lucky to have had a medical school in Greece for over 200 years. It was founded by a man called HIPPOCRATES. All our doctors train there.

DIMITRI: Greeks also keep our bodies healthy by training for the OLYMPIC GAMES. Have you heard of them? Our best athletes compete against each other in different contests like wrestling, racing, and spear throwing. Winners get a special pottery vase filled with olive oil. In our country olive oil is so precious that we call it "liquid gold." Winners also get the favor of the gods.

LIVIA: We have games here in Rome, too. My brother likes to go to the chariot races at the CIRCUS MAXIMUS. You should see it! It's a huge, round stadium that holds 250,000 people – one-quarter of all the people that live in Rome. The races are very dangerous because the chariots bump into each other and there are many accidents. Sometimes, horses and even people get killed.

DIMITRI: Oh look, everyone. Who are those men marching through the Forum?

STAVROS: Those are Roman soldiers. Aren't they great? They are well trained and part of the very well organized Roman army. The largest unit is called a LEGION and has over 4,000. You can see that many of them are as young as sixteen years old. They travel all over the Empire and

build camps to protect the borders. The camps are surrounded by stone walls and some camps are so big, they are more like towns.

DIMITRI: How do they travel so far?

STAVROS: They build roads as they go along, crossing mountains and rivers, and even deserts. Roman soldiers are very good builders. They not only have to fight but they also have to march and build.

PUBLIUS: My uncle was in the Etruscan army. He fought against the Roman soldiers but the Etruscans lost and we became slaves to the Romans. Some of the best soldiers captured by Rome are used to perform as GLADIATORS.

WIA: What are gladiators?

PUBLIUS: Gladiators are slaves or prisoners who fight each other or lions or tigers in the Colosseum. Everyone watches them do battle and tries to pick the winner.

WIA: I know *I* wouldn't like to be a gladiator!

PUBLIUS: Neither would I. Even if the gladiator survives the battle, it's up to the emperor to decide his fate. If the emperor likes the show, he gives a "thumb's up" signal. But if he doesn't like it, he shows a "thumb's down" signal. That's definitely NOT a good sign.

KAHA: We fight hippopotamuses in Egypt rather than people. Hippos often trample our grain along the Nile River. We need the grain for food so often they are hunted down and killed. Sometimes we tame other animals that live in the grain fields, like cats and monkeys, and have them as pets.

WIA: Cats are sacred in EGYPT and they bring us good luck. We even have a cat goddess. Her name is BASTET.

KAHA: I have a friend who has a pet monkey that climbs the date palm trees and throws dates down to us. He's fun to watch and the ripe dates taste really sweet.

LIVIA: We often eat dates for dessert. I like the stuffed ones best.

DIMITRI: My favorite dessert is sweet meats.

PUBLIUS: What are sweet meats?

STAVROS: Sweet meats are dates, figs, nuts and sesame seeds rolled in honey.

PUBLIUS: Mmm, that sounds really good. You are making me hungry just listening to you.

LIVIA: Say, that reminds me. We are going to have a wonderful feast at my wedding. Do you think you could stay for it? I came to the forum today to pick up my wedding dress. I'm so excited! It's white and goes an orange veil that has a crown of leaves. After I am married, I'll wear a different veil called a STOLA that is worn only by married women. The wedding ceremony will take place at our family shrine and afterwards the wedding guests will form a

procession to accompany me to my new home where I will be carried over the threshold. I am going to live with my husband's family.

WIA: Will you like living with your mother-in-law?

LIVIA: I don't know. I don't even know if I will like living with my husband. My father chose him for me but I have to believe that he knows best. It shouldn't be too bad. I will have my slaves to do all the work in the house. I'll be like a supervisor.

STAVROS: Is the feast after the procession?

LIVIA: Oh, yes! That is the best part. We will have singers and dancers and even acrobats. Slaves will bring in lots of food. They will even wipe your fingers between courses. You will be a *very* pampered guest if you can come.

KAHA: Wia, let's ask Father if we can. After all, we'll be here for a couple of weeks while father sells his grain and this sounds like so much fun!

PUBLIUS: How about you Dimitri and Stavros? How long are you staying in Rome?

STAVROS: We'll need to be here for a few more weeks too. We haven't seen all the architecture that we came to see yet.

DIMITRI: So we will probably be able to go the wedding, too.

LIVIA: Wonderful! You all have an invitation. You'll know my house. It will have lots of garlands over the door. Come, Publius, we let's go to the dressmaker's now. Good-bye everyone! See you next Friday!

EPILOGUE:

NARRATOR and CLOSING CHORUS:

Today our friends have traded lots of information
 On the customs and practices of their home nation
 They've told of foods they eat, their games and education.
 They've talked of different gods and their future expectation.
 They will attend a Roman wedding feast and find it a delight.
 They will listen to the music and dance throughout the night.
 They will stand in a long line to congratulate the bride
 And meet the handsome groom who is standing by her side.
 They've learned a lot, and we hope you have, too
 About the Ancient World and what there is to do.

THE END