

Revision Starter

Drawing of a wall painting from a *popina* in Pompeii, in Italy.

Women at work



QUESTION

What do you think the role of the woman is? Is she a serving woman, a customer, the owner, or someone else entirely?

Roman Women - remember...

Some women, like Rufina, worked outside the home. It is difficult to know how many women did work, and how much of the work in Rome was done by women (whether enslaved or free). This is because there is relatively little evidence for women working. This may just be because of a bias in the way Romans represented working women, though it might also suggest that it was less common for a woman to have a job.

The lack of evidence might be explained by the fact that many women must have been occupied

with having and raising children and domestic work, such as making clothes. Many probably helped in their family business, but this could go unrecorded in our evidence. However, we do also know about women in specialist occupations, such as textile-workers, doctors, and artisans, as well as about women doing jobs usually associated with men (fish sellers, innkeepers, barbers). Additionally, there were women working as performers, dancers, and sex workers.

Freedmen and women

Wednesday 7th December

LO: to understand the life of enslaved people who were freed

Component 3B

Freedmen

When a slave was set free (manumitted), he ceased to be the property of his master and became a **libertus** instead of a **servus**. He also, as we have seen, became a **cliens** of his ex-master, and his ex-master became his **patrōnus**.

Patronage

Patronage was an aspect of Roman society known as patronage, in which a patron (**patrōnus**) gave help and protection to others less rich or powerful than himself, and they performed various services for him in return.

Patronage

But the commonest type of patronage was the type in which the patron looked after a number of poorer people who depended on him for support or employment. They were known as clients (**clientēs**). A client was expected to present himself at his patron's house each day for the **salūtātiō** or early morning ceremony of greeting, at which he hoped to receive a gift known as the **sportula**. In the past, the sportula had consisted of a little basket of food, but by Domitian's time it was normally money; the standard amount was fixed by custom at 6.25 sesterces. A client was expected to dress formally in a toga for the salutatio. He also had to address his patron as **domine**; the poet Martial complains that when he once forgot to do this, the patron punished him by giving him no sportula.

Patronage

In addition to the sportula, the client might receive help of other kinds from his patron. His patron might advise him if he was in trouble, give him occasional presents, perhaps find him employment or speak on his behalf in court. Occasionally clients might be invited to dinner at their patron's house. At these dinners, as we know from the angry comments of several Roman writers, some patrons served two different qualities of

food and wine: a superior quality for themselves and their close friends, and a poor one for the clients. Some patrons did this to save money, others to make it clear that they regarded their clients as inferiors.

Patronage

In return for this help a patron would expect his clients not only to attend the salutatio, but also to perform various tasks and errands for him. For example, he might require some of them to escort him when he went to the Forum on official business, or to witness the signing of a legal document, or to lead the applause if he made a public speech in court or elsewhere, or to help him at election time. It seems likely that for many clients their duties were not difficult but could be very boring and time-consuming.

Patronage

Both patrons and clients had something to gain from the system. The government did not provide any state assistance, apart from distributions of free grain or occasionally money to a limited number of citizens, and so a patron might be a client's chief means of support. The main advantage for the patron was that he was able to call on the services of his clients when he needed them; and to have a large number of clients was good for his prestige and status.

One special type of patron-client relationship should be mentioned: the relationship between ex-master and his former slave. When a slave was set free, he automatically became a client of his ex-master, and his ex-master became his patron. The word **patrōnus** is sometimes used with the meaning 'ex-master' as well as the meaning 'patron'.



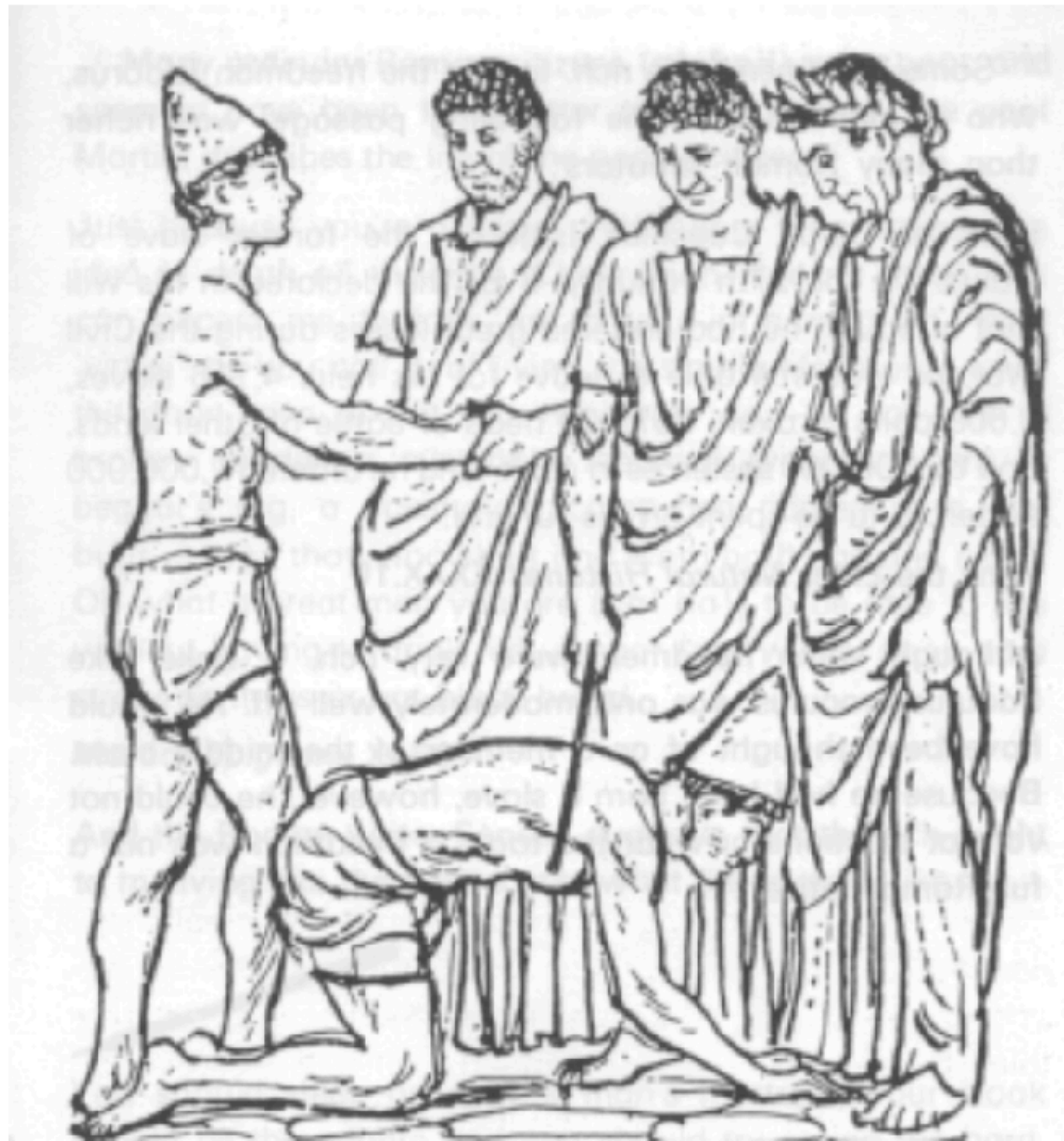
[Watch the video on the website](#)

Freedmen and women

Manumission

- There were two common ways a slave might be legally manumitted (freed):
 - Either the slave and master might appear before a magistrate who would touch the slave with a rod to signify that he/she was now free ('per vindicatam');
 - Or a master would state in his will that he wished to free some or all of his slaves.

A slave being freed 'per vindictam'



Key vocabulary
'manumission'

The act of freeing a slave was known as 'manumission', from the Latin words 'manus' (hand) and 'mittere' (to send)

Freedmen and women

A slave being freed, showing his progress from the lowly stoop of a slave to shaking his ex-master's hand as a freedman.



Freedmen and women

Complete the worksheet

Freedom from Slavery

Given below are the various ways in which a slave could become free. Complete each one by saying how this worked or how it proved freedom:

1) **Running away:**

2) **Buying freedom:**

3) **'per vindictam':**

4) **Enrolled on the list of citizens:**

5) **Declared in a will:**

6) **Invited to dinner:**

**Mark with an * those which are informal and mark with a + those which are formal.
Also note which one of the above methods was illegal.**

Freedmen and women

One of the main purposes of manumission was to offer an incentive to slaves to work hard, in the hope of ending their lives free. During their years of service, some slaves were allowed to earn a small sum of money, the *peculium*, with which they could eventually buy their freedom from their master. In other cases, masters were more generous and would free their slaves for long service or an outstanding act. Masters who fell in love with slave-girls might free them to marry them, while if they had children by a slave-girl, they might free them so as to make them heirs. In a similar vein, a newly freed slave might save up the money to purchase a female slave 'partner', so that he could then free her.

Freedmen and women

Some masters had more selfish reasons for manumission. For some, freeing slaves was a way to impress friends, since any man who could afford to free slaves and buy others would appear very affluent. There were also cases of masters who were facing serious court proceedings freeing all their slaves, so preventing them from being tortured and revealing any incriminating evidence. Some heartless masters also freed elderly slaves who were too weak or sick to work any more – they had no resale value, and so it was cheaper to free them than look after them in old age. Such slaves usually had no means to support themselves and many must have starved to death.

Freedmen and women

In addition, a freedman became a Roman citizen. He now had three names, of which the first two came from the name of his ex-master. (For example, Tiro, the freedman of Marcus Tullius Cicero, became Marcus Tullius Tiro.). As a citizen, he now had the right to vote in elections and to make a will or business agreement which would be valid in the eyes of the law. He could also get married. If he had been living in an unofficial marriage with a slave-woman, one of his first acts after manumission might be to save up enough money to buy her out of slavery and marry her legally.

Freedmen and women



There were some limits to the rights and privileges of a freedman, compared with other Roman citizens. He could not become a senator or **equus**, except by special favour of the emperor (and a freedwoman could not become a senator's wife). He could not serve in the legions, nor stand as a candidate in elections. One privilege, however, was available to a freedman. He could become one of the six priests (**sēvirī Augustālēs**) who were appointed in many Italian towns to look after the worship of the deified Emperor Augustus. Like all priesthoods, the priesthood of Augustus was a position of honour and prestige.

Augustales

To be chosen as an Augustalis, or priest of the emperor, was the greatest honour open to many freedmen.

Top left: The hall in Herculaneum where the Augustales would meet to conduct worship and for ceremonial dinners.

The law and 'liberti'

The law laid down certain obligations which a freedman owed to his ex-master. For example, a freedman was supposed to leave money to his ex-master in his will (ex-masters did not often insist on this); he was forbidden to do anything that would bring harm to his ex-master; and he had to do a certain number of days' work for his ex-master every year, or pay him a sum of money instead. It is clear from this that it would often be financially worthwhile for a master to manumit a slave; he would still be able to make some use of the ex-slave's services, but would no longer have to provide and pay for his food, clothing and shelter.

After manumission, a freedman had to put up with a certain amount of prejudice from those who despised him for having been a slave. He was also faced with the need to earn a living. His ex-master might help by providing money to start a small business, as Quintus did for Clemens in Stage 18, or introducing him to potential customers. Many highly skilled or educated freedmen were quickly able to earn a good living because they already possessed some special ability or experience; for example, a freedman might already be a skilled craftsman, teacher, musician or secretary, or be experienced in accountancy, trade or banking. Freedmen who had previously used these skills in their master's service could now use them for their own benefit. There was plenty of demand for such services, and not much competition from freeborn Romans, who often lacked the necessary skills or regarded such work as below their dignity.

Ongoing bonds between 'liberti' & 'domini'

Some freedmen continued to live in their ex-master's household, doing the same work that they had done as slaves. One such man was Pliny's talented freedman Zosimus, who was equally skilled at reciting, lyre-playing and comedy-acting.

Pliny treated Zosimus with kindness and affection, and when Zosimus fell ill with tuberculosis, Pliny arranged a holiday abroad for him.

In summary

Life after Slavery

Once you had been freed by any of the methods already discussed, you were then a **FREEDMAN** (not a freeman). Although this sounds ideal, there were still limitations.

In summary

➤ Ties with the master

- 1) You would take two of his names as a symbol that you had once belonged to him. e.g. Marcus Tullius Cicero had a slave called Tiro whom he freed. Once freed, this slave took the name Marcus Tullius Tiro.
- 2) You would become one of your master's clients and would have to do the kind of tasks which we discussed under the 'paterfamilias'.
- 3) If you died childless, your former master would inherit any property which you had.

In summary

➤ Legal limitations after formal freeing

- 4) You were not allowed to serve in the Roman Army's legions (although your sons could). You could serve in the extra reserve forces though.
- 5) You could not become a Roman equestrian unless the Emperor of Rome agreed to it.
- 6) You could not become a magistrate (type of judge) in your own town.

In summary

➤ Legal limitations after informal freeing

- 7) You were not a Roman citizen (because you could not be enrolled on the list).
- 8) You were not given three names and nor were your children.

In your books....



Explain why the price of buying a slave could vary greatly.

[2]

What letters were branded on a slave to show that he had run away?

[1]

What letters were branded on a slave to show that he had been a thief?

[1]

Give three tasks that a slave may have done on a daily basis in a city house.

[3]

In your books....



Explain what happened when a slave was freed '*per vindictam*'.

You may draw and label a diagram

In your books....



Freedom from slavery

Give two unofficial ways in which a slave might be freed

1)

2)

Give two official ways in which a slave might be freed

1)

2)

In your books....



➤ What advantages were there to being a freedman over a slave?

In your books....



Life after freedom

- 1) How might an ex-slave still be linked to his former master?
- 2) How might an ex-slave benefit from his former master?

How could one tell who a former slave's master was? (1)