

Roman Architecture

Adapted from Colleen Messina



¹ The Romans were great builders. Many things you see today have been inspired by ancient Rome. Even though they copied some things from the Greeks, the Romans had many original ideas.

² The Romans used arches extensively. An arch is a curved structure that can hold a lot of weight. Arches helped Roman architects a great deal. With arches, they could build over windows and doors. With arches, they could build huge structures called aqueducts. Aqueducts brought water to the city of Rome from the hills.

³ The Romans invented concrete. Concrete comes from lime and water. A Roman builder would make a mushy paste. Then he would add volcanic sand and pebbles. It could then be molded into whatever shape was needed. The concrete would dry and harden. It would never get soft again, even in the rain. Roman builders also made bricks out of baked clay. Bricks were used in many Roman structures. Each brick maker put his own special mark on his bricks. That would tell others who made the brick and where it came from.

⁴ The Romans used concrete to build an enormous structure called the Coliseum. It was named the Flavian Amphitheatre, and it held 50,000 people. Today, people all over the world call it the Coliseum.

⁵ If you could look down on the top, you would see that it looks like a circular football stadium. There is a big arena in the center and seats all around. The Romans enjoyed watching many kinds of fights there. Today, many of them seem cruel. They would be illegal now, but in ancient Roman times, thousands of people enjoyed these contests. Roman fighters, called gladiators, would fight to the death in the Coliseum. There were also events in which hunters hunted wild animals.

Sometimes the arena was even filled with water for a sea battle. Other shows acted out land battles and ancient myths.

⁶ A large part of the Coliseum is still standing, and it is open for tours. If you visit Rome, you can see the stadium and imagine what it was like to be part of the crowd there. Look at the outside of the Coliseum. You see three tiers of arches circling around the huge building. Above that, there is a fourth level. On that top story there were masts that held up a giant canopy. It shaded the fans and still let a breeze pass through. Just like in a modern stadium, the seats for the fans circled around inside. The most important fans sat on the lower level close to the action. The everyday people sat higher up.

⁷ The arena in the center used to have a wood floor. It was covered with sand, and this is where the shows took place. That floor is no longer there. Below the arena floor there are two more levels. Since the floor is gone now, you can see into the rooms below. There were rooms for gladiators waiting to fight. There were rooms for wild animals. Gladiators and animals could be raised up on platforms. They would appear suddenly through trapdoors in the floor. There were even hoists to raise an elephant up to the stage.

⁸ The Romans also built thousands of miles of roads. These roads helped the army keep track of the vast Roman Empire. The roads were straight. Chariot wheels moved much more easily over paved roads than on muddy ruts. The Romans liked straight roads. They even went through cliffs so their roads could be straight. The Romans were great builders. Even fast food restaurants use ideas from the Romans! From arches to concrete, our modern world has been influenced by the architects of ancient Rome.

Name _____

Date _____

	Roman Coliseum	Circus Maximus	Wrigley Field	United Center
Year built	80 AD	500 BC	1914 AD	1988 AD
Years used	More than 400	Almost 1000	92 and counting	17 and counting
Used for...	Gladiator fights, Naval battles, mock wars, prisoner and animal executions, speeches and plays	Chariot Races, foot races	Baseball (Cubs), Football (Bears and college football), Concerts	Basketball (Bulls), Hockey (Blackhawks), Shows, Concerts
Dimensions	144 Feet tall	700 Yards long	135 feet high	155 feet high
Seating	55,000 and up (100,000 max)	200,000	40,000	21,000
Levels of Seats	4	2	2	3
Cover	Yes	No	No	Yes
Luxury Boxes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Extras	Had hundreds of statues, one in each arch of stadium. Floor changed for "naval" battles	Had 12 large starting gates for the chariots	Ivy covered walls, field changed for football	Remove hard floor for ice rink

- Which stadium is the oldest
 - Wrigley Field
 - United Center
 - Circus Maximus
 - Roman Coliseum
- Which stadium had the most uses?
 - Wrigley Field
 - United Center
 - Circus Maximus
 - Roman Coliseum
- Which stadium held the most people?
 - Wrigley Field
 - United Center
 - Circus Maximus
 - Roman Coliseum
- What did all the stadiums have in common?
 - They all had luxury boxes
 - They held over 20,000 people
 - Sports were played in each stadium
 - All of the above