

tpo_29_passage_3

The pottery of ancient Romans is remarkable in several ways. The high quality of Roman pottery is very easy to appreciate when handling actual pieces of tableware or indeed kitchenware and amphorae (the large jars used throughout the Mediterranean for the transport and storage of liquids, such as wine and oil). However, it is impossible to do justice to Roman wares on the page, even when words can be backed up by photographs and drawings. Most Roman pottery is light and smooth to the touch and very tough, although, like all pottery, it shatters if dropped on a hard surface. It is generally made with carefully selected and purified clay, worked to thin-walled and standardized shapes on a fast wheel and fired in a kiln (pottery oven) capable of ensuring a consistent finish. With handmade pottery, inevitably there are slight differences between individual vessels of the same design and occasional minor blemishes (flaws). But what strikes the eye and the touch most immediately and most powerfully with Roman pottery is its consistent high quality. This is not just an aesthetic consideration but also a practical one. These vessels are solid (brittle, but not fragile), they are pleasant and easy to handle (being light and smooth), and, with their hard and sometimes glossy (smooth and shiny) surfaces, they hold liquids well and are easy to wash. Furthermore, their regular and standardized shapes would have made them simple to stack and store. When people today are shown a very ordinary Roman pot and, in particular, are allowed to handle it, they often comment on how modern it looks and feels, and they need to be convinced of its true age. As impressive as the quality of Roman pottery is its sheer massive quantity. When considering quantities, we would ideally like to have some estimates for overall production from particular sites of pottery manufacture and for overall consumption at specific settlements. Unfortunately, it is in the nature of the archaeological evidence, which is almost invariably only a sample of what once existed, that such figures will always be elusive. However, no one who has ever worked in the field would question the abundance of Roman pottery, particularly in the Mediterranean region. This abundance is notable in Roman settlements (especially urban sites) where the labor that archaeologists have to put into the washing and sorting of potsherds (fragments of pottery) constitutes a high proportion of the total work during the initial phases of excavation. Only rarely can we derive any "real" quantities from deposits of broken pots. However, there is one exceptional dump, which does represent a very large part of the site's total history of consumption and for which an estimate of quantity has been produced. On the left bank of the Tiber River in Rome, by one of the river ports of the ancient city, is a substantial hill some 50 meters high called Monte Testaccio. It is made up entirely of broken oil amphorae, mainly of the second and third centuries A.D. It has been estimated that Monte Testaccio contains the remains of some 53 million amphorae, in which around 6,000 million liters of oil were imported into the city from overseas. Imports into imperial Rome were supported by the full might of the state and were therefore quite exceptional-but the size of the operations at Monte Testaccio, and the productivity and complexity that lay behind them, nonetheless cannot fail to impress. This was a society with similarities to modern ones-moving goods on a gigantic scale, manufacturing high-quality containers to do so, and occasionally, as here, even discarding them on delivery. Roman pottery was transported not only in large quantities but also over substantial distances. Many Roman pots, in particular amphorae and the fine wares designed for use at tables, could travel hundreds of miles-all over the Mediterranean and also further afield. But maps that show the

various spots where Roman pottery of a particular type has been found tell only part of the story. What is more significant than any geographical spread is the access that different levels of society had to good-quality products. In all but the remotest regions of the empire, Roman pottery of a high standard is common at the sites of humble villages and isolated farmsteads.

question 1

All of the following are mentioned in paragraph 1 as characteristics of Roman pottery EXCEPT:

- A It was usually made with high-quality clay.
- B It generally did not weigh much.
- C It did not break as easily as other ancient pottery.
- D It sometimes had imperfections.

question 2

The word "particular" in the passage is closest in meaning to

- A specific
- B common
- C ancient
- D superior

question 3

According to paragraph 2, which of the following is NOT true of Roman vessels?

- A They were good containers for liquids.
- B Their shapes allowed for easy stacking and storing.
- C They sometimes had shiny surfaces.
- D Their true age is immediately apparent.

question 4

The author mentions the work of archaeologists in paragraph 3 in order to

A support the idea that pottery was produced in large quantities by the Romans

B illustrate how hard it is for archaeologists to find complete pieces of Roman pottery

C contrast archaeological sites in Roman urban areas with other sites in the Mediterranean

D explain why the quantities of pottery found vary significantly from one site to another

question 5

The word "substantial" in the passage is closest in meaning to

A protected

B man-made

C large

D famous

question 6

Paragraph 4 indicates which of the following about the port on the Tiber River near Monte Testaccio?

A It was built around the third century A.D.

B It was close to areas where large quantities of oil were produced.

C It was in use only for a very short period of time.

D It had an impressive level of commercial activity.

question 7

The statement in paragraph 4 that amphorae delivered to the port near Monte Testaccio were occasionally discarded supports which of the following?

- A Traders at the port were often careless.
- B The quality of the amphorae used at the port was not very good.
- C The scale of the trade made it possible to waste quality amphorae sometimes.
- D The importing of oil from overseas gradually declined, reducing the need for pottery containers.

question 8

The statement that maps "show the various spots where Roman pottery of a particular type has been found tell only part of the story" makes the point that

- A maps indicate where specific pottery styles have been found, but they do not indicate where these styles originated
- B maps show the geographical spread of Roman pottery but not the people who had access to it
- C maps do not usually include pottery styles found in the remotest regions of the Roman Empire
- D archaeologists studying Roman pottery need to use a range of techniques in their investigations

question 9

The word "humble" in the passage is closest in meaning to

- A rural
- B distant
- C ancient
- D modest

question 10

Look at the four squares [] that indicate where the following sentence could be added to the passage.

The pottery of ancient Romans is remarkable in several ways. The high quality of Roman pottery is very easy to appreciate when handling actual pieces of tableware or indeed kitchenware and amphorae (the large jars used throughout the Mediterranean for the transport and storage of liquids, such as wine and oil). However, it is impossible to do justice to Roman wares on the page, even when words can be backed up by photographs and drawings. Most Roman pottery is light and smooth to the touch and very tough, although, like all pottery, it shatters if dropped on a hard surface. It is generally made with carefully selected and purified clay, worked to thin-walled and standardized shapes on a fast wheel and fired in a kiln (pottery oven) capable of ensuring a consistent finish. With handmade pottery, inevitably there are slight differences between individual vessels of the same design and occasional minor blemishes (flaws). But what strikes the eye and the touch most immediately and most powerfully with Roman pottery is its consistent high quality. This is not just an aesthetic consideration but also a practical one. These vessels are solid (brittle, but not fragile), they are pleasant and easy to handle (being light and smooth), and, with their hard and sometimes glossy (smooth and shiny) surfaces, they hold liquids well and are easy to wash. Furthermore, their regular and standardized shapes would have made them simple to stack and store. When people today are shown a very ordinary Roman pot and, in particular, are allowed to handle it, they often comment on how modern it looks and feels, and they need to be convinced of its true age. As impressive as the quality of Roman pottery is its sheer massive quantity. When considering quantities, we would ideally like to have some estimates for overall production from particular sites of pottery manufacture and for overall consumption at specific settlements. Unfortunately, it is in the nature of the archaeological evidence, which is almost invariably only a sample of what once existed, that such figures will always be elusive. However, no one who has ever worked in the field would question the abundance of Roman pottery, particularly in the Mediterranean region. This abundance is notable in Roman settlements (especially urban sites) where the labor that archaeologists have to put into the washing and sorting of potsherds (fragments of pottery) constitutes a high proportion of the total work during the initial phases of excavation. [] Only rarely can we derive any "real" quantities from deposits of broken pots. [] However, there is one exceptional dump, which does represent a very large part of the site's total history of consumption and for which an estimate of quantity has been produced. [] On the left bank of the Tiber River in Rome, by one of the river ports of the ancient city, is a substantial hill some 50 meters high called Monte Testaccio. [] It is made up entirely of broken oil amphorae, mainly of the second and third centuries A.D. It has been estimated that Monte Testaccio contains the remains of some 53 million amphorae, in which around 6,000 million liters of oil were imported into the city from overseas. Imports into imperial Rome were supported by the full might of the state and were therefore quite exceptional-but the size of the operations at Monte Testaccio, and the productivity and complexity that lay behind them, nonetheless cannot fail to impress. This was a society with similarities to modern ones-moving goods on a gigantic scale, manufacturing high-quality containers to do so, and occasionally,

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