

Chapter 10: Rome: From City-State to Empire: 10-6c Children and Education

Book Title: World Civilizations

Printed By: Colin Morris-Moncada (006279659@coyote.csusb.edu)

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10-6c Children and Education

The male child of patrician birth was important as the continuer of the familia, and much attention was devoted to his education, sometimes at a school but more often by a live-in tutor. Strict demands for achievement were placed on him from the earliest years. Learning was acquired for a communal purpose: to advance the welfare of the state. Therefore, the most important subjects to master were law and the principles of government. All men of affairs were also taught rhetoric and philosophy. Science and the fine arts were of secondary importance and were viewed as personal matters, possibly important to the individual but only incidental to the community.

The segregation of the sexes that was so marked in classical Greece was largely overcome in Roman theory and, to some extent, in practice. Roman females gradually received increased freedom to enter the “great world” of male concerns. They could do this through advanced studies and larger political responsibilities. Hence, by the second century C.E., it was no longer absurd for a middle-class Roman girl to study mathematics or philosophy or to become an instructor in one of the arts—all careers that had been closed even to upper-class Greek females.

Girl Reading.

This tender rendition of a young girl daydreaming over her studies is marked by a sentiment not often encountered in Roman painting.



Portrait of a young girl, from Pompeii (fresco), Roman, (1st century) / Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte, Naples, Italy / Bridgeman Images

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