

The Ultimate Certamen Guide: Culture

These tips cover most of the culture material on the state's certamen syllabus. The history player is expected to know this material for all tournaments.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at shirleyhong2000@gmail.com

**the bolded and italicized words are in Latin.

****Nota Bene:** Cramming will not always work, so please pace yourself. The North Gwinnett Certamen Team depends on you! Bonam fortunam!

****Disclaimer:** this is NOT a study guide; these are TIPS ONLY. YOU MUST study ALL the material, regardless of whether I stress it in the guide or not.

Recommended sources: *The Private Life of the Romans* by Harold Whetstone Johnston, Basic Custom Notes (these are good for a quick review). Everything you need for culture is on the website!

The Roman culture subsection covers:

- The Roman household (family, rooms of the villa, furniture, etc)
- Roman occupations
- Roman names
- Children and education
- Roles of slaves
- Food (mainly fruits)
- Clothing and accessories
- Entertainment/amusement/hobbies
- Roman religion/rituals
- Baths
- Gladiators/sports
- Marriages
- Laws
- *Cursus honorum* and additional offices
- Buildings/structures
- Patron/Client system

The **Novice** level focuses on better-known customs and information.

The **Intermediate** level focuses on slightly more obscure information, but there are more questions asking for basic content than obscure content.

The **Advanced** level is a step up from intermediate, and the information is slightly more obscure. The more specifics you know, the better!

Because culture is not an aspect as significant as history, the questions will not differ TOO much among the levels, but be prepared! There will be some questions in the advanced level that will require knowledge of obscure details!

*The tips will NOT be separated by level as the distinctions are not as strict!

Topic: Nomenclature

You should know:

- The different parts of a Roman name (Praenomen, nomen, cognomen, agnomen)
- The meaning of a name (e.g. Manius = morning)
- When Roman babies were named

Topic: Rooms

Everyone's favorite! Rooms are the easiest because (hopefully) everyone has learned about them in their first year of Latin.

You should know:

- The names of the rooms as well as the purpose they serve
- Some of the important items placed in certain rooms (e.g. know where the *imagines* are stored, etc.)

Topic: Clothing

Clothing can be a little harder to study since there are so many garments and accessories the Romans wore. Good luck lol.

You should know:

- The different togas (who wore certain ones and what did they look like)
- Girls'/women's clothing and accessories
- The ceremonial accessories (e.g. bulla)
- Different parts of an outfit

Topic: Marriages

Marriages are pretty straightforward, just know the different types of marriages (e.g. usus, coemptio, etc.) and some of the rituals involved (e.g. confarreatio marriage is where the bride and groom split a spelt cake, or *far* in Latin).

Topic: Laws

Laws are also straightforward! Knowing the laws and when/who they were established by is more than enough. The ones mentioned throughout the Connor Harrison/Keaton Rama notes should be sufficient!

Topic: Cursus Honorum

The cursus honorum is pretty important, so make sure you know the positions! It will also help with history!

You should know:

- The order of the cursus honorum
- How long each position served
- How many people served each position at a time
- The roles of the positions

Topic: Additional Offices

Apply everything I mentioned about the *cursus honorum* and apply it here! The main two additional offices are *tribune* and *ensor*.

Topic: Villa

The questions regarding villas are pretty easy, just know the different types and where they're located, as well as the type of people who would live in the different houses (e.g. peasants lived in *insulae*).

These are all the topics on the syllabus, but I am very sure that there is more information you'll have to know. Let the list continue!

Topic: Roles of Slaves

The Romans had a slave for just about every little job they could think of, and questions (especially in intermediate) tend to ask about these roles because they want you to feel bad about yourself for not knowing! But you can't let them!

You should know:

- Different roles of slaves (e.g. *paedagogus*, *ianitor*, *nomenclator*, etc.)
- How to free a slave/name of the process

Thankfully, you don't have to know a good chunk of the slaves. As you practice, you'll start to see which ones come up frequently!

Topic: Children and Education

Pretty easy info here! Know the different teachers in the education system (e.g. *grammaticus*) and what/who they taught!

Topic: Meals/Food

The info here is easy as well, it's just a matter of what you should focus on!

You should know:

- Name of the meal times/what time of day they were served
- Various fruits (I would know the pomegranate, apricot, apple, and grape)

- Condiments (e.g. garum)
- A few examples of what Romans would eat/drink (e.g. Romans drank wine and sometimes mixed **honey** into it...this drink was called **mulsum**)

Topic: Patron/Client System

The patron/client system is quite simple. It's basically where a rich person (patron) protects/sponsors their plebeian client. In return, the client gets up every morning for the *salutatio*, a morning greeting to the patron. This is when the patron gets to flex about how many clients he had, which indicated social status and influence. The patron would gift the clients with money or food in return for their loyalty (gifts were called *sportula*)

Topic: Entertainment/Games/Hobbies

The Romans liked to party a lot and get drunk, so now you have to know about how they liked to have a good time.

You should know:

- The dinner party games/festivities (e.g. tali)
- Theater (features of different plays like tragedies and comedies, location/number of theaters in Rome)
- Gladiators (different types of gladiators, how they fought/trained, different types of gladiatorial games, process of freedom, trainers, where it took place, etc.)
- Chariot racing (name of the track and posts, where it took place, etc.)

Topic: Buildings/Structures

Studying history will take care of having to look at famous buildings, but make sure you know the purposes/locations of structures like the *rostra*, *basilica*, baths, etc.! For the baths, make sure you know the different rooms and tools the Romans used to stay squeaky clean (not really).

Topic: Roman Religion/Rituals

ALMOST THERE!!!

You should know:

- Different forms of Jupiter (e.g. Jupiter Elicius and Jupiter Feretrius...they serve different purposes, do not get them mixed up!)

- Roles of different priests, soothsayers, and Vestal Virgins (know the Latin names of the priests and soothsayers!)
- Ceremonies/celebrations like the *suovetaurilia*, *Parilia*, *Saturnalia*, etc.
- Birth ceremonies
- Aspects of rituals

WOOHOO! You made it until the end! There is a lot of information that history players must know, so don't beat yourself up over not being perfect or not knowing some info. Take it little by little and you'll get it someday! Don't give up!