Slavery in Ancient Rome

Written by: Monika Jagustyn
Who was a slave?

- Unlike in more modern slavery, in Rome slavery was not based on race.
- Slaves in Rome mainly consisted of prisoners of war, sailors captured and sold by pirates, and slaves who were bought outside of Rome.
- It was not uncommon for very poor Romans to sell their children into slavery for money.
Servititum

- This is the Latin word meaning slave, or servant
Life as a Slave

- Slaves in ancient Rome were viewed as property, thus they were commonly mistreated and harassed by their owners for no reason.
Laboro

- This is the Latin word meaning labor
Where did slaves work?

- Slaves worked on farms, in private households, in mines, on roads and in factories.
Circumverto

- This is the Latin word meaning Manumission or the action of freeing from slavery.
Can slaves be freed?

- Unlike in more modern slavery, slaves could be freed and would obtain full citizenship in Rome, except they could not hold office, however, their children could be able to.
- Therefore, slaves were obedient and hardworking, so that one day they could become free men/women.
Negotium

- This is the Latin word meaning job/work.
How was life after slavery?

- Once freed, slaves could work in the same jobs as plebeians (craftsmen, midwives, traders, etc.)