

Servius the Student

Narrators 1–5

Garan—younger brother

Timone and Xenatis—friends

Servius—student

Etrusia—younger sister

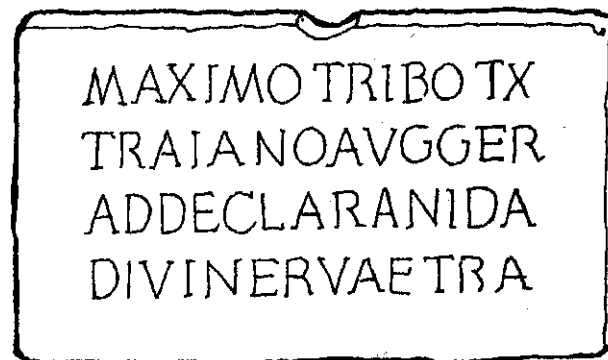
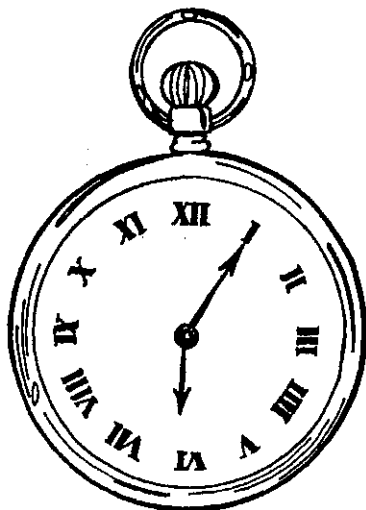
Narrator 1: One of the many responsibilities of the head of the family, or *paterfamilias*, was to make sure that his children were educated and became good Roman citizens. Children were taught to be worthy of the traditions of Rome and to be honest, virtuous, and dutiful toward their father and the Empire. There were two choices for education in Rome—home or school. Join Servius and his classmates as they take you on a tour of the Roman educational system.

Servius: Welcome, my friends. We begin our tour at the local primary school, or *ludus*, where wealthy boys and some wealthy girls are taught from ages seven through twelve. Of course, our education truly begins at home. We learn obedience from our parents. We learn about the gods and how to keep them happy. From an early age boys and girls take part in religious ceremonies. My younger brother and sister are still students here at the primary school.

Garan: To say I don't like it here is an understatement! Every day I am escorted to school by a slave who makes sure I am prepared for the day's lessons. Many mornings I am barely awake. Classes begin at dawn, and lessons last until midday. Our teachers are very strict and require complete attention and obedience. It is not uncommon for a student to be beaten for any sort of misbehavior or wrongdoing. One time a boy contradicted the teacher and was flogged with a leather whip.

Etrusia: Although Garan paints a bleak picture, the teacher disciplines us so that we learn to be respectful. We speak only if we are asked a question, and we always complete our assignments. We have learned to read and write in Greek and **Latin** and to do simple mathematical calculations on the abacus.

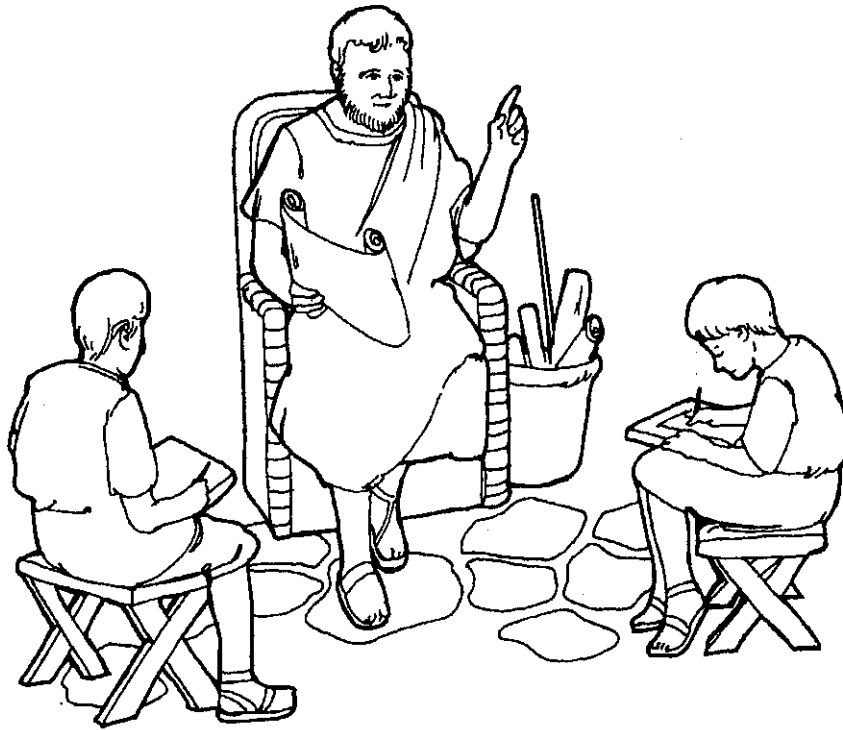
Narrator 2: Dozens of different languages were spoken throughout the Roman Empire. In the west Latin and in the east Greek were the standard languages used. The Romans introduced writing to northern Europe. They used the Latin alphabet, which has 22 letters. Roman numerals are still used today, although not for mathematics. But they are used in outlines, for labeling book volumes, and on clocks and watches.



Servius the Student *(cont.)*

Etrusia: Although I am fortunate to have been given the opportunity to come to school, I must say I will not miss the rigorous, repetitious, and mostly boring lessons. This is my last year at school. Mother must now prepare me to master the more important domestic skills if I am to marry a wealthy Roman. I wish Father would have let us have a Greek tutor, or **pedagogue**, like Timone has.

Timone: When I was six my father entrusted me to one of our Greek slaves. As you know, slaves are treated in a variety of ways in Rome. Some work very hard and live like animals. Others, like my trusted friend Sophles, are treated like one of the family. Sophles was a teacher in Greece and is highly knowledgeable in reading, writing, mathematics, the arts, literature, philosophy, and the sciences. Sophles is responsible for my appearance and for teaching me how I should behave in different situations. His care and instruction prepared me to enter the **grammaticus**, or secondary school. Many other wealthy Roman families have Greek tutors for their children.



Servius: As a matter of fact, Xenatis and his pedagogue are waiting for us at the **grammaticus** as we speak, so we must be on our way. Not all boys are able to move on to secondary school. Most children in the Empire are illiterate or have only a basic education because they are needed in the family trade or business. Those of us wishing to have prominent positions within the government or to practice law require a higher education that only wealthy families can afford. Ah, here we are. Greetings, Xenatis.

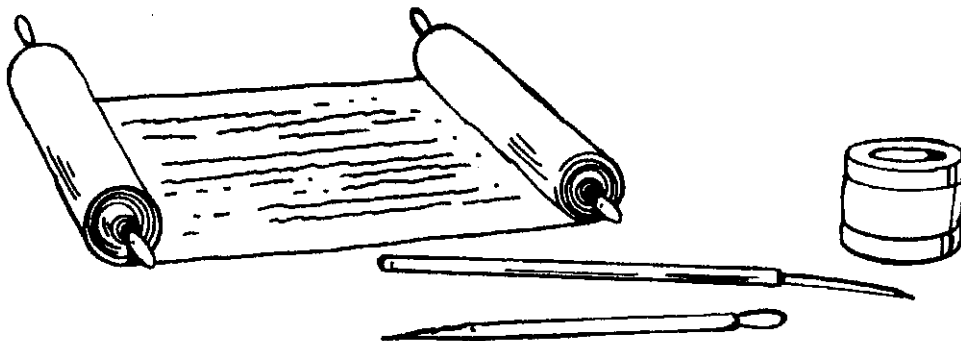
Xenatis: Hello. I understand you are giving a tour of my alma mater. Although I am glad to help you, I'm also glad to have already graduated. The **grammaticus** was much more strenuous than I had imagined. We read scroll after scroll of famous Greek and Latin literature and memorized long, complicated passages from each. I remember being questioned constantly by our teachers not only about the content, but also about the grammar and figures of speech used by the authors. And the writing assignments! I dulled more than my share of styluses, and I'm still picking beeswax from under my fingernails!

Servius the Student *(cont.)*

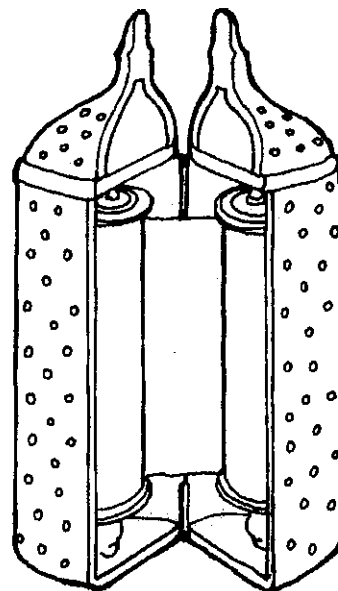
Narrator 3: Students in the grammaticus wrote their daily assignments on special wooden tablets covered in melted beeswax. When notes were no longer needed, the wax was often smoothed and reused. Occasionally, wax tablets were bound together to form a book, but it was more customary for important texts to be written in ink on papyrus scrolls.

Narrator 4: These scrolls were more permanent than the wax tablets, but also more expensive. Paper was made by pounding together the fibers of the papyrus reed, then pressing, and polishing the sheets until they were smooth. Papyrus was used for important documents, especially those with a legal purpose. The very best books were written on a substance called **vellum**, made from the skin of a kid or lamb. Vellum was very durable. The sheets were thin enough to create a beautiful writing surface. But vellum was very expensive and required many hours to prepare.

Narrator 5: The ink used by the Romans was made from soot mixed with resin, wine dregs, and cuttle fish secretions. A tool called a **stylus** was used for writing. They had a point at one end that was used to transfer ink onto papyrus or vellum and to scratch text into wax tablets. The other end was a flat surface used to smooth out, or erase, unwanted text on the wax. Ink pots were fashionable with the Romans. They came in a variety of shapes and sizes. Many of the upper-class displayed their wealth by having beautiful inkpots inlaid with patterns of gold and silver.



Servius: We read and write a lot here at the grammaticus. Here's the school library. We glued the sheets of papyrus or vellum together to form a scroll, or a long strip attached to two dowels. We read them by unrolling them from one dowel and rolling them up with the other. The scrolls are stored in drumlike containers. Our "books" have to be copied by hand—a slow and painstaking process mostly performed by Greek slaves.



Servius the Student *(cont.)*

Timone: Xenatis and I depended upon our pedagogues to support us at home with our studies, and we learned many more subjects, including advanced calculations in mathematics, weights and measures, and the art of **rhetoric**, or effective and persuasive speaking. Do you wish you had a pedagogue, Servius?



Servius: Primary school trained me well to be disciplined in my studies. Garan may dread his studies here, but he'll enjoy the athletics. We participate in a variety of physical activities such as running, jumping, wrestling, and swimming. There is a terrible toughening-up process.

Xenatis: I certainly wouldn't want to go through that again! We had to swim the river rapids and avoid the rocks. We had to endure many hardships without complaint. How we survived and graduated with honors is mystery only the gods can unravel.

Servius: My father has said very little about my progress, but I believe he is proud of me. Lately I have been accompanying him when he gives important speeches at the forum, and he let me attend a dinner party last week at the home of an important patrician. When I am home and he is conducting business, he allows me to be there with his clients. He says it is good preparation for becoming a respected citizen and paterfamilias. And it's good practice to reinforce the teachings of my rhetor.

Timone: That's right, you are working with a professional public speaker now to further your studies. This will prepare you for a number of professions, such as law, the military, and politics.

Xenatis: Working with a rhetor is far more enjoyable than grammaticus. It is fun to write a speech in which you present and argue various points of view. I have read a few of your essays, Servius, and you show promise.

Servius: Thank you, dear friend. My rhetor requires that I write many different types of essays. But it is not only words that help make a good speech. Tone, diction, and gestures are also important. Father has agreed to pay for my studies as long as I continue to work hard. Eventually I would like to go to Athens to study. It is the best place to study rhetoric, and some of the most famous teachers live there. However, it will be very expensive.

Timone: Have faith in the gods and your fate, Servius. You are a good student. Now let's get back to the ludus and pick up your siblings. We can stop at a food stall on the way home for a midday snack. All of this talk about Roman education has made me hungry!

Servius the Student – Please answer the questions (watch for plurals!).

1. What was the head of the family called?
2. What 2 things did the head of the family make sure his children learned?
3. What was the name of the primary school? Who was allowed to attend? What ages attended?
4. Before attending school, name 2 things children learned from their parents.
5. Who escorted the children to school?
6. What happened if children misbehaved?
7. What languages did children learn to read and write? On what instrument did they learn to do math calculations?
8. What is another name for a Greek tutor?
9. After age 12, why did the mother teach daughters domestic skills?
10. What are the responsibilities of the slaves who teach the sons?
11. What is the name for the secondary school?
12. T or F – Most children of the empire are literate. (If your answer is false, EXPLAIN why).
13. What positions required higher education?
14. Explain classes at the secondary school.
15. What did students in the grammaticus use instead of paper?
16. Important texts were written on ___ with ___. The very best books were written on ___.
17. How did they make ink in Rome?

Compare Educational Systems

Use the information from the Student (pages 137-140) and the chart below. Be sure to include your efforts as detailed as possible. Compare Roman education to modern education.

Roman Education

Modern Education

	School Levels/ Students' Ages	
	Subjects Studied	
	School Supplies	
	Discipline/ Rules	
	Higher Education	
	Home Schooling	
	Education for Girls	