

Forum Romanum: Activity Ideas for Teachers

Here are some suggested activities for teachers to use with any of the shows.

Chaos to Cosmos

Give your students the task of organizing disorganized ideas. Create a handout or use the board to show a list of ideas presented in a show. Play the show then give students time to work in small groups to create an organizing structure—the format can be up to them—for the ideas or topics covered in the show. In this case, the students are working without the scripts. You can also (again having students work without scripts) pull sentences or lines for phrases out of the show and have students try to organize those based on what order they are said, or who says them, or what segment they fall in, or any other organizing scheme the group of students chooses. In doing this activity, it is recommended that you read or have students read the show's prologue (background information) so they have some understanding of the show's topic.

Concept Drill-Down

Choose a key concept discussed in a show and write the Latin term or phrase for that concept on the board and a single English definition. See if students can come up with a related English word or phrase for each of the following categories:

- Synonym (something the same or similar)
- Antonym (the opposite of this concept)
- Analogy (a thing that is like this concept—for example, revenge is like an open wound)
- Famous person (real or fictional) this concept makes you think of; someone who exemplifies this concept
- Image—ask the students to quickly draw what this concept or idea looks like

For example, if you viewed Episode IX about Cicero, you would write *negotium* – business on the board, to which students might come up with "work" (synonym), "time-off" (antonym), "hamster on a treadmill" (analogy), and Donald Trump (famous real or fictional person). They might then draw the hamster on a treadmill or themselves flopped over a desk stacked high with textbooks!

Group Opinion Survey

Write the following rating scale on the board:

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

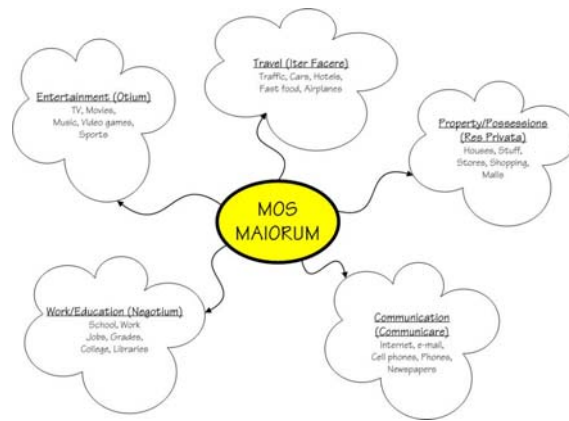
Show an episode and highlight some statements made in the show, either by having students underline them in copies of the Latin script or by writing the statement on the board. Try to find an arguable or controversial statement—something that is open to debate. For example, in Show XXII (*Odi et Amo*), Scirtus Agitator shares some strong opinions about the poetry of Catullus. Discuss the meaning of the statement to make sure all students understand the sentiment, and then ask students to show their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement. To do so, ask first for a show of hands of those who Strongly Disagree with Scirtus, then those who Disagree, and so on. After you have everyone's vote and have totaled the numbers for each level in the scale, ask for volunteers from each level receiving votes to explain why they rated their agreement or disagreement that way.

Distillation Drill

View a single segment of a show—the *Quid Novi*, *Persona Notanda*, *Tempestas Hodierna*, or *De Ludis* segment. Ask one student to summarize what happened in that segment in a 60-second spoken summary. Then ask another student to summarize that same segment in 30 seconds. Then ask another student to try to summarize it in 10 seconds. Finally, ask a student to summarize the show or segment in 5 seconds. You can also have students create a written summary of the segment. The first should be in 50 words, the second in 25 words, the third in 10 words, and the last in 3 words.

Idea Mapping

Show an entire episode and have students create an idea map as they watch the show. An idea map is a graphical way of identifying and organizing the different ideas presented. To start, you take a blank piece of paper (orient it landscape style—wider than tall) and put the central idea in a circle in the middle of the paper. In this case, the central idea would be the subject of the show—for example, the eruption of Vesuvius, Roman food, or Roman education (see example below). Students would put that central idea in the center of their paper and then place subsequent ideas in smaller circles that are linked by lines to the central idea. The result looks something like a web diagram.



Idea map: A nonlinear way to illustrate ideas and their interrelationships

Press Conference

View a show and then review with students the *persona notanda* segment. Give any additional background on the featured person interviewed by Iulia Pauli. You the teacher then assume the role of that famous person. Give students five minutes to jot down some questions, and then run a press conference, with students asking you questions. You can also have students jot down one question each on 3x5 cards and turn them in. You can then select those questions you would like to answer. Or, you could have a student being the “talk show host” who chooses which questions to ask from the completed index cards. Follow up this activity by asking students to think of someone else in ancient history they would like to interview. Ask them to think of three questions they would like to ask that person. A variation on this theme is to ask, “Who from the ancient world would you most like to have lunch with?” and then have students explain why.

Outlining

Have students work in small groups, reviewing the Latin script, to create a topical outline of the *Quid Novi* and *Persona Notanda* segments, organizing the main ideas sequentially. Once the groups have completed their first draft outline, invite each group to share their outlines and their reasons for how they organized the content. After all groups have presented, give all five minutes more to make any changes they would like based on what other groups did. When all groups are comfortable with their outlines, play the show.

An outline of these segments from Show XII (*Gens Togata*) may look something like this:

- I. Quid Novi
 - A. Emperor Marcus Aurelius dead
 - i) Stoic writings
 - ii) Son Commodus now emperor
 - B. Today is Liberalia
 - i) Liber = Dionysus or Bacchus
 - ii) Boys put on toga
- II. Persona Notanda – Mela on Roman clothing
 - A. Tunic
 - i) Simple, to knees, belted
 - ii) Stripe for upper class
 - B. Toga
 - i) Toga as symbol of Romans and of peace
 - ii) Wool, heavy, long, elegant folds, only for men (Roman citizens)
 - C. Stola
 - i) Neck to ankles
 - ii) Sometimes palla too

You can also create the outline working together as a class, with you the teacher facilitating the discussion and creating the outline on the board.

Parallel Lines

Choose some idiomatic expressions from the script and ask students to come up with a modern equivalent—not a textbook translation, but a similar expression used in everyday conversational English today, such as "Well heIIIIII!" for *Multum salve* or "Gotta run!" for *Eundum est mihi* or "Who cares?!" for *Nil refert!*

Parallel Lives

After viewing a show and reviewing the persona notanda segment, ask students to think of a person in modern life, literature, or popular culture who is similar in some ways to or reminds them of the famous person interviewed. For example, Apicius in Episode XIII (*De Arte Coquinaria*) might remind them of Emeril (or someone else who hosts a cooking show). Ask students to define some of the qualities or characteristics that make them similar. Then try translating these qualities into Latin.

Paraphrasing and Summarizing

Explain to students the two concepts: paraphrasing and summarizing. (*Paraphrasing* is saying something that is essentially equal but in a slightly different way—it's putting something in your own words, so that the words differ but the "spirit" or essential meaning remains the same. *Summarizing* is capturing just the high points—or mountain tops (summits) of the message. With paraphrasing, you may use as many words, more words, or fewer words to capture the message, but with summarizing, you capture the essential elements in far fewer words.) Play a short segment or clip from a show and then ask a student to paraphrase (in English!) what he or she heard. Then ask another student to summarize. For advanced students, consider asking students to paraphrase in Latin, perhaps beginning with the phrase *Ut mihi videtur . . .* (for paraphrasing) and *Ad summam . . .* (for summarizing).

Peer Group Quiz

Put students into teams—five teams works best for the scoring scheme. Ask each team to come up with three questions within their team while watching a show or segment or from studying a script. (Each student on the team writes down a question idea while the show is playing, then after the show the team takes 5 to 10 minutes to agree on five questions from their team.) Go around the room, one team at a time, having each team ask the other teams one of the questions they prepared. The team spokesperson asks the question and members of the other teams quietly discuss the answer, and then write down their team's "official" answer on an answer sheet. After about 30 seconds to a minute, the team gives its answer.

On each question, it's the team that *asks* the question who scores points. With five teams, scoring works this way:

- If none of the other team can answer their question, the asking team receives one point.
- If all four of the other teams answer the question correctly, the asking team also receives one point.
- If two of the four teams answer the question correctly, the asking team receives three points.
- If one of the other teams or three of the other teams answers correctly, the asking team receives two points.

After all five teams have asked all three of their questions, the team with the highest point score wins.

Pre-Quiz

Create a "pre-quiz" of five to ten questions about an episode of *Forum Romanum*. Make two copies of this pre-quiz (photocopy so that the two sets of identical questions are on the front and back of a handout). Have the students complete the first quiz (the pre-quiz) *before* you show it. Then show the episode and have students turn over their handouts and complete the quiz again.

Rapid Recall

Show a short segment of a show, then ask students to write down on a piece of paper as much as they can remember of what they heard. Then go around room and ask students to share. When one person says what he/she heard, the teacher should ask if anyone else heard that too. You can do this two ways: students can write down an English translation or summary of the content they heard, or students can try to write down actual Latin words or phrases they heard.

Recitation and Dictation

Select a segment of a show in the script, perhaps an interesting dialog within the *persona notanda* segment, and have students practice reading the Latin aloud from the script. Then have students put away the script and take out a blank piece of paper. You the teacher then read a line or phrase from the segment practiced and have students write down the Latin. You can also do this by have a dictation first before they've seen the script, followed by a recitation in which students read aloud from the script, followed by another dictation from the same part of the script.

Recitatio: Persona Notanda

View the show in its entirety then review the script for the *persona notanda* segment only so that students have a general idea of what is being said—not an exact translation, just the gist. Then have students read aloud the *persona notanda* segment, with one student playing the part of Iulia Pauli and the other the famous person being interviewed.

Sentence Creation

When reviewing useful expressions used in each show (see that activity book chapter), ask students to come up with a sentence using one or more useful expressions from the list. (Remember we all did that in elementary school—the teacher gives a word and asks you to use it in a sentence?)

Short Story

Preview, view, and discuss an episode, then ask students to take 15 minutes or so to write a short story (1 page or about 200 words) on anything related to the show—perhaps a story about the featured person or about what Aulus Serenus did before he became a weatherman: the topic is up to them.

Storyboarding

A storyboard is a visual, hand-drawn sequential depiction of key scenes in a show. This is one way of "designing" a show and defining how it will flow from scene to scene. After viewing a show, you can have students work in groups to create their own storyboard of a show based on an ancient world theme—for example, after viewing Episode VII (*Natalis Urbis*), they could storyboard a show about one of the Roman heroes mentioned (perhaps even a "Where are they now?" show, as if they were tracing what happened to Mucius Scaevola after all the hoopla around his heroic deed died down). To "storyboard" the show, students draw on 5x7 index cards a cartoon sketch of the key scenes in their show (one scene per card). They then arrange and rearrange the scene-cards on a table until they come up with the way they want their show to flow. (You can also do this exercise by showing them an episode or any other educational movie, instead of having them come up with their own show.)

Spot-Checks

The teacher should preview a show and pick five or so spots within a show to stop the tape and ask a question of the students—either a general summary question (e.g., "Who can give us a quick summary of what has happened to this point?"), a specific question (e.g., "In that last segment, why is Serenus so upset?), or a prediction question ("What do you think will happen next?").

The Top Three Takeaways

Before playing the *Persona Notanda* segment of a show, put students in small groups and tell them to make notes as best they can during the show. After the show, they are to reach agreement in their group on what were the top three learning points from the show. Go around to each group and ask them to name one of their top points; as they do so, ask if any other groups also identified that item as one of their “Top Three.” You can also use a point system in which the group gets one point for a unique item, but an additional point for each group that also identified that item as one of their Top Three. For example, if one team picks out in Show XIV, *Fortuna Muliebris*, that Roman women may have married at a young age to a much older man and two other groups also put that down as an important learning point, then that first team receives 3 points (1 point + 2 for two other groups with the same point).

Weather Map

Use the blank map of the lands around the Mediterranean provided in this book, or create your own. Make copies and give one to each student. Show a weather segment and ask students to mark on their map all the places they hear about or see during the weather segment. You may also ask them to draw a sun, a raindrop, a cloud, etc., on each place that they hear about and have them mark the places they hear on their map. They can draw a sun, rain, wind, etc. Or, you can have them write, *Sol lucet*, *Pluit*, *Ventosum*, etc. in the appropriate place on the map.

What If?

After previewing, viewing, and discussing an episode, engage the class in a discussion around “What if?” scenarios related to the show. For example, for Show II, *Hannibal ad portas*, you could ask, “What if Hannibal had captured Rome? How might history have changed?” or for Show V, *Caesar Caesus*, what if Caesar had heeded his wife’s request and stayed home from the Senate on March 15? Encourage students to speculate not only on the direct consequences but the indirect consequences and implications of the “What if?” scenario.