


















10 Knowledge Map: Myth and Religion: Festivals (Rome)

In this topic, you will study some of the key festivals that took place in Greece and Rome. For Greece, you will examine the Great Panathenaia that was held to honour the city's patron goddess Athena. You will also study the City Dionysia held in honour of Dionysus, god of wine and revelry. For Rome, you will study the Lupercalia held in honour of Lupercus and the Saturnalia held for Saturn. When examining these festivals, you will need to draw comparisons between their origins, officials, the sacrifices that took place and the people who attended the festival.

Festivals in Ancient Greece and Rome				The Saturnalia													
1	Festivals in the Greek and Roman World	Greeks and Romans had a twelve month year but did not divide their week into seven days. In Rome, they set aside 159 days of the year for religious celebrations, festivals, and entertainment days.		19	Dedicated to Saturn	The Saturnalia was a festival that was dedicated to the Roman god, Saturn.											
The Lupercalia				20	Reasons for Celebration	As Saturn was the god of sowing and seed, the festival celebrated the end of the winter sowing.											
2	Lupercus	The festival derived from a festival of purification and fertility in honour of the god Lupercus.		21		The festival began at the Winter Solstice and celebrated the coming of new light, rebirth, and the promise of a positive future.											
3	Lupus	In Latin, the word <i>lupus</i> means 'wolf' and so the festival also celebrated Rome's founder, Romulus. Romulus was originally known as King of the Shepherds.		22		Saturn was believed to have ruled the earth during the Golden Age, a time when gods and men lived together in harmony and as equals. The festival brought hope of a return to this Golden Age.											
4	Origin of the Festival (1)	There are various versions about how the festival originated. One version, from Plutarch, links the festival with Archadian Lycaea, the feast of wolves. This was in connection to an ancient god who protected herds from wolves.		23	Participants	The Saturnalia was considered unique amongst festivals as it involved all levels of society, including men, women, children, and slaves.											
5	Origin of the Festival (2)	The second version is from Ovid, who links the festival to the Greek god, Pan. Pan was the god of the wild, shepherds, and flocks.		24	Dates	At its longest it lasted from 17th to 23rd December. During the reign of Augustus Caesar it was shortened to three days, before being extended to five days under Claudius.											
6	Changing Focus of Festival	As Rome developed into an Empire, it lost its identity as a nation of farmers, and the importance of the shepherd decreased, so the festival became more associated with celebrating its founder, Romulus.		25	Christmas	The Saturnalia remained very popular throughout the Roman period, even when Christianity became the dominant religion. The Saturnalia was incorporated into Christmas.											
7	Date	The festival was always celebrated on the 15th February each year.		26	Officials	The priests of the Temple of Saturn in the Roman Forum, provided the priests for the Saturnalia. As religious officials were elected each year, the possibility of leading the Saturnalia was a real prospect for many leading Romans.											
8	Officials	The priests were called the Luperci. They were chosen especially for the day from the noble upper class male population.		27	Finance	The responsibility for the public feast fell to the Senate and state money was used to pay for it.											
9	Programme of Events	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Programme of Events</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Priests gather in the Lupercal</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sacrifice on altar of Lupercus</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Feast of Lupercus</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Public race around Palatine Hill</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Programme of Events	Priests gather in the Lupercal	Sacrifice on altar of Lupercus	Feast of Lupercus	Public race around Palatine Hill	28	Programme of Events	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Programme of Events</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Priests gather at the Temple of Saturn</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sacrifice on altar of Saturn</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Feast of Saturn</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gift giving</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Programme of Events	Priests gather at the Temple of Saturn	Sacrifice on altar of Saturn	Feast of Saturn	Gift giving
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10	Lupercal	The Lupercal was a cave in the Palatine Hill that was believed to be the place where Romulus and Remus were suckled by the she-wolf. The priests gathered in this cave at the beginning of the festival.		29	National Holiday	From day one, all business was suspended and the period declared a national holiday. This meant the whole city was free to take part in the festivities of singing, playing music, feasting, socialising, and giving gifts.											
11	Altar to Lupercus	The cave contained an altar to Lupercus. The Luperci were divided into two teams and underwent a sacrifice in honour of the gods. Once the sacrifice had taken place, the two teams took part in a race around the Palatine Hill.		30	Decorations	During the period, people decorated their homes with wreaths and other greenery.											
12	Sacrifice	On entering the cave, the Luperci sacrificed dogs and goats to Lupercus. These animals are known for their virility and suited a sacrifice to the god of fertility.		31	The Sacrifice	Unlike normal Roman sacrifices, the priest took part in the sacrifice with his head uncovered in the Greek style.											
13		The animals were sprinkled with mola salsa on their heads, in order to help them give their acceptance to the sacrifice. They then had their throats slit.		32		On the first day of the festival period, a sacrifice took place at the Temple of Saturn. A young pig would be publically sacrificed.											
14		When the animals had been killed, a knife was dipped in the blood, which was then dripped onto the foreheads of the participants. The blood was then wiped off with wool soaked in milk.		33	Public Feast	After the sacrifice, the state paid for a huge public feast that took place throughout the streets of Rome, and lasted for several days.											
15		A haruspex would then read the entrails of the animals for positive signs. If positive, the participants would eat the sacrificial meat and drink large amounts of wine.		34		At the table, a statue of Saturn was expected to be sat to signify the god's presence at the festival.											
16		The Luperci would then cut the skins from the animals into strips, and used to cover parts of the body, while other parts were used in the race.		35		Equality	The festival promoted equality, which meant that slaves and their masters were equals for the duration of the festivities.										
17	The Race	The race was the public part of the festival and involved the participants running around the foot of the Palatine Hill and through the Roman Forum.		36	Clothing	To support this equality, masters would not wear their traditional togas, and all would wear colourful clothes known as synthesis.											
18		As the runners (the Luperci) raced they whipped spectators with their leather strips to grant great fertility to those struck.		37	Gifts	Throughout the period, gifts would be given to loved ones. Wax candles were common gifts as they represented new light. On the last day known as Sigillaria, Romans gave their loved ones small terracotta figurines known as signillaria.		