Ludi (Games) – Fun way to learn about the Roman culture

Roman number system

The Romans counted according to decimal mathematics, just like we do, but with a different style of writing. It is useful to know this method of writing because we still run across these numbers today. So here is a layout of the numbers so we can remember them.

Numeration

Utilized were only 7 alphabetical symbols to form all numbers, placed before or after a symbol to subtract or sum among them. A small bar above the letter adds 1,000 of the expressed value. Zero has no symbol.

\[
\begin{align*}
I & = 1 \\
V & = 5 \\
X & = 10 \\
L & = 50 \\
C & = 100 \\
D & = 500 \\
M & = 1,000 \\
\end{align*}
\]

When two letters (numbers) are adjacent; if the lesser number is to the right it is added to that of the left, while if the lesser is to the left, it is subtracted from that on the right. Therefore, VI = 6 and IV = 4. Exception are rare.

Some rules have been added as follows: 3 identical symbols are never attached (and never repeat V or L), a lesser number must proceed a larger one that is a maximum of ten times the difference of the previous number (so today we are in MCMXCIX and not MIM).

Vocal correspondence of the cardinal numbers

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>unus</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>duo</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>tres</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>quattuor</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>quinque</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>sex</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>septem</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>octo</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>novem</td>
<td>90</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>decem</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>undecim</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>duodecim</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
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<td>400</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>quattuordecim</td>
<td>500</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
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<td>600</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>septendecim</td>
<td>800</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>duodeviginti</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>1000</td>
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</table>

Hours of the day
The primitive Romans didn’t have the possibility to exactly measure the time and based the hour principally on the rising, the position, and the setting of the sun.

Only three moments were defined: the dawn ("solis Ortus"), noon ("meridies"), and dusk ("solis occasus").

The day was divided into two parts: morning ("ante Meridiem") and evening ("post meridium"), still used today in the English language as AM/PM.

In 263 B.C. the sundial ("solarium") was introduced in Sicily and installed in the Forum area. This allowed the day to be divided into 12 numbered hours ("horae"), followed by a.m. or p.m., with each hour divided into 60 minutes.

The hourglass ("clepsydra") followed this, also called the "horologium". This was used by the military to divide the guard’s ("vigilae") shifts.

**Latin Phrases**

Latin is the mother language to some contemporary languages and many words used today. Today we still use sayings cited over 2000 years ago. Let’s discover which ones.

**Mottoes:**

- *De duobus malis, minus est semper eligendum*
  Always choose the lesser of two evils (Accius)

- *Est unusquisque faber ipsae suae fortunae*
  Every man is master of his own fate (Appio Claudio)

- *Acta est fabula*
  The game has began (Augustus)

- *Alea iacta est*
  The die is cast (Cesar in the Rubicone in 49 B.C.)

- *Hoc voluerunt*
  They got what they deserved (Cesar, after the battle of Mundia, 49 B.C.)

- *Ars longa, vita brevis*
  Art is eternal, life is short (Hippocrates)

- *Fortes fortuna adiuvat*
  Fortune favors the brave

**Sayings**
- **Ex tempore**
  For now

- **Coram populo**
  Before the people

- **Nunc est bibendum**
  Now lets drink

- **Splendide mendax**
  Splendidly false

- **Alere flamas**
  Feed the flames

**Mottoes**

- **A latere**
  Aside, in the collateral sense

- **Ad libitum**
  as much as one likes, in quantity

- **Cadit quaestio**
  Subject closed

- **Modus operandi**
  Method of action

**Antique Rome at the Movies - 1**
Rome has lived some intense moments that are also seen in the cinema. This historical period and its events have been represented in some movies of great success.

THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE (1964)  
Directed by Anthony Mann

A spectacular colossal film on the last years of the empire under the rule of Marco Aurelius. In spite of an exceptional cast including Alec Guinness, James Mason and Sophia Loren, the film had many production problems. To name a few were the funeral of Marco Aurelius and the duel in the arena.

FABIOLA (1947)  Directed by Alessandro Blasetti

Based on the novel by Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman and dramatized by 14 people including Cesare Zavattini, Emilio Cecchi and Suso Cecchi D’Amico. It was the first Italian colossal film after the war and the first film of the 1948-49 season. An expensive film (500 million dollars), it created a scandal for the sexy scene with Michèle Morgan.
MESSALINA (1951)
Directed by Carmine Gallone

Messalina, after homicide and betrayal, plots to make his favorite emperor. But after another crime, it is discovered: his favorite is killed and Messalina commits suicide. Part of the impressive scenography comes from *Scipione the African* also made by Gallone in 1937. The film made 456.100.000 ITL.

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ORAZI AND CURIAZI (1961)
Directed by Ferdinando Baldi

Revised and correct version of the legendary war between the Orazi, three Roman brothers, and the Curiazi- their enemies. It is Orazio that breaks through, giving victory to the population. Filmed in Cinecittà and arranged by Carlo Lizzani, Ennio De Concini and Giuliano Montaldo, it made 358.000.000 ITL.
QUO VADIS? (1951)
Director  Mervyn Le Roy

Made four times as silent films, the story of commander Vinicio and the Christian slave Licia. This film was a colossal production of 8 million dollars and it took two years to make it in Cinecittà, Rome. At the end of the decade Hollywood will do another re-make:  *Ben Hur*.

SCIPIONE, ALIAS THE AFRICAN (1970)
By Luigi Magni

Publio Cornelio Scipione, called the African (Marcello Mastroianni) and his brother, called the Asian (Ruggero Mastroianni, Marcello's brother) are accused by Catone of stealing a large sum. But it is really only a political move, the African is in fact a man of integrity while his brother is the guilty one. Bizzare work made after the colossal success by Carmine Gallone (*Scipione l'Africano*, 1931).
ACCORDING TO PONTIOUS PILATE (1987)
Directed by Luigi Magni

After the death of Christ, Pontious Pilate starts to feel guilty and asks the emperor to be beheaded. Luigi Magni rehabilitates Pilate, who becomes a skeptical and lazy Roman (Nino Manfredi), and makes him a hero against his will. Courageous film from an unexceptionable historical point of view.