

Reading Review

Roman Beliefs about Life after Death

1. Where did the Romans place the tombs of their dead?

Not in secluded spots but along the roadside just outside of town.

2. What was the common way of disposing of the bodies of the dead?

Bodies of the dead were almost always cremated and placed in urns.

3. Why did Romans place their tombs in conspicuous places?

They believed that the dead wanted to be as close as possible to the living and that it was important to keep the dead happy to prevent them from haunting the living.

4. What was commonly buried with the ashes of the dead and why?

Since Romans believed that the dead in some way carried on the activities of life, they often buried the dead person's favorite objects and implements, such as tools, books clothing, etc. that they would miss if they didn't have them in the afterlife.

5. Why did the Romans bring food and drink to the tombs of the dead?

The Romans believed the dead became hungry and thirsty. They particularly liked wine as a substitute for their lack of life giving blood.

6. Did the Romans believe that the dead were happy?

No. They believed that the dead were generally unhappy and likely to haunt the living unless they were appeased with frequent gifts and visits when they brought them food, flowers and spent time at the tomb keeping the dead company. Families often had picnics at the tombs of the dead to accomplish this.

7. Describe the two major festivals for the dead?

The first festival was the "Parentalia" during which a family would visit the tombs of the dead and attempt to cheer them up by bringing gifts and spending time with them.



The second festival was the "Lemuria" in which the head of the household would by certain fixed ceremonies attempt to exorcise any ghosts who were unhappy and were haunting their house.

8. What other views about death were held by Romans?

Some people believed in the Greek myths and a life after death in the underworld where the good lived happily forever in the Elysian Fields and the wicked in Tartarus where they suffered eternal punishments.

Others who were the followers of the Greek philosopher Epicurus did not believe in any afterlife at all and thought that the soul died with a person's last breath, lost forever. These people believed in making the most of life in this world.

