**Assessing Greco-Roman Civilization – What can our studies of Greco-Roman Civilization tell us of our own time and place?**

**Topics:**

* Greco-Roman Mythology
* Early Greeks – Minoans and Mycenaeans
* Greek governance – Democracy? Oligarchy?
* Early Rome & Republicanism
* Greco-Roman Military & Warfare
* Roman Sport – Gladiators and Gore?
* Women, the sexes and sexuality
* Art, Literature, Philosophy
* Architecture & Engineering
* Science, Technology and Medicine

**Prodding Questions:**

* Myths and legends of Greeks and Romans cannot be seen as mere stories. In many cases they impart an understanding of history, if not a knowledge of it. Using Greek and Roman myth show that some legends, despite their seeming to be fanciful, might be based on historical truths (Ex: Theseus and the Minotaur and/or Romulus and Remus) What do myths tell us? What purpose do myths serve in our understanding of past civilizations?
* Some historians argue that Roman civilization is simply an extension of Hellenism (Greek civilization). Examine the impact of the Greeks on Roman history and the achievements of Rome. Is this a valid statement, or do the achievements of the Romans deserve their own place in history? Which civilization was more instrumental in the formation of the Western World?
* Athens has been called the birthplace of democracy and the Roman constitution was so respected that the Americans modelled their constitution on it. Consider the relative freedom enjoyed by the Greeks and Romans. Was it enjoyed by all people, or only by some? Was one society more advanced and open than the other? Is it fair to credit the Greeks and Romans with creating equitable civilizations? What lessons can we learn from these civilizations’ experiences, successes, and failures? Would you feel comfortable living in either Greece or Rome? Why or why not?
* The Greeks and Romans are often referred to as classical civilizations because of their stunning achievements in art and architecture. Select one piece of art and architecture from each civilization which you feel best reflects the magnitude of Greco-Roman achievements. Justify your selection.
* Discuss the role of women in Ancient Greek and Roman societies with respect to education, their ‘place’ in society, and in marriage and be sure to include some variation between such city-states as Sparta, Athens and Rome.
* Discuss the question of sexuality in Greco-Roman culture and compare it to that of society today. Consider attitudes towards homosexuality (and LGBTQ) then to today and whether we are as open-minded today as we think we are. Provide historic examples – ex. Sappho of Lesbos, the Sacred Band, Sleeping Hermaphrodite (sculpture), the Vestal Virgins…..
* Discuss Plato’s Allegory of the Cave – summarizing key ideas and points of view – then, state your opinion of Plato’s ideas and the implications of ideas therein. Do you agree with him? Is some of what he says flawed? What is the takeaway – what can we learn from Plato? What have you learned?
* The *Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius refers often to the need to act ‘unselfishly,’ yet much of its advice seems to centre on seeking tranquility within oneself and ignoring the outside world. Is this a contradiction? Is this a fair critique? Do (should?) other people matter to us? Or, is Aurelius’ *Meditations* too ‘impoverishing’ or too pessimistic? Discuss with consideration of specific quotes from the text of this work.
* Violence would appear to be an integral part of Greco-Roman sport and by all accounts they loved it. What does this suggest about Greco-Roman society? Additionally, is there a place for violence in sport? After all, it could be argued that violence remains integral to sports today too.
* To what extent was the military and warfare important to the expansion of Greco-Roman civilizations? Consider the role of the military across society and the tactics used by its adherents in your assessment and evaluation. Were Greco-Roman societies militaristic? Explain.