



Fact file: Livia and Cara

In this chapter we met two women, Cara and Livia.

They had very different days. Cara had to work while Livia just slept!

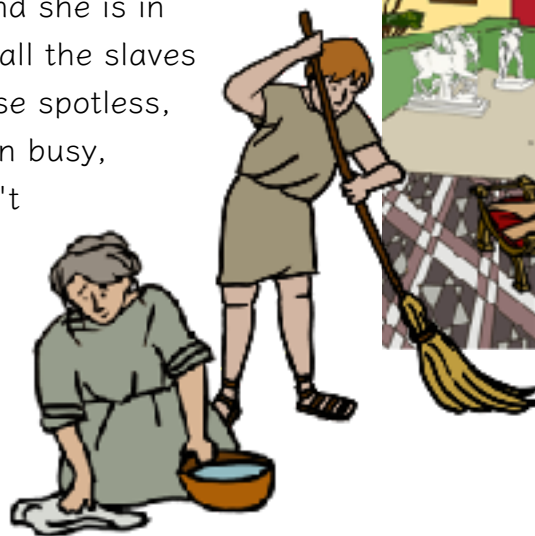


As Cara's family is not that wealthy she works as a painter. She also has to look after her two children, Marcus and Silvia.

She probably helps out at her husband's taberna too.



Livia's husband, Balbus, was very wealthy so Livia did not have to work. Because they live in a big house and she is in charge of managing all the slaves and keeping the house spotless, Livia would have been busy, although she wouldn't have to do any cleaning herself!





Some women would have been educated like this woman here who is holding a stylus and book of wax tablets.

Education was a sign of wealth as you had to pay to go to school. Although wealthy women didn't work it was seen as impressive and attractive to be intelligent and well-read.



Women had less freedom than they do now. According to Roman law, a woman could not act independently 'on account of the lightness of the mind'. All women had a male guardian, which could be their father or husband or any other male relative, who would act for them. They could not vote or defend themselves in court, but they could inherit property, have independent wealth, initiate a divorce, and leave a will.

Almost all we know about women was written or made by men and for men which means that some of the evidence we do have might be quite one-sided. These three Roman women would all have been quite wealthy. It would have been expensive to have a portrait made so only the rich could afford it. Now we have very few images of ordinary Roman women.



What do you think Romans meant in saying a woman could not act independently 'on account of the lightness of the mind'?



Above is a stone relief showing a woman selling fruit and vegetables.

On the left is a wall painting in which women are hanging up cloth to dry. This painting is from the **fullonica** (where they washed and dyed cloth) of Veranius Hypsaesus in Pompeii.

Like Cara some women would have had to work. From Herculaneum and towns nearby we have evidence of women working as money-lenders, a manager of a fish-sauce workshop, a pig-keeper and many more jobs.

Women would also have been busy in their homes. A wealthy women could have had many slaves to manage and organise. Less wealthy women would have had to look after their children at home and had to clean the house and feed everyone.

Nowadays do you think that women and men are equal?

Can a woman do all the things that a man can?

