Inquiry Set 6.7 - Religious Influences on Rome

I. Inquiry Set Introduction	
Inquiry Set Title	Religious Influences on Rome
Brief Description	This set focus on religious beliefs and practices to show how other cultures and civilizations (Greece, Persia, Egypt, other Near Eastern cultures) influenced Ancient Rome. With the examples of Diana, Cybele, Isis, and Mithras, students explore mystery cults and religious syncretism.
Authors	Anya Free, History Graduate Student, UC Davis Shennan Hutton, Program Coordinator, CHSSP
Grade Levels	6
Topics/Concepts	conquests of Roman Empire, Hellenistic culture, Cybele, Dura-Europos, Roman Empire, Egypt, Isis, Mediterranean culture, Mithras, Olympic gods, Persia, religious syncretism, Roman religion, Roman gods, mystery cults
CA HSS Standards / Frameworks	World History and Geography: Ancient Civilizations **6.7** Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures during the development of Rome. **6.7.3** Identify the location of and the political and geographic reasons for the growth of Roman territories and expansion of the empire, including how the empire fostered economic growth through the use of currency and trade routes.
Framework Excerpt	Rome defeated its nearby neighbors in a series of wars and partially incorporated them into the young state, which ensured a steady supply of soldiers for the growing army. Expansion around the Mediterranean rim began in the third century BCE, when Rome defeated the maritime state of Carthage in the Punic Wars. By devastating Carthage, Rome gained thousands of square miles of wheat land in Sicily and North Africa, as well as a windfall of Spanish silver. In the decades before and after the turn of the millennium, Rome also conquered the Hellenistic kingdoms of Greece and Egypt. …

	Rome, at its height, was at the center of a web of trade routes by land and sea. Huge plantations, through slave labor, produced grain to feed the population in Roman cities. Uniting the diverse environments of Egypt, North Africa, Syria, Anatolia, Greece, and Europe gave Romans access to vast resources. Roman roads united the empire, and trade routes by land and sea connected it with eastern Asia. Wealthy Romans dressed in silk imported from China and jewels imported from India. The Romans could not expand to the east because they could not defeat the Persian Empire, first under the Parthians and then under the Sasanians. In the first century BCE, Roman attacked the Parthians from their base in Syria. This resulted in a catastrophic military defeat for Rome and confirmed the Parthian empire as Rome's chief rival for control over Mesopotamia. The Parthian and Sasanian Persian emperors promoted the religion of Zoroastrianism to strengthen the power of their state and build up a national identity. Fighting continued between the two empires along the border in a bitter conflict. However, religious ideas and trade products were exchanged between the two enemies. Many Romans began to follow Mithraism, a religion from Persia and the east. Christianity spread back and forth across the Roman–Persian border.
Standards	**California English Language Development Standards for Grade 6** Part I. Interacting in Meaningful Ways B. Interpretative 6. Reading closely literary and informational texts and viewing multimedia to determine how meaning is conveyed explicitly and implicitly through language. 7. Evaluating how well writers and speakers use language to support ideas and arguments with details or evidence depending on modality, text type, purpose, audience, topic, and content area. 8. Analyzing how writers and speakers use vocabulary and other language resources for specific purposes (to explain, persuade, entertain, etc.) depending on modality, text type, purpose, audience, topic, and content area. **Common Core State Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Grades 6 – 8** 1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources. 4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to

	domains related to history/social studies. 7. Integrate visual information (e.g. in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
Investigative Question	How did other societies (the Greeks, Hellenistic states, Han China, Parthian Persia) influence and affect the Romans?
Historical Background	This source set uses religious examples to show the influence that other cultures and civilizations — especially Greece (and Hellenistic culture in general), Persia, and Egypt — had on Rome. The Romans imposed themselves on other cultures by conquering them, absorbing their wealth, and changing their societies, but Rome also borrowed deities and practices (and many other things) from those cultures. The influence, therefore, goes in multiple directions. The set also introduces students to the concept of religious syncretism, or the blending of deities and practices from many different sources, in the ancient world. The teacher can help students to understand the spread of the cults (that is, practices of worshipping a certain god) and gods by tracing place-names on a map of the empire. There was a melting pot of cultures around the Mediterranean. Roman civilization belonged to Hellenistic culture from at least the sixth century BCE, several centuries before Rome conquered Greece. The first two sources provide opportunities for the students to compare the Romans' traditional animistic spirits with the more familiar anthropomorphic (humanlike) gods such as Diana (Source 2), who inherited her features and family from the Olympic gods. Blending deities and practices was natural, because as Paul Veyne states, "in the pre-Christian world all gods were true, and Jupiter was everywhere Jupiter just as an oak is everywhere an oak, except that the names had to be translated from one language to another, from Zeus in Greece to Tinia in Etruria" (1979). The Romans also claimed foreign gods by associating Jupiter with Tinia or Serapis (as in Source 3). That is, the Romans would rename the cult "Jupiter Serapis," build new temples, and add statues and artifacts to old temples to emphasize the new name and association. At the same time, the Romans were selective about which gods they adopted and which they rejected. The Romans controlled most of the cultures around them, and they used their power to reject and persecute religions they did not like, such as Christianity and the Druid religion, or, in connection with rebellions, Judaism. Roman religion changed drastically with the conquests of the empire, as conquered people brought their own customs and beliefs to Rome. Some gods, such as Jupiter Serapis and Cybele, were approved by the Roman Senate and included in the official Roman pantheon and public cult (public rituals). Some groups, called mystery

	cults, were never official; individual Romans chose to join them. The fusion of cultures in the ancient world, started by Alexander's conquests and continued by Roman empire building, brought together a variety of religious and philosophical ideas that produced a religious synthesis in the Roman world. Religion and politics were deeply intertwined in Rome. Romans believed in omens, and some foreign cults entered Rome at times of social or political crisis. The cult (or worship) of Cybele, a goddess from Asia Minor, was officially imported during the Second Punic War (Source 4), when Rome's traditional gods seemed unable to secure a victory over Carthage. The Romans were so powerful that they forced this transfer of Cybele, against the preferences of her worshippers in Asia Minor. On the other hand, among the political methods they used to take over and control conquered areas, the Romans included respect and acceptance of the area's deities (Source 3). Public participation in the official cult was largely impersonal, a mark of support for the Roman regime. The Roman army promoted and spread the cult of Mithras. However, most eastern cults never became official. Probably introduced by slaves, foreign merchants, and other easterners, these cults often provided a more spiritual, intimate experience, such as a personal connection with the deity and happiness in the afterlife. Roman citizens chose whether or not to join these cults. One popular eastern cult was that of Isis (sources 5 and 6), which reached Rome from Egypt early in the first century BCE. The Romans were tolerant unless cults were perceived as threats to public order within the empire. For example, Augustus tried to oppress the cult of Isis during his war with Anthony and Cleopatra, since it came from Egypt, and Cleopatra used the epithet "the new Isis." Perhaps there is no better place that demonstrates Roman cultural and religious diversity than Dura-Europos, a city located in modern Syria. It was founded by the Hellenistic Seleucid Empire around 300 BCE, conquered first by the Parthian Persians in 113 BCE and then by the Romans in 165 CE, when it became an important military garrison on the Roman eastern frontier. Dura-Europos was located on a major east–west trade route, and its population was multicultural. Archaeological excavations of Dura-Europos have revealed temples to Greek, Roman, and Palmyrene (Syrian) gods, a Jewish synagogue, a Christian house-church — and a Mithraeum, quite expected in a military city, as Mithras was very popular among the soldiers (Source 7). This archaeological site shows that the religions of Rome were diverse and syncretic, including local cults and deities along with those from the multiple cultures that changed Roman religion, particularly the Greek Hellenistic, Persian, and Egyptian cultures.
Map	Alexandria (Egypt), Athens, Greece, Carthage, Palmyra, Pergamon, Pompeii, Rome, Roman Empire, Parthian Persia, Dura-Europos, Ostia *Note*: Some of these are the ancient regions and kingdoms, NOT modern nations!

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">II. Source Sets</th></tr>
<tr><td>#1 Primary Source</td><td>Seneca the Younger, Letter, ca. 65 CE
Roman Spirits

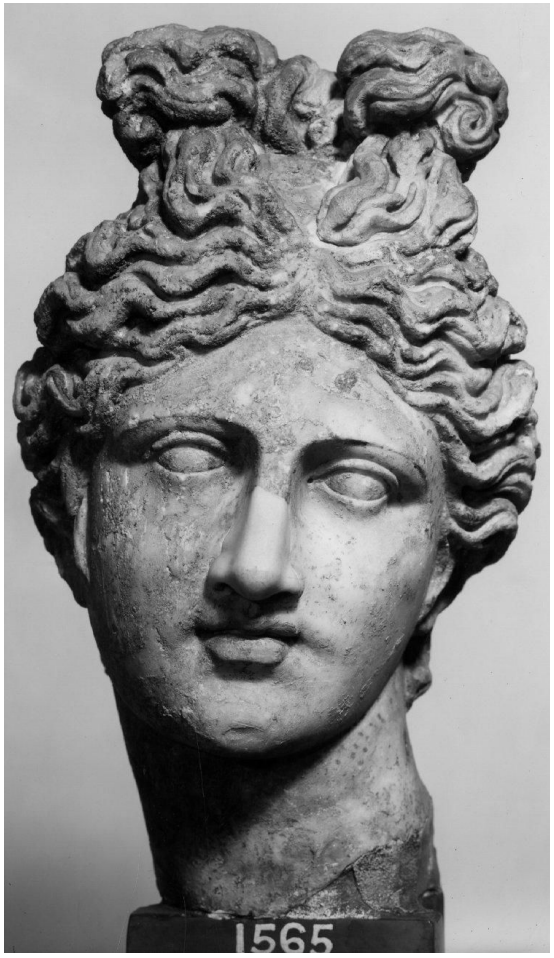
If you have ever come upon a grove that is thick with ancient trees rising far above the usual height and blocking the view of the sky with their cover of intertwining branches, the loftiness of the forest, the seclusion of the spot, and your wonder at the unbroken shade in the midst of open space will create in you a sense of the divine. . . We venerate the sources of mighty rivers, we build an altar where a great stream suddenly burst forth from a hidden source, we worship hot springs, and we deem lakes sacred because of their darkness or immeasurable depth.

<table><tr><td>Title of Source</td><td>Seneca the Younger, letter 41.3 (circa 65 CE)</td></tr><tr><td>Preferred Citation</td><td>Seneca the Younger, Letters 41.3 (ca. 65 CE), translated by Valerie M. Warrior, Roman Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2006), 5; Latin original: Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Ad Lucilium epistulae morales, Loeb Classical Library (London: W. Heinemann, 1917-1953, 3 vols.</td></tr></table></td></tr>
<tr><td>For the Student</td><td>This source gives you information about the earlier Roman religion, before it was influenced by other cultures. You probably heard about the Roman gods who are so similar to the Greek ones. Jupiter is like Zeus, Mars – Ares, Juno – Hera, Venus – Aphrodite, and so on. But even before the Romans described their gods as having the characteristics of Greek gods, the Romans had countless gods and spirits of their own. A lot of them were the gods of nature who helped people to farm their land, such as Flora, the goddess of flowers. The words “we build an altar” refers to an important ritual, an offering to the deity of an animal or crops on an altar. People would sacrifice the animal and burn part or all of the body.</td></tr>
<tr><td>For the Teacher</td><td>In this letter to his friend and correspondent Lucilius Junior, Roman stoic philosopher and author Seneca the Younger (ca. 4 BCE – 65 CE) reflects on the Roman “sense of the divine” inspired by nature. These ancient Roman deities were very different from the anthropomorphic Greek Olympic gods, whose features were later</td></tr>
</table>

	incorporated into the gods of the Roman pantheon. The spirits or deities found in the environment were usually local and therefore limited in power. This attribution of spirits to natural phenomena such as stones, rivers, and trees is called animism. Point out to students the phrase “we build an altar” and alert them to the Roman religious ritual of sacrificing an animal or offering crops on an altar in (similar to such rituals in the Mesopotamian, Greek, and Hebrew religions).
#2 Primary Source	**2a. Diana** Catullus, Poem 34 Diana, we are in your care, We chaste girls and boys. Come, chaste boys and girls, Let us sing in praise of Diana. O daughter of Leto, Mighty offspring of mightiest Jupiter, You who were born beside the Delian olive tree, Queen of the mountains And the green forests And the trackless glens And the murmuring streams…. You, goddess, Measuring out the year's progress by your monthly phases, Do fill the farmer's Humble storerooms with fine produce. Hallowed be thy name, Whatever name it is that you prefer. And, as in years past you have been

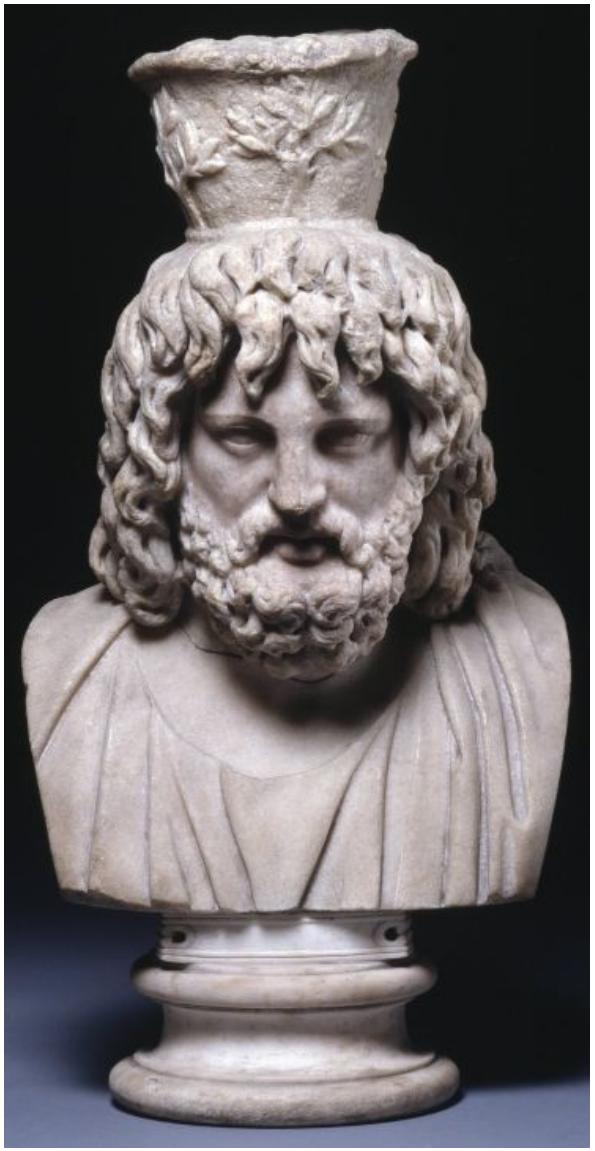
Accustomed to do, so now, too,
Protect and preserve the race of Romulus with your kindly favor.

2b. ***Head of Marble Figure of Young Goddess for a Statue***



	Title of Source 2a. Catullus, Poem 34 2b. Head of marble figure of a young goddess for a statue
	Holding Institution 2b. The British Museum
	Link to Record 2b. https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?assetId=870737001&objectId=406452&partId=1
For the Student	The Roman civilization grew up in the shadow of the Greeks and was highly influenced by Hellenistic culture, as were many people around the Mediterranean and in western Asia. Romans admired Hellenistic culture and adopted a lot of it, including arts, philosophy, and some customs. The Romans gave their old spirits features of Greek gods and adopted Greek myths about them. Diana's features were adopted from the Greek goddess Artemis. In the hymn the poet Catullus addresses Diana, praising her as a forest queen, and asks her to help Roman people just like she had in the previous years. The Romans worshiped Diana as a goddess of the hunt, the moon, fertility, animals, and the woodlands. In mythology Diana was the daughter of Jupiter and Latona (Leto in Greek) and the twin sister of Apollo. **Vocabulary** chaste: pure, innocent Delian olive tree: according to Greek myth, Leto gave birth to Apollo and Artemis on the island of Delos by an olive tree trackless: without roads or paths glen: a small, isolated valley by your monthly phases: Diana was the goddess of the moon, which goes through phases (from toenail to full) in a month hallowed: blessed race of Romulus: the Romans; Romulus founded Rome, according to myth **Visual caption for object:** This marble head originally belonged on a statue that was made between 120 and 180

	CE. It was found in Rome. Art historians have made the interpretation that it represents a goddess, but there are not enough attributes (features or characteristics) to conclude whether it represents Diana (Artemis) or Venus (Aphrodite).
For the Teacher	Catullus's hymn to Diana demonstrates the nature of the transformation that took place when a Roman spirit became identified with a Greek deity. Diana had been a woodland spirit of groves and hunting; however, once she became identified in function with Artemis, the Greek goddess of woodland and wildlife, she also took on the personality and appearance of Artemis. She acquired, moreover, Artemis's family; the once vague spirit now became the daughter of Leto and sister of Apollo, two other Greek deities. In addition, Diana assumed new functions — for example, like Artemis, Diana became the goddess of the moon as well as of the woods. Students might analyze the Roman and Greek features of the goddess from Catullus's poem.
#3 Primary Source	**3a. Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 6** The Romans, however, worship all the gods in the world. Their power and authority have occupied the farthest limits of the whole world, and extended their empire beyond the paths of the sun and the borders of the very ocean. . . . And after they have captured a town, when brutality in victory might be expected, the Romans pay honor to the deities of the conquered people. They invite to Rome gods from all over the world, and they make them their own. . . . And thus, while the Romans were adopting the religious rites of all nations, they also won for themselves an empire. **3b. Marble Head from a Statue of Jupiter Serapis**

	Title of Source 2a. Minucius Felix, Octavius 6 (ca. 160-250) 2b. Representation of Zeus/Jupiter Serapis
	Holding Institution 3b. The British Museum
	Link to Record 3b. https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=460061&partId=1
	Preferred Citation 3a. Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 6 (ca. 160-250), translated by Shelton, Jo-Ann. *As the Romans did: a sourcebook in Roman social history* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 417.
For the Student	This passage explains to us why it was important for the Romans to respect and even adopt other peoples' gods. When the Romans conquered a group of people, the Romans adopted and honored the other people's gods and cultures. The Romans mixed other peoples' gods and beliefs into Roman religion. This mix of religious beliefs is called religious syncretism**.** The Roman Empire tolerated the religions of the conquered people and tried to integrate them peacefully into the empire. However, when the Romans thought that a cult or religion was a threat to the empire, they persecuted its worshippers severely. How is the Roman syncretic religion different from modern religion? **Visual caption for object:** When Romans learned about gods of other peoples, they often noticed the similarities with their own gods and identified them as the same deity. In this case, Serapis, a Greco-Egyptian god, merged with Roman Jupiter, as both of them were kings of the gods. The grain measuring cup on his head symbolizes his power over nature. The Romans then named the cult (the worship) Jupiter Serapis, built new temples, and added statues and artifacts to old temples in order to show the new name and association.
For the Teacher	Many scholars think cultural flexibility and respect toward foreign gods and customs were among the reasons for the Romans' success as empire builders. Marcus Minucius Felix (died ca. 250) was one of the earliest Christian Apologists (defenders of Christianity) to write in Latin. His work *Octavius* is written in the form of a dialogue between the pagan Caecilius Natalis and the Christian Octavius Januarius. The work defends Christianity so as to

	appeal to educated non-Christians, and the “pro-pagan” arguments, one of which is cited in the excerpt, are borrowed mostly from the writings of Cicero. This argument for Roman syncretic religion demonstrates the way in which religious tolerance and political goals were connected in the Roman culture. However, it is also important to remember that Roman tolerance did not extend to religions that were perceived as threats to public order or to the state. The Romans persecuted Christians and Druids, and sometimes Jews. Certain pagan cults and rites were also banned from time to time.
#4 Primary Source	**4a. Cybele, the Great Mother** From Livy, *The History of Rome*, ca. 10 CE Scipio was ordered to go to Ostia, accompanied by all the matrons, to meet the goddess. He was to receive her as she left the ship, and when [she was] brought to land he was to place her in the hands of the matrons who were to carry her to her destination. As soon as the ship appeared off the mouth of the Tiber he put out to sea in accordance with his instructions, received the goddess from the hands of her priestesses, and brought her to land. Here she was received by the foremost matrons of the City […]. The matrons, each taking their turn in bearing the sacred image, carried the goddess into the temple of Victory on the Palatine. All the citizens flocked out to meet them, censers in which incense was burning were placed before the doors in the streets through which she was borne, and from all lips arose the prayer that she would of her own free will and favor be pleased to enter Rome. The day on which this event took place was 12th April, and was observed as a festival; the people came in crowds to make their offerings to the deity … and Games were established…. **4b. *Statue of a Seated Cybele with the Portrait Head of her Priestess***

Title of Source	2a. Livy, The History of Rome (ca. 10 CE) 2b. Statue of a Seated Cybele with the Portrait Head of her Priestess

	Holding Institution 4b. The J. Paul Getty Museum **Preferred Citation** 4a. Livy, *The History of Rome*, by Titus Livius, trans. D. Spillan and Cyrus Edmonds, (New York: G. Bell & Sons, 1892), slightly modernized by Shennan Hutton. Latin original: Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, edited by John Yardley and John Briscoe, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2017).
For the Student	People in Anatolia worshipped a mother goddess figure called Cybele or the Great Mother. They believed that a black stone from a meteor was the goddess, but she could also be anywhere in her invisible form. The meteoric stone image of Cybele was in a temple in the Kingdom of Pergamum, but Cybele was also worshipped throughout the Hellenistic world. During the Second Punic War against Carthage (218 – 201 BCE), the Romans consulted the Sibylline Books of Prophecies and decided that Carthage could be defeated if Rome brought Great Mother, or Cybele, to the city. The Romans believed in omens and respected the Greek oracles called Sibyl, meaning "prophetess." The Sibyls made predictions about the future and could also give advice on how to avoid a bad event (think of Professor Sybill Trelawney in *Harry Potter*!). Using the threat of their great military power, the Romans forced the king of Pergamum to "give" the meteoric stone image of Cybele to Rome. What do you think the people of Pergamum, worshippers of Cybele, thought about this transfer? **Vocabulary** ● Scipio: a great Roman general ● Ostia: the seaport of Rome ● matrons: married women from the upper classes ● receive her: that is, the priestesses would hand the statue of the goddess to Scipio ● put out to sea: got in his boat and sailed out to meet the other ship ● foremost: most important ● sacred image: a piece of a black meteor that people believed was the goddess. That's why Livy wrote "as she left the ship" as if the image were the actual goddess. ● the Palatine: one of the hills of Rome, the location of the most important temples ● censer: incense burner; people burned incense to honor the goddess

	● deity: a god or goddess ● Games: athletic competitions were often held in honor of gods and goddesses **Visual caption for object:** This large statue of a seated woman portrays Cybele, whom the Romans also called the Great Mother. She was first worshipped in Anatolia, east of the Greek city-states. She wears a crown shaped like a wall with towers, representing a city. Her right hand holds a bunch of wheat and poppy heads, a symbol of her role as a goddess of fertile earth. The lion sits at her feet, symbolizing her power over wild animals.
For the Teacher	The goddess Cybele was worshipped in Anatolia (modern Turkey) as a Mother Goddess. From Anatolia her cult spread first to the Greeks, who saw a resemblance between the Great Mother and their own goddess Rhea, and they eventually started identifying the two as the same goddess. Rome officially imported her cult during the Second Punic War (218 – 201 BCE) after observing a few bad signs, including a meteor fall that was seen as a warning of Rome's defeat in the war. The Romans consulted the Sibylline Books of Prophecies and interpreted that Carthage could be defeated if Rome brought the Magna Mater ("Great Mother") to the city. The image of the goddess in the form of a black meteor belonged to a Roman ally, the Kingdom of Pergamum, who agreed to give it to Rome. However, since Rome was so much more powerful than Pergamum, the king of Pergamum could not refuse. The text by the Roman historian Livy describes how the famous general and politician Scipio and Roman matrons brought the goddess into Rome.
#5 Primary Source	**5a. Lucius Apuleius, "Isis, the Queen of Heaven," *Metamorphoses* or *The Golden Ass*, Book 11, Chap 5, 155 CE** [Isis says:] I, mother of the universe, mistress of all the elements, first-born of the ages, highest of the gods, queen of the shadows, first of those who dwell in heaven, representing in one shape all gods and goddesses. My will controls the shining heights of heaven, the health-giving sea-winds, and the mournful silences of hell; the entire world worships my single godhead in a thousand shapes, with different rituals, and under many different names.… [but] the Egyptians who excel in ancient learning, honor me with the worship which is truly mine and call me by my true name: Queen Isis. I am here in pity for your misfortunes, I am here with favor and goodwill. Stop now your weeping, put an end to your crying, banish your grief: now by my Providence the day of your release is dawning. **5b. Panel with Painted Image of Isis**

	Title of Source 5a. Lucius Apuleius, "Isis, Queen of Heaven" (circa 155 CE) 5b. Panel with Painted Image of Isis
	Holding Institution 5b. The J. Paul Getty Museum
	Link to Record 5b.http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/7146/unknown-maker-panel-with-painted-image-of-isis-romano-egyptian-ad-100-200/
	Preferred Citation 5a. Lucius Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* or *the Golden Ass*. Book 11, Chap 5 (48). Modern translation and introduction by E. J. Kenny. (London: Penguin Classics, 1998), 171.
For the Student	The passage you read is from a Roman novel about a man called Lucius who had been transformed into a donkey. After many adventures and misfortunes, Lucius prayed to Isis, who pitied him and changed him back into a human. In the Egyptian religion, Isis was the wife and sister of Osiris, the king of Egypt. The evil god Seth murdered his brother Osiris, cut his body into pieces, and scattered them across Egypt. Isis used her magical powers to collect the pieces and revive her brother-husband Osiris, who then became the king of the Underworld. Isis and Osiris had a son, Horus. The Roman Senate never made the cult of Isis an official part of the Roman state religion, but some Romans had adopted the cult of Isis by the early first century CE. Isis was very compassionate and kind. She could cure the sick, and she also helped the dead enter the afterlife. Isis was a very important goddess and was especially popular among women, poor people, and slaves. **Vocabulary** ● godhead: divine nature ● Providence: divine care and guidance **Visual caption for object:** This portrait of the goddess Isis shows her wearing an elaborate headdress with pink flowers. The front of her mantle is tied in a knot on her chest. That knot is an attribute — a characteristic or feature — of Isis. When people saw the knot they knew that the painting represented Isis.

For the Teacher	In this excerpt from Lucius Apuleius's novel *The Golden Ass*, Isis appears to Lucius in all her divine glory and claims to be all goddesses, the Queen of Heaven — the most important of all the gods and goddesses. In traditional Egyptian religion, Isis was the wife and sister of Osiris, the king of Egypt. The evil god Seth murdered his brother Osiris, dismembering his body and scattering the pieces across Egypt. Isis collected the pieces and magically revived her brother-husband Osiris, who became the king of the Underworld and the afterlife. Isis and Osiris (syncretized into Serapis in Ptolemaic Egypt) had a son, Horus (Harpocrates). The cult of Isis was first adopted by the Greeks and then by the Romans, and it spread throughout the vast Roman Empire from modern-day England to Afghanistan by the early first century CE. Isis was a goddess with vast magical powers, including the ability to heal the sick and to help the dead enter a pleasant afterlife. The compassionate goddess and loving mother who promised salvation was especially appealing to women and the lower classes. Many scholars believe that the image of the mother Isis holding the baby Horus influenced Christian Madonna and Child images.
#6 Primary Source	**Isis-Fortuna**

Title of Source	Statuette of Isis-Fortuna
Date	2nd century CE

	Holding Institution: The J. Paul Getty Museum **Link to Record**: http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/6637/unknown-maker-statuette-of-isis-fortuna-roman-2nd-century-ad/
For the Student	Many of the gods the Romans adopted from conquered lands had attributes or powers similar to Roman gods. Sometimes Romans combined these two gods, as in this statuette of Isis-Fortuna. The goddess is wearing the headdress of the Egyptian Isis with a lunar disk between horns or feathers, and the front of her dress is tied in a knot on her chest, which is an attribute, or characteristic, of Isis. The statuette also has attributes of the Roman goddess Fortuna, who controlled the fate of people. In her right hand the goddess holds a ship's rudder, a symbol of her control over the course of human lives. In her left arm she has the cornucopia — the horn of plenty filled with fruits and vegetables, a symbol of prosperity and abundance.
For the Teacher	In the syncretic Roman religion, Isis was often merged and identified with other goddesses, such as Ceres (Demeter) or Venus (Aphrodite). This statuette represents Isis combined with Fortuna, a goddess who controlled the fate of both individuals and cities and was the personification of luck in the Roman pantheon. The statuette depicts a goddess wearing the headdress of Isis with a lunar disk between horns or feathers, and the front of her dress is tied in a knot on her chest, which is characteristic of Isis. She also holds the usual attributes of Fortuna: the ship's rudder in her right hand that refers to her control over the course of human lives, and the cornucopia — horn of plenty — in her left arm, a symbol of prosperity, nourishment, and abundance.
#7 Primary Source	**Mithras at Dura-Europos**

Title of Source	Painting of Mithras and Sol from the Middle Mithraeum
Date	ca. 210 CE
Holding Institution	Yale University Art Gallery

For the Student	Mithras was originally a Persian god who became very popular in the Roman Empire during the second and third centuries CE, especially among soldiers. Only men were allowed to join Mithraism, and its ceremonies and rituals were supposed to be secret, which is why we do not have many written sources about it. Mithraism was a religion that promised salvation after death. Mithras was often painted banqueting with Sol, the god of the sun and patron of soldiers. Another important scene in religious art is Mithras killing a sacred bull, which then became the moon symbolizing the victory of light over darkness. You can recognize Mithras by his special conical cap, called a Phrygian cap.
For the Teacher	Mithraism was a religion especially popular among soldiers, as only men could join. The god Mithras originally came from Persia, but his cult changed significantly as the Roman army spread it throughout the empire. It was a mystery cult, and worshippers initiated into the cult were forbidden to tell anyone about its rituals. Worshippers went through seven levels of initiation, with the promise of salvation after death. Due to the secretive and exclusive nature of the cult, there is not much information about its rituals. Mithras was often painted banqueting with Sol, the god of the sun and patron of soldiers. Another important scene in religious art is Mithras killing a sacred bull, which symbolized the victory of light over darkness, because the bull then became the moon. Mithraism declined in Rome in the fourth century, which coincides with the official recognition of Christianity.

III. English Language Development extension activity

This excerpt comes from a text written by Seneca, a Roman philosopher and writer, around 65 CE. Although the text is called a letter, it is more like an essay in its expansive and formal style. The excerpt is confusing to the reader because the sentences are long, the subject is abstract, and the style and vocabulary may be unfamiliar. To help students both understand Seneca's text and, more importantly, think about the historical significance of the piece, the text has been broken down into its functional parts and is followed by questions to spur further thinking and discussion. Before the class begins this sentence deconstruction activity, you may want to refer to the Sentence Deconstruction Strategy handout.

Directions

1. For each passage, first define the bold-faced terms (or others that are unfamiliar to your students) and then have students complete the related sentence deconstruction chart in pairs or groups of three.
    a. grove: a small forest
    b. intertwining: branches of different trees woven in together
    c. loftiness: tall height

d. seclusion: the state of being quiet and without people
e. unbroken shade: complete shade with no sunlight coming through
f. divine: of the god(s), holy
g. venerate: worship
h. deem: consider, regard
i. immeasurable depth: the lake is so deep that no one can measure or know where the bottom is

2. As a whole class, go over each completed chart to make sure students understand how the parts of the text function and give meaning.

3. After students complete the first four columns of the chart, have them use that information to discuss the questions in the last column.

4. Discuss with the students the purpose of this text in relation to the investigative question How did other societies (the Greeks, Hellenistic states, Han China, Parthian Persia) influence and affect the Romans? It is the first source and it describes the earliest Roman religion. The investigative question addresses change over time, as the Romans were changed by the influences from other societies. We have to begin with what the Romans believed before the influences — the original Roman religion. This source will give us evidence to answer part of the investigative question: What was the earliest Roman religion like? What did Romans believe? What were their gods like? The rest of the sources will give us evidence about the influences from other societies and how they changed Roman religion.