

Student Handout 6.7 Religious Influences on Rome

Background: This excerpt comes from a text written by Seneca, a Roman philosopher and writer, around 65 CE. Although the title is “Letter,” its style is more like an essay.

Directions

1. For each passage, first define the bold-faced terms (or others that are unfamiliar) and then with others in your group, complete the first four columns of the related sentence deconstruction chart.
2. Discuss and answer the questions in the last column.
3. Discuss in your groups: How does this source help you answer the investigative question? Keep in mind that this is the first source, and it describes the earliest Roman religion. It gives us evidence to answer part of the investigative question How did other societies (the Greeks, Hellenistic states, Han China, Parthian Persia) influence and affect the Romans?

Seneca, *Letter* (Source 1)

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**.

Connector	Participant	Process	Who or What	Questions
if	you	have ever come upon		Who is you?
that	(the grove)	is	thick with ancient trees	What is special about these trees?
	(trees)	rising		
and	(trees)	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		What makes Seneca feel that he is close to the gods in this place?
	We	venerate		What type of places did the Romans believe had a god or divine spirit?
	we	build	an altar	
where	a great stream	suddenly bursts forth		
	we	worship	hot springs,	
	we	deem		
	lakes	(are)	sacred because of their darkness or immeasurable depth.	

What was the earliest Roman religion like?

What did Romans believe?

What were their gods like?