

## A Roman Townhouse

Wealthy Romans in towns and cities lived in large, well-organised homes called a domus. Unlike modern houses, a domus faced inward, with few windows on the outer walls. Instead, light and air came from within the building itself.

At the heart of the home was the atrium, a grand central hall with a rectangular opening in the roof called the compluvium. Directly below this sat the impluvium, a shallow stone pool that collected rainwater for the household's use. The atrium was where guests were received and first impressions were made, so it was decorated with care.

Leading off the atrium was the tablinum, the master's private office where business and important meetings took place. Beyond this lay the peristyle, an elegant garden courtyard framed by columns, where the family could relax in privacy.

Rooms including bedrooms (cubicula), a kitchen (culina), and a formal dining room (triclinium) lined the edges of the house. In the triclinium, guests reclined on couches arranged around low tables.

Floors displayed elaborate mosaics and walls were adorned with detailed frescoes. The household was run by slaves, who carried out all domestic duties. Poorer citizens lived in multi-storey apartment blocks known as insulae, which were often overcrowded and poorly built.



*Read and Retrieve*

## Questions

1. What was a Roman townhouse called?
2. Why did a domus have few windows on its outer walls?
3. What was the rectangular opening in the roof of the atrium called?
4. What was the impluvium?
5. What was the tablinum used for?
6. What was the peristyle?
7. What was the Roman dining room called?
8. How did Roman guests behave at dinner?
9. What were the multi-storey apartment blocks for poorer Romans called?
10. Why do you think wealthy Romans put great effort into decorating the atrium?



**Text C Quiz**