

The Roman Forum

Before you read

1 How much do you know about the Roman Forum? Read the statements and write T (true) or F (false).

- 1 The Roman Forum was a big square. _____
- 2 The Forum was a marketplace. _____
- 3 The Forum was a sports stadium. _____
- 4 People made speeches in the Forum. _____
- 5 The government was in the Forum. _____
- 6 The Romans built the Forum in 300 AD. _____
- 7 Julius Caesar built a Forum. _____

Reading

2 Now read the text and check your answers to exercise 1.



THE FORUM

At the centre of most Roman cities was a big open space called the Forum; it was the heart of ancient Rome, the most famous meeting place in the world. The Forum was a rectangular plaza with important ancient government buildings and shops. Citizens of the ancient city referred to this space, originally a marketplace, as the *Forum Magnum* (the main forum), or simply the Forum. People met at the Forum to do business, to sell and buy things, to see their friends, to find out about the news, and sometimes to go to school. Usually the Forum had a stone pavement, and around the edges there were important buildings: temples and basilicas and shops. In some cities, the Forum had a platform in it for people to stand on and make speeches. This platform was called the Rostra.

People first began meeting in the main forum around 500 BC, at the time of the founding of the Roman Republic. Little by little, rich citizens added temples, statues, triumphal arches, and basilicas to the forum.

There were Statues and monuments to the memory of the city's great men. The Forum was also the location of the ancient former royal residence, the Regia (8th century BC), and the Temple of Vesta (7th century BC).

The *Forum Magnum* was for centuries the centre of Roman public life. Buildings such as



the Vulcanal (Shrine of Vulcan), became the Republic's *Comitium* or assembly area. This is where the Senate – as well as the Republican government itself – began. The Senate House, government offices, tribunals, temples, memorials and statues gradually filled the area.

By the time of Julius Caesar the forum was very crowded. So Julius Caesar built a new forum to the side of the first one. Julius Caesar's forum also had a temple and a lot of little shops. This new Forum became the city square where the people of Rome met for commercial, political, judicial and religious activities.

3 Read the text about the Forum again and answer the following questions.

- 1 What did children do at the Forum?
- 2 What was the Rostra?
- 3 Who paid for the statues in the Forum?
- 4 What happened in the *Comitium*?
- 5 Why did Julius Caesar build a new Forum?


STUDY SKILLS

Becoming a better listener

Here are some tips to become a better listener:

- Read the questions and underline key words.
- Think of synonyms of the key words. For example: *steps – stairs – stairway; boutique – shops – store; gallery – museum.*
- Use any pictures that go with the test: what can you see in them?
- Think of words that go with the key words in the questions (collocations). For example: *pigeons – feed – fly; church – saint; fashion show – clothes – catwalk;*
- Make sure you know how key words are pronounced and stressed. For example: *fountain, gallery, pigeon.*

Listening

- 4**  **3** Do this quiz: which square is it? Read the following statements and tick (✓) the correct box, then listen and check your answers.




Piazza di Spagna



Trafalgar Square

If you go to this square you will see...	Piazza di Spagna	Trafalgar Square
1 a fountain		
2 famous steps		
3 famous boutiques		
4 a statue of a famous man		
5 a big art gallery		
6 pigeons		
7 fashion shows		
8 a church		

- 5**  **3** Listen again and complete this summary.

The Spanish Steps go from Piazza di Spagna at the base to the Trinità dei Monti (1) _____ at the top. The *Scalinata* is the widest staircase in Europe, with 138 (2) _____. Every year there is an important fashion show on the steps; during the fashion show, the steps become a (3) _____.

Trafalgar Square is a big tourist attraction in central London. There are a number of (4) _____ in the square. At its centre, is Nelson's Column, with four lion statues at its base. The column has a statue of Horatio Nelson at the (5) _____, the hero of the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, when the British beat Napoleon.

Speaking

- 6** Work in pairs. Describe one of the squares in exercise 4 to your partner. Use the following questions to help you.

- 1 What is the name of the square?
- 2 What are the main buildings there?
- 3 Are there any statues? If yes, describe them.
- 4 Is there a fountain in the square?
- 5 Do people do their shopping there?
- 6 What else happens in the square? (e.g. meetings, festivals, concerts)

- 7** Work in pairs. Think of a famous square in your town and describe it to your partner.

Writing

- 8** Write a leaflet for a tourist brochure for the main square in your town. Remember:

- Who is going to read your text?
- What do they want to know?
- What do you want them to know?
- What are the three most important facts about the square?
- What do you like most about the square?
- Which words will make your description attractive to visitors?

- 9** Read out your text to the class. Can they guess which square you are describing?