

WALLS THAT TALK: VOICES OF POMPEII

In Pompeii, people wrote messages on walls to show who they were, share their feelings, and leave a mark on their community. From simple “I was here” notes to love messages, jokes and children’s practice letters, these inscriptions reveal everyday life, relationships, and personal identity. Graffiti was carefully placed in public streets and important buildings so others could see it, turning walls into a record of ordinary people’s presence and interactions. These writings give voices to Romans we rarely hear about in history books, showing how they expressed themselves, participated in cultural life, and made themselves remembered.

“I WAS HERE”

Self portraits and simple inscriptions like “...was here” were a way for Romans to claim space and assert their existence. These short notes acted like a personal signature or a mini self-portrait, visible to passers-by. Writing their names allowed individuals to leave a trace in the city and mark themselves as part of the community.



Fadius_Nasso

NASSO NADIVS

12 5 1

Fadius_Nasso Self-portrait - check! Name - check! Claiming my spot in the city's memory, one wall at a time 🏠👤🔥
#RumbleInTheCity #FeelingTheHeat #CIL IV 03204
6 hours ago



ABCDE...K~



Childrens Handprint and stick figure drawings

Practising your ABCs, Pompeii-style! Children scratched alphabets into walls as both play and learning
CIL IV 9277

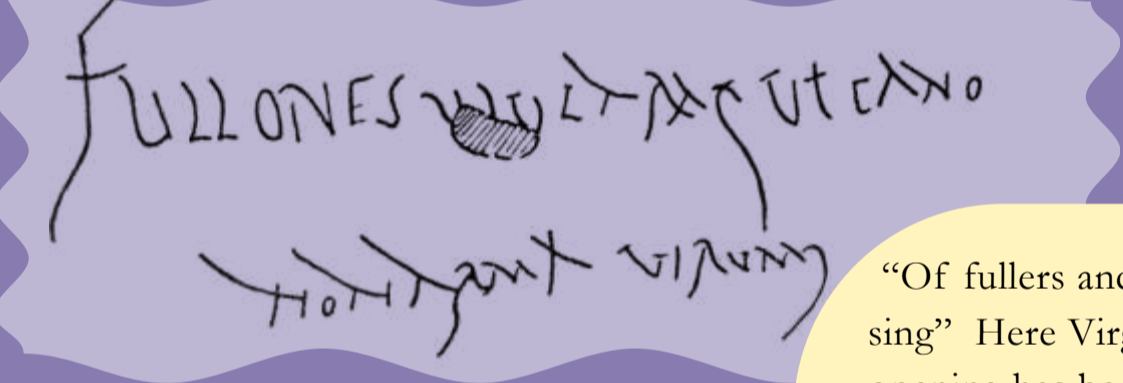
Children left their own marks on walls with letters, doodles, and practice scratches. These small inscriptions reveal how young people learned, played, and expressed themselves creatively. Even without the sophisticated style of adults, their graffiti shows that children were active participants in Pompeii's social world, contributing to the city's lively network of voices



“Acanthus (was) here”
CIL IV 08558

VIRGIL, VIRGIL

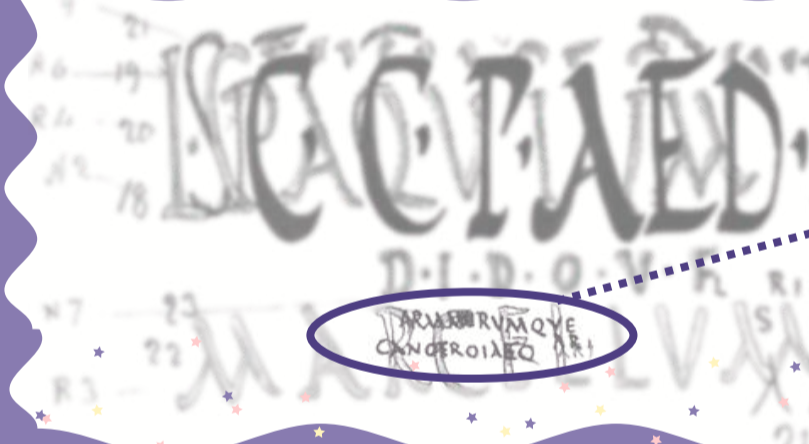
AND MORE VIRGIL



“Of fullers and the owl I sing” Here Virgil's Aeneid opening has been remixed, swapping epic heroes for owls and wool-workers in a clever Pompeian joke.
CIL IV 9131

Why do they only know Virgil????

Some graffiti quoted or adapted famous poetry, such as Virgil's Aeneid. By doing this, ordinary Romans demonstrated literary knowledge, creativity, and participation in cultural traditions. These inscriptions show that even non-elites could interact with elite culture, blending personal identity with shared social values and contributing to public conversations through cleverly placed wall writings



Amidst a cluster of casual graffiti, someone neatly copied the opening of Virgil's Aeneid —‘Arma virumque cano...’ showing how epic poetry slipped into everyday wall-writing.
CIL IV 7129-7131

TAGGED!

Graffiti could be humorous, teasing, or satirical. Romans used walls to perform identity, show personality, and communicate socially. By writing jokes, insults, or clever messages, people engaged with others in playful social interactions. These inscriptions highlight how everyday Romans created a public dialogue and expressed themselves beyond formal literature or official inscriptions.



Publius Propesius, jerk. You who read this are a prick. -- You are not trustworthy, writer. (drawing of a phallus)
CIL IV 08617



Epaphra, you are bald! 🍷!

Goodbye to Symphorus. ❤️ Naeve should drop dead, he really should.

Servilius is in love 😍 ... he shouldn't be allowed the chance. 🚫❤️

Chie, I hope your hemorrhoids rub together so much they hurt worse than ever before! 😬

12:00 PM · Jun 1, 2021

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CRUSHES & CHAOS

Pompeian walls weren't just for names, they were a stage for relationships. Graffiti recorded friendships, romances, rivalries, and professional connections, making private bonds visible to everyone. From playful teasing at taverns to love notes invoking Venus, these inscriptions show how Romans expressed their identity, negotiated status, and shared social and cultural knowledge in public spaces



Primigenia was here with Prima': a Pompeian graffiti that made friendship visible, turning private bonds into public identity.
CIL IV 08770a



Successus (A Weaver)

Bar of Prima, Pompeii

Successus, you love the innkeeper's slave girl Iris, but she doesn't love you 😬 Still begging her for pity? Your rival wrote this. Goodbye 🙄

Envious much? 🙄 Step aside for a handsomer man who's being treated wrongly...and good looking 🙄

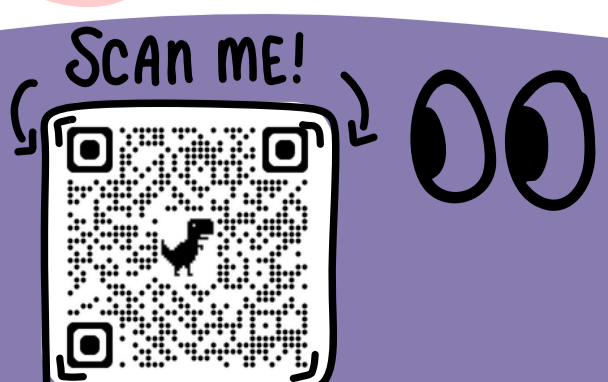
I've said all there is to say 😬 You love her, but she doesn't love you ❤️



Methe, a female slave, inscribed her love for Chrestus, invoking Venus. Her graffiti shows that even those outside the elite could use words and culture to shape how they were seen in Pompeii.



Methe of Atella, slave of Cominina, loves Chrestus. May Venus of Pompeii smile favourably on their hearts and let them always live in harmony
CIL IV 2457



Poster By
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