

Roman Art and Architecture | Sample answer

(i) Trier - 2014

Photograph G on paper X shows the plan of Trier.

(a) Identify the features shown at c, d, e, g and h.

- c. Forum
- d. Constantinian Baths
- e. Amphitheatre
- g. Constantinian Palace
- f. Aula Palatina

(b) What evidence is there to show that Trier was a city of wealth and importance in ancient times?

There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that Trier was a prosperous city in ancient times. Not only was it the capital of Gaul, but it was also made capital of the western provinces by Emperor Constantine in 293 AD. He also made it his residence which is evident from the Constantinian palace built on the outskirts of the grid pattern city.

The forum also suggests that the city was wealthy and important in ancient times. The forum is about 690 by 450 feet and divided by shops from the north to the south suggesting the forum was a place of commerce. Trade must have been lively as well as northwest of the forum where horrea, where goods were stored. The horrea were like those of Ostia (the port of Rome) which suggests trade was important to Trier. Also in the forum was a basilica and the curia (council house). Both were very grand and imply that law and order were relevant in the town. As for worship, a Romano Celtic temple and a shrine surrounded by a portico could be found in the forum as well as in the temple quarter. These temples suggest the town was religious and able to afford lavish temples.

The town of Trier also had much entertainment. Both the Constantinian baths and the Barbara baths were present in the town. They were built in the 2nd century, modeled after the North

African baths rather than the Italian baths and were still used by the 5th century. The amphitheatre was originally built on timber but refurbished with stone around the 2nd century AD. It could hold 7000 spectators. North of the amphitheatre was 150 long hippodrome renovated after 293 AD by Constantine. This is believed to be the circus which is said to have rivaled the Circus Maximus in Rome. All of this suggests the town was wealthy and important.

Finally, the town had major defenses which indicates that the town was more important than others, especially since it was a luxury town. The Porta Nigra was the main north gate built during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. It was also known as the "black gate." The wall surrounding the town were used for protection. the amphitheatre was built into these walls and served as a strong point. All of this would lead to the conclusion that it was indeed a major city.

(c) The Aula Palatina is a famous landmark in Trier. Describe this building and say what its original purpose was.

The Aula Palatina was located at the northeast of the town. Most of the structure remains in perfect condition today. It is 220 feet long and 106 feet high. It is flanked by colonnade courts at the entrance. It also had balconies. Inside, it was heated by a hypocaust system which is evident from the hollow spaces in the walls.

It was aisleless with a polygonal apse at one end and the floors were plastered covered partly by mosaics and partly by elaborate painted plaster. The walls were also plastered with mosaics as well. The Aula Palatina means audience hall. Its purpose was to serve as the audience hall or basilica of the Constantine palace. Now it is used as a church.