Rome Questions 1-7

1. What does the following image of Ancient Rome tell us about the power of the Empire and what do the walls of Rome tell us about the threats to that power? Also, briefly discuss one aspect of Rome that is of interest to you using the comprehensive bibliographic source for Ancient Rome.

* In each image, the scale and ornateness of the Roman structures suggests both a strong understanding of mathematics and architecture and an air of superiority in competition with other powerful civilizations of the time.
* The 3D simulation of the building of a Roman ship suggests a strong naval power and early Roman militarism.
* Militarism is alluded to in the Circo Massimo image; its size and elaborate protective details suggest a Roman demand for defense against massive threats of power and rivaling empires.
* The map of different ancient Roman walls suggests frequent expansion of the Roman territory, perhaps through the conquering of inferior areas or groups. It can be derived that the Ancient Roman Empire devoted much of its history to strengthening its territory both in size and grandeur.
* In searching the provided sources for Ancient Rome, I became particularly interested in pre-Christian Ancient Roman religion. Where more is known of Catholicism’s influence and practice in Rome, it was interesting to see how Rome’s early identity was shaped by other beliefs and practices, specifically Mithraism, which was derived in part from Hinduism.

2. What was the function of the Roman Forum and what major institutions did it contain?

* The Roman Forum was the political center of Rome, which promoted expansion and militarism as well as domestic organization.
* Within the Roman Forum, the empire established a government and laws through a senate that met at the Curia.
* In turn, an early form of a justice system was implemented through the Carcer, or state prison of Rome, and its Tullianum where its prisoners were executed for punishable crimes.
* The Roman Forum held the institution of religion, through temples honoring their gods and goddesses, and the Regia, where services were conducted and religious rules regarding prayers and sacrifice were contained.
* Tradition and history were honored and emphasized through the Roman Forum, which commemorated its founders and key figures through temples, monuments, and grave sites, and carried out sacred practices such as the preservation of the fire of the Temple of Vesta by selected virgin vestals.

3. What are the key architectural features of the Colosseum and what do we know about the Gladiatorial games?

* The Colosseum was designed almost entirely using columns, and, more importantly, arches, an architectural feature that would reappear frequently in Roman structures.
* As Rome’s largest amphitheater, the interior of the Colosseum featured abundant seating and eighty exits, which accommodated 50,000 spectators for its center events.
* Though rare due to structural damage, the Colosseum had the capacity to be flooded in order to hold public naval battles.
* Gladiator games were held in the Colosseum multiple times throughout the year and were funded by the emperor in order to “keep the poor and unemployed entertained” and discourage class uprisings.
* According to “The Gladiator Graveyard,” referees and regulations were present in gladiator fights so as not to completely mutilate fighters within the Colosseum. Gladiator games were not always “fought to the death,” with fighters sometimes surrendering beforehand.

4. Describe the architectural features of the Pantheon, and discuss its original function for Ancient Rome, and its transformation into a Christian church.

* The Pantheon is a symmetrical structure that features Corinthian columns on a rectangular porch leading into a large circular room.
* Its circular room features a domed roof and oculus, which manipulate outside light and further the ceiling’s intent to symbolize the heavens in both its original and transformative functions.
* The Pantheon originally honored “the seven deities of the seven planets in the Roman state religion.”
* Even as the Roman Empire moved toward Christianity, emperor Hadrian hoped its tribute to the gods would be a blending of the age’s religions.
* The Pantheon, in the possession of Pope Boniface IV in 609, became a Christian church honoring Mary and the martyred saints.
* After the Renaissance, the Pantheon was used as a tomb that holds painters Raphael and Caracci.

5. What events are depicted on the following four Ancient Roman Monuments: a) The Column of Marcus Aurelius; b) The Column of Trajan; c) The Arch of Titus and the d) Arch of Constantine? And, what was the function of Trajan’s Forum?

* Marcus Aurelius, an emperor known for both his philosophical thoughts and military accomplishments, is commended in the Column of Marcus Aurelius for his success in the Danubian wars. The column shows a series of events from the wars including the crossing of the river Danube by the army and the disputed “rain miracle,” in which a god (or the Christian God) interferes in the war and rescues the Romans.
* Emperor Trajan’s column, which features both he and his horse, honors the emperor’s military victories in the Dacian wars. Though his motives were unclear and believed to be less than noble, Trajan received large sums for his success, and was adored by the Romans for his contributions to the Forum of Trajan in building roads and other structures.
* Trajan’s Forum was built through the money he earned in battle in order to supplement the Roman Forum, which was becoming too small for its functions. Trajan’s Forum held a large piazza and basilica where public business such as auctions and ceremonies were held
* The Arch of Titus commemorates Titus’ victory in the Jewish Wars in which the Romans conquered Jerusalem and destroyed its Jewish temple.
* The Arch of Constantine tells the story of Constantine’s victory in the battle at Milvian Bridge against the larger army of Maxentius.

6. What do the remains of the Ancient Roman city Ostia tell us about Roman Life 2000 years ago?

* Ostia was a center for cultural meeting, where people from all of Europe came and met and influenced the area through goods, ideas, and language.
* In both life and death, a very modern class system determined where one lived; apartments above stores and “penthouses” differentiated the poor and noble, respectively, and mausoleums and temples commemorated the noble dead within the city limits, where the poor were to be buried outside them.
* Ostia’s close proximity to the sea shows the importance of Roman bathing, which consisted of the modern equivalent of spas and gyms.
* Religious tolerance existed with the exception of religions that opposed Roman religion and religions that promoted a lack of payment of public taxes.
* Ostia Antica’s survival in modern day shows the quality design and efforts of Roman architects and serves as an accessible glimpse into the materials used at the time.

7. What do the Catacombs tell us about the beliefs of early Christianity in Rome?

* In burying the dead rather than cremating them, as was custom in prior pagan culture, it can be derived that early Christians were concerned with the preservation of the body for the afterlife.
* Early Christians believed that Jews could be saved through conversion, as was seen through the Catacombs’ containment of many Jews converted in the fall of Jerusalem.
* Early Roman Christians admonished slavery (to a degree), inscribing the term “foster-child” rather than “slave” on graves.
* Early Roman Christians associated the Eucharist with the multiplication of bread and wine by Jesus, as is seen in many paintings in the Catacombs.
* Early Roman Christians regarded Peter as an example of Moses, frequently relating the two in lamp inscriptions which were placed at the Catacombs.