

Glossary of Names and Terms Found in **THE RUBY-VIPER TRILOGY**

by Martha Marks

Rubies of the Viper, The Viper Amulet, and The Ruby Ring

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A B C

abacus – a hand-operated counting tool used since ancient times; also called a “counting frame,” it still works well but mostly has been replaced by electronic devices

acanthus – a prickly perennial herb natively found in the Mediterranean region; in modern times, it has been hybridized and now is grown throughout the world

Adonis – the Greek god of beauty and desire

Alps – one of the highest and most extensive mountain ranges in Europe, stretching across the modern-day countries of Monaco, France, Switzerland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Germany, Austria and Slovenia

amphora – an ancient Greek jar or vase with a large oval body, narrow cylindrical neck, and two handles that rose almost to the level of the mouth; they were widely used throughout the ancient world as shipping and storage jars for wine and other foods; plural *amphorae*

amulet – an ornament or small piece of jewelry thought to give protection against evil, danger, or disease; a good luck charm; in ancient Rome, it was called a **bullā**

Apennines – the Apennine Mountains, a large range consisting of smaller chains that together extend 870 miles north-south through the Italian peninsula

apostate – a person who has officially renounced or separated himself from his religion, political belief, or principle; in Martha Marks’s *The Ruby Ring*, the highly Romanized Prefect Tiberius Julius Alexander is accurately described as an apostate Jew

Argiletum, the – a commercial street in ancient Rome that began in the slum area called Subura as a modest place to buy books and sandals and eventually extended to the Forum, where it became a hub of shops offering the finest merchandise

Arsinoë – a name given to numerous female members of the ancient royal families of Egypt, Macedonia, Thrace, etc.; per historic custom, it appears in Martha Marks’s *Rubies of the Viper* as the name of a boat; the **ë** is pronounced as a separate, final, fourth syllable

atrium – the central room of a Roman house, usually with a roof opening to admit light and a sunken pool or tank (*impluvium*) that collects rainwater

ballista – sometimes called a “bolt thrower,” an ancient weapon that launched either javelins (“bolts”) or stones at a distant target; similar to a larger device called a “catapult”; the derivative English word “ballistics” is the study of the motion of projectiles (bullets, rockets, and bombs) and the effects they have on impact

Bedriacum – a hamlet (now called Calvatone) on the Padus River (now called the Po) that in AD 69 was the site of two bloody battles of the Roman civil war, commonly referred to as the Year of the Four Emperors; in the first of those battles, forty thousand Roman soldiers died fighting either for Marcus Salvius Otho (who committed suicide immediately after his defeat) or for Aulus Vitellius (the governor whose army defeated Otho's)

beehive tomb – a burial structure used by the ancient Etruscans and others; its characteristic dome consists of successively smaller rings of mudbricks or stones; English-speaking archaeologists named it for its resemblance to a beehive. [Click here to see two photos of beehive tombs from the author's personal collection](#) (in PHOTO SET #2 of 4 on that page).

Berytus – ancient Roman name for an important eastern-Mediterranean seaport that dates from approximately 2500 BC; founded by the Phoenicians, it occupies a natural harbor now known as **Beirut**, Lebanon

bireme – an ancient warship with two files of oarsmen on each side; invented by the Phoenicians and used by many navies as battering ram vessels; see **trireme** (below)

bullā – a good-luck charm commonly given to Roman children to wear around their necks as protection; the **viper amulet** featured in this series is a bullā

burnoose – a one-piece hooded cloak worn in both ancient and modern times by Arabs and Berbers

Caesar – a title used by Roman emperors from Augustus to Hadrian; the word began as the surname (*cognomen*) of Julius Caesar but over time came to mean an absolute ruler or dictator

Caesarea Maritima – an important coastal city and seaport built by Judean King Herod I “the Great” and named in honor of Caesar Augustus; later used during the Roman-Jewish War as the military headquarters of Roman generals Vespasian and Titus; now an Israeli national park

calceus (plural *calcei*) – a type of hobnailed, flat-soled, shoe-boot popular with upper-class male Roman citizens; made of good-quality leather, it covered the entire foot and ankle, rose to the lower shin, and (exactly like modern high-rise boots) had laces that secured it at the foot and calf; considered especially stylish when worn with a toga

calends – (sometimes spelled *kalends* or *kal.*), the first day of the month in the ancient Roman calendar

Campania – an Italian province on the coast south of Rome; it included such ancient cities as Naples, Pompeii, and Herculaneum

Carcer Tullianum – also known as either the Carcer or the Tullianum, a prison and place of execution right in the heart of the ancient city of Rome; named for Servius Tullius, the legendary sixth king of Rome who lived in the sixth century BC; the Latin word *carcer* (“prison”) is the root of “incarcerate” in modern English

Cardo Maximus – a name often given to main thoroughfares in Roman and Roman-style cities and military camps; typically, as the primary arterial, it would be lined with shops and colonnades and thus crowded with people; in Martha Marks’s *The Ruby Ring*, the name specifically refers to a street in the Judean port town of Caesarea Maritima that is difficult to walk along due to the abundance of camels, donkeys, horses, and their droppings

Castor and Pollux – in ancient Greek and Roman mythology, these two men are half-brothers, born to a mortal woman named Leda who had been impregnated by a) Tyndareus, the mortal human king of Sparta, who fathered Castor and b) the immortal god Zeus, who seduced Leda by assuming the guise of a swan and thereby became the father of Pollux

catapult – an ancient military device for hurling large stones or other missiles at an enemy

centurion – an officer grade that bore great responsibility in the army of ancient Rome; a man holding that rank commanded a “century,” which originally was one hundred men but by the time of Martha Marks’s novels had been reduced to eighty

chironomia – a Latin word introduced into English for the ancient art of using hand gestures and gesticulations for effective communication, in particular to enhance one's rhetoric and oratory; the word, meaning “with or without the voice,” comes from the Ancient Greek *kheironomía* and entered modern use from both Latin (*chironomia*) and French (*chironomie*).

chiton – the basic garment of ancient Greece, usually knee-length for men and full-length for women

Cilicia – ancient name of a region located on the Mediterranean coast in the southern part of today's Turkey; a Roman province at the time of Martha Marks’s novels; around AD 41, per the customs of that time, the 13-year-old Jewish princess Berenice became Queen of Cilicia by marrying King Herod of Cilicia, who was her uncle

cithara – an ancient Greek stringed instrument similar to but larger than the lyre and having a box-shaped resonator

Cloaca Maxima – the ancient “Great Sewer” that carried stormwater and both human and animal waste from the Roman Forum and dumped them into the Tiber River

coffle – a group of prisoners, enslaved people, or animals chained or tied together in a line, usually for transportation

cognatus (plural *cognati*) – Latin word for a blood member of the family, especially a kinsman who descended from the mother's side; it signifies a connection through shared ancestry, rather than marriage

cohort – a component of the Roman army; it consisted of six centuries of eighty men each

colonnade – a row of columns supporting a roof or arcade; its usual purpose is to connect the private interior of a building with the public exterior

concubinage – (*Latin: concubinatus*) a monogamous relationship that in ancient Rome was an alternative to “legal marriage” (*Justae Nuptiae*), usually because of the woman's lesser social status; often, a wealthy widower would take a concubine (*concubina*) rather than remarry, in order to preserve the inheritance rights of his children by a previous legal marriage

concubinal ceremony – a ritual marking the establishment of a concubinal relationship between a man and a woman who are not legally married

connubium – Latin word for the legal right to contract a valid marriage (*Justae Nuptiae*) that would be recognized under Roman law; it was not available to all but limited to Roman citizens

consul – the highest elected official in the Roman Republic (209- 27 BC); later on, during the Empire, he was replaced by the hereditary emperor, known as Caesar, who was a dictator

Crete – an island in the eastern Mediterranean Sea; the largest and most populous of the Greek islands and the fifth largest island in the Mediterranean [Click here to see several photos of Crete from the author's personal collection](#) (in PHOTO SET #4 of 4 on that page).

Cyprus – an island in the eastern Mediterranean Sea; the third largest and third most populous; known since ancient times for its mineral wealth, superb wines and produce

DEFGHI

denarius – a coin, either gold or silver depending on the value, minted by the Roman Empire; plural *denarii*

domina– Latin word for “mistress” or “lady;” the masculine form is **dominus**, which means “master” or “lord”; either one would suggest a person of high rank, status, authority, or power, although slaves would use those terms to address their master or mistress, regardless of their status outside the home

domus – Latin word for “home” or “house” that generally included all the people living under its roof, both the free family members and their slaves; *domus* is the root of “domicile” in English

Domus Aurea – (“Golden House”) refers to the palace and formal gardens that Emperor Nero built on Rome's Oppian Hill for his personal use after the Great Fire of AD 64 destroyed much of the city; it later became an embarrassing symbol of decadence and soon was stripped of its marble, jewels, and ivory; the Flavian Amphitheater (now better known as the Colosseum),

whose construction plays a large role in Martha Marks's *The Ruby Ring*, was built in the center of a lake located on the Golden House's expansive grounds

entrails – the intestines or internal organs, especially when removed from a freshly killed body; in ancient cultures a priest would read the entrails of a sacrificed animal to determine if a given project—perhaps a marriage or a battle—was likely to be successful

equestrian rank – also known as the *equites* (“horsemen” or “knights”), a hereditary social class, created by the Emperor Augustus, which consisted of property owners who possessed at least 400,000 sesterces; in Rome's status- and wealth-conscious society, they ranked below the senatorial class who were the “old Romans” but often were far wealthier and more powerful than their social “betters”

equites – (see equestrian rank, above)

Ethiopians – a general term used by the ancient Greeks and Romans for black-skinned people, not specifically referring to the modern nation of Ethiopia

Etruria – a region north of Rome that was the homeland of the Etruscan people before they were defeated by the Romans and absorbed into the Roman empire; much of it is now called Tuscany (also named for the Etruscans)

Etruscan Sea – one name for the body of water that parallels the western coast of Italy; also known as the **Tyrrhenian Sea**

Etruscans – people who lived in an area known as Etruria in ancient Italy, shared a common language and culture, and formed a federation of city-states before they were defeated by the Roman Empire

Falernian – an expensive white wine produced in Campania, an Italian province on the coast south of Rome

Flavian Dynasty, The or simply **The Flavians** – refers to the family that ruled the Roman empire from AD 69-96; consisted of Titus Flavius Vespasianus the Elder (or just **Vespasian**), his elder son Titus Flavius Vespasianus the Younger (or just **Titus**), and Vespasian's younger son **Domitian**; they appear as characters in all three books of Martha Marks's **Ruby-Viper Trilogy**

freedman – a person who has been legally freed (or manumitted) from slavery; plural *freedmen* (in Latin, *liberti*)

Gallia Narbonensis – a Roman province along the coast north of Italia; today, it's the French region known as Provence

Gaul – a large region that the ancient Romans ruled for 600 years (in Latin, *Gallia*), now divided among the nations of France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany

garum – a fermented fish sauce used as a condiment in the ancient world; a popular version of it was produced and bottled in the Campanian city of Pompeii; the family that produced it became extremely wealthy before the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79

Germania Superior – an ancient Roman province that today is western Switzerland, several French regions, and southwestern Germany

Golden House, The – Emperor Nero's infamously opulent *Domus Aurea*, which he had built on the Oppian Hill in the heart of ancient Rome after the great fire of 64 AD; briefly occupied by Emperor Vitellius during the Year of Four Emperors, it subsequently burned to the ground in 104 during the reign of Emperor Trajan

Great Fire of Rome, The – an inferno that began on July 19, 64 AD in shops near the Circus Maximus, Rome's chariot stadium; high winds caused it to spread quickly, leading to many deaths and the loss of thousands of buildings; while many blamed Emperor Nero, he famously countered by blaming Christians, which led to greater persecution of them than had existed before

Great Revolt, The – what the ancient Hebrews called the war they fought from AD 66-70 (or, by some calculations, AD 66-74) between Rome and the independent province of Judea; also known in history as the either the **Jewish-Roman War** or the **Roman-Jewish War**

gunnysack – (also **gunny sack**) a bag or sack made of a coarse heavy fabric such as burlap; from the Indo-Aryan word *gunny*, meaning a coarse fabric; in ancient and primitive cultures, it would be used to carry things like grain, potatoes, etc.

Hatzidakis – a family surname of Cretan origin that was common in ancient times and still is today; pronounced with four clear syllables: hot-zi-dak-is

Hellespont, The – ancient name of the narrow passage between the Aegean Sea and the Sea of Marmara; known today as the Dardanelles or the Strait of Gallipoli

henna – a reddish dye made from the leaves of the *henna* tree; used for cosmetics since the ancient Egyptian period, and possibly even earlier

Hera – the Greek goddess of marriage, family, childbirth, and women; the wife and sister of Zeus, king of the gods

Herodian Dynasty, The – the Jewish royal family that ruled Judaea between 39 BC and 92 AD; notable members mentioned in Martha Marks's novels include **King Herod the Great** (73 BC - 4 BC), **King Herod Agrippa** (10 BC - 44 AD), and **Queen Berenice of Chalcis** (AD 28-?)

hippodrome – a Greek word used in both ancient Greece and Rome to describe an open-air stadium for horse and chariot races; in Martha Marks's *The Viper Amulet* and *The Ruby Ring*, it specifically refers to the Hippodrome of Caesarea Maritima, Judea, that was built by King Herod the Great in 10-9 BC to inaugurate that city and is now a site of archaeological interest located in Israel's Caesarea National Park

Hispania – the name that ancient Romans gave to what is now known as the Iberian Peninsula, where Spain and Portugal are located today

Hispania Tarraconensis – one of three Roman provinces that encompassed much of the northern, eastern and central territories of Hispania; the other two were Baetica and Lusitania

Hyperion – in Greek mythology, one of the Titans, specifically the god of heavenly light; the husband of Theia, the goddess who personified the sky's shimmering brilliance, and also the father of Helios, the sun; Selene, the moon; and Eos, the dawn; the twelve Titans were the pre-Olympian gods, considered the children of the primordial parents Uranus (Sky) and Gaia (Earth); see also **Kronos** and **Titans**

hypocaust – an ancient Roman central heating system consisting of an underground furnace and tile flues that distributed the heat; slaves usually managed the fires that kept the heat flowing; like window glass, it was found in the wealthiest houses only

insula (plural *insulae*) – a multi-storied, typically wooden building that often housed large numbers of individuals and families in urban areas like Rome and Pompeii; they were notorious fire traps with floors accessible by stairwells that easily carried flames from one level to another; often included shops and bars on the ground floor

Italia, or **the Italian Peninsula** – when referring in English to the ancient world, either “Italia” or “the Italian Peninsula” is the correct geographical term for what is now known as “Italy”; the nation of Italy, as a political entity, did not come into being until the 1800s; the word *Italia* has its roots in the now-extinct Oscan language, which was one of several spoken on the Italian Peninsula in ancient times

J K L M

Janus – the Roman god of beginnings, transitions, and endings, traditionally depicted as having faces on both the front and back of his head, symbolizing his ability to see both the past and the future at once; the two faces also represent his role in presiding over all moments of passage and change, such as the start of a new year, a new endeavor, or a new life cycle; he is the god for which our month of January is named, for obvious reasons

Jewish-Roman War (alternatively, the **Roman-Jewish War**) – commonly used name for the war fought from AD 66-70 (or, by some calculations, AD 66-74) between Rome and the independent province of Judea; in Jewish history, it's known as **The Great Revolt**

Josephus – Latin name given to Jewish general and scholar **Yosef ben Matityahu** (English translation: Joseph son of Matthew); the Judean scholar and military general who fought the Romans and was captured by them after the siege of Jotapata, but then went on to live out his natural life in Rome; author of an autobiography and the only surviving chronicles of the Roman-Jewish War, aka The Great Revolt

Jotapata – the modern spelling of an ancient fortified city, alternately spelled Yodfat, Yodefat, or Iotapata; the site of a lengthy and deadly siege during The Great Revolt; now an Israeli national historic site

Judea – while Judea is considered part of ancient Israel, the name refers specifically to the southern kingdom of Judah, which split from the northern Kingdom of Israel after King Solomon's reign, making it only a portion of the larger ancient Israelite territory; as early as the 10th century BC, the Israelite and Judean religion began to emerge within the broader West Semitic culture, otherwise known as Canaanite culture

Juno – the Roman goddess of light, women, marriage, and childbirth; the wife of Jupiter, she was also known as the “queen of heaven” and associated with youthfulness, vital energy, and the moon; throughout Martha Marks’s novels, the protagonist Theodosia Varro identifies closely with Juno the Moon as her personal protector

Jupiter – the supreme Roman god of sky, thunder, and lightning; also known as the “king of the gods,” he was associated with treaties, alliances, and oaths such as “I swear by Jupiter” or simply “By Jupiter!”

karkinoma – the Greek word for “cancer,” later adopted by the Romans; it’s the origin of today’s word “carcinoma,” describing a type of cancer that begins in the skin or in tissues that line or cover internal organs

knucklebones – a game that has been played for thousands of years; originally it involved throwing the ankle bones of sheep or goats into the air and catching them on the back of the hand; in modern times it is often called “jacks” and uses spiked metal shapes instead of bones

Kronos (also spelled **Cronos**) – in Greek mythology, the youngest of the Titans who overthrew his father Uranus to gain power and swallowed his children—Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, and Poseidon—out of fear that one of them would dethrone him; the twelve Titans were the pre-Olympian gods, considered the children of the primordial parents: Gaia (Earth) and Uranus (Sky); see also **Hyperion** and **Titans**

lanista – a man who trained gladiators to fight in ancient Rome

legal marriage – (Latin: *Justae Nuptiae*) a “just marriage” or “legal marriage” was the main one recognized under Roman law; it created the familial relationship of *patria potestas*, a father’s power over his family, thereby assigning him the role of *paterfamilias* or *pater familias*; an alternative for many other people was concubinage (Latin: *concupinatus*)

legate – a senior officer of the army, the *legati legionis* (legion commanders), *tribuni militum* (legion staff officers) and the *praefecti* (commanders of auxiliary regiments); all held the minimum of equestrian rank

legion – the principal unit of the Roman army comprising 3,000 to 6,000 foot soldiers with cavalry

legionary – a soldier who is part of a legion

litter – a covered, curtained, and cushioned couch equipped with horizontal wooden shafts that were carried by litter bearers, who were usually slaves; a typical litter carried a single passenger, but some owned by the wealthiest Romans were larger

Lusitania – a Roman province located in what is today Spain and Portugal on the Iberian Peninsula

Macedonia – an ancient kingdom that occupied the northeast corner of the Greek peninsula

Mala Orcula – Latin “Apples of the Underworld,” named that because the area where they grew in ancient times (and still grow today) was considered the location of the gates of hell; these small, tasty apples are mentioned in ancient Roman writings and are available today, with the name Melannurca apples, just as they were 2,000 years ago

manumission – the formal emancipation from slavery

to manumit – to release or set free, specifically from slavery; its synonym to emancipate does not exclusively mean from slavery

“meatman” – direct translation of an ancient slang term for a professional flogger or executioner; the original word came from Latin *carnifex* (“butcher” or “maker of meat”)

Miles Gloriosus – a comedic play by Titus Maccius Plautus (c. 254–184 B.C.), translated as “Swaggering Soldier”; even today, in plays such as “A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum,” it’s a stereotype of a certain type of bombastic military character

Minoan – an ancient people who flourished on the island of Crete for almost 2,000 years during the Bronze Age; their civilization was based at Knossos, named for the legendary King Minos

Molossian hound (aka **Molossus** and **Epirus mastiff**) – an enormous and ferocious wild dog that originated in western Greece; first domestication attempted by Alexander the Great who wanted it to be a military asset; later picked up by the Roman legions who subsequently introduced the species to the Italian peninsula; extinct now, even though its genes are believed to linger in modern hunting dogs

monophonic – an ancient form of music played on a single instrument; it’s characterized by a single unaccompanied melodic line

N O P Q

necropolis – a cemetery that contains elaborate tomb monuments; in Martha Marks’s *Rubies of the Viper*, the word specifically refers to a large Etruscan burial site near the modern-day town of Cerveteri, Italy (ancient town of Caere), which was 1,000 years old at the time it appears as a setting; in Martha Marks’s *The Ruby Ring* it refers to a smaller site outside the walls of Pompeii; the word comes from the Greek *nekropolis* (“city of the dead”). [Click here to see two photos of](#)

[beehive tombs in the Etruscan necropolis near Caere/Cerveteri from the author's personal collection](#) (in PHOTO SET #2 of 4 on that page).

Numidian – a person from Numidia, an area of northern Africa bordering the Mediterranean Sea that was part of the Roman Empire

Nuceria – (aka **Nuceria Alfaterna**) a settlement in Campania, a region on the western coast of Italy, that already was ancient at the time of these novels; in pre-Roman times it was the main settlement along the Sarnus (now Sarno) River; in 216 BC, the Carthaginian general Hannibal sacked Nuceria, but Emperor August later rebuilt it; in AD 79 ash from the eruption of nearby Mount Vesuvius blew in and smothered most of the townspeople; the Nuceria Gate was one of the main escape routes out of Pompeii, as portrayed in Martha Marks's *The Ruby Ring*.

Olipor – a name commonly given to male slaves who were the property of men named Aulus; “Oli” was a shortened form of Aulus, and “por” came from *puer*, the Latin word for “boy”; so Olipor meant “Aulus’s (slave) boy”

Padus – the ancient name for a river that is now called the Po; at about 400 miles in length, it’s the longest in Italy, stretching across the northern tier through the cities of Cremona, Milan, Ferrara, Piacenza, and Comacchio

palla – a woman’s long-sleeved tunic that was secured above the waist with ornamental brooches that resembled today’s safety pins; like a cloak, it was usually worn outside the house

panis quadratus – a loaf of bread (*panis*) shaped in a circle with quarter sections (*quadratus*) formed by inserting strings to divide the dough before baking; it was a specialty of bakers in Pompeii; many photos and even recipes for such loaves are available on the internet

Paphian – adjective used to describe an ancient temple on Cyprus; its original reference was to the nearby city of Paphos; eventually it came to be a reference to sexual love, derived from the city's role as the center of the worship of Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, who was said to have been born there; the sly insinuation in Martha Marks's *The Ruby Ring* that sailors and others at sea for long periods of time frequented this temple for sex is historically accurate

papyrus – a tall perennial sedge (*Cyperus papyrus*) native to the Nile valley of Egypt; in ancient times it was harvested and pressed into a paperlike material that people throughout the Mediterranean region used to write on; it was less durable than parchment and so was used for ordinary correspondence

parchment – the skin of a sheep or goat purposefully processed to be written on; it was stiff, flat, thin, tough, and durable enough to be used for imperial proclamations, wills, certificates of purchase, marriage, manumission, etc; usually rolled into a scroll and secured with a scroll ring; if needed for a secure delivery, it could be sealed with wax (see **purple parchment** below)

Parthia – an ancient kingdom and empire that rivaled and often battled Rome during the first centuries BC and AD; roughly equivalent to northeastern Iran today

Pasiphaë – in ancient Greek mythology, an immortal daughter of the sun-god Helios; also a skilled practitioner of witchcraft who married King Minos of Crete and was cursed with lust for the king's finest bull, with whom she conceived a hybrid child, the bull-headed Minotaur, who possessed the head and tail of a bull and the body of a man; the **ë** at the end is pronounced as a separate syllable: *pə-'sī-fə-,ē*

paterfamilias – also spelled **pater familias**, the head of a Roman family, the oldest living male in a household who legally could exercise autocratic authority over his relatives; Latin for “father of the family” or the “owner of the family estate”

pergola – a structure in a garden that climbing plants can grow over, creating shade, and that people can sit under or walk through

peristyle – a colonnade surrounding a building, court, or garden space

plebeian – as a noun, this identifies a member of the common class of citizens in ancient Rome, considered inferior to the patricians and the equestrians who ruled the empire; when used as an adjective, it describes someone who displays coarse or common behavior; often shortened simply to **a pleb** or **the plebs**

Pola – an ancient seaport and ship-building center; now the site of well-preserved Roman ruins and a tourist resort known as both **Pula** (Croatian) and **Pola** (Italian); located in western Croatia at the southern tip of the Istrian Peninsula, which juts into the northern part of the Adriatic Sea; in Martha Marks’s *Rubies of the Viper*, it plays a small but critical role in a challenging getaway

pontifex maximus – (translation: greatest pontiff) the chief high priest of the College of Pontiffs (*Collegium Pontificum*) of the Roman state religion; it became one of many titles held by the emperor; in Martha Marks’s novel *The Ruby Ring*, Emperor Vespasian is acknowledged as Pontifex Maximus and in that role performs part of a wedding ceremony; the parallels to today’s Roman Catholic pope, or pontiff, and the College of Cardinals are clear

praetor – in ancient Rome, a magistrate who ranked just below a consul and had chiefly judicial functions

Praetorian – in ancient Rome, a member of the imperial bodyguard, known as the **Praetorian Guard**

Praetorian Guard – the main body of troops in Rome; a force that emperors often used to discourage plotting, curb rebellions, and crush unrest and dissent

prefect – in ancient Rome, a category of military or civil official, ranging from low to very high-ranking; in some circumstances, a prefect could act as a governor, but his title of prefect was considered to outrank that of a governor

purple parchment – the same as ordinary parchment (see above) except that it was extraordinarily expensive due to its being dyed purple with the purple-colored blood of sea

snails; due to its color and cost, its use was reserved for emperors and, even then, signified that a document was of special importance; the ink used on purple parchments tended to be gold or silver. See Martha Marks's [The Purple Parchment](#) blog on this website.

quaestor – in ancient Rome, an official who was concerned chiefly with financial administration

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R S T U

Reate (now Rieti in the Lazio region) – a province in the Sabine hill country northeast of Rome that was both Emperor Vespasian's birthplace (specifically the hamlet of Falacrine) on November 17, AD 9 and the place where he died on June 23, 79; his death occurred in a mineral-springs spa area known as *Aquae Cutiliae* ("thermal springs"), which is also the place where his son Emperor Titus died in AD 81; the cold waters there were popular for their mineral-rich properties, which people believed treated various ailments such as stomach problems and nervous system issues; structures now known as the Baths of Vespasian and the Baths of Titus were discovered in the 1890s and have been thoroughly excavated in recent times

Roman-Jewish War (alternatively, the **Jewish-Roman War**) – commonly used name for the war fought from AD 66-70 (or, by some calculations, AD 66-74) between Rome and the independent province of Judea; in Jewish history, it's known as **The Great Revolt**

Rostra – an elevated platform in the Roman Forum where orators gave speeches to the public; named for the six bronze beaks of captured ships that decorated its front; notably, *rostra* (the plural of *rostrum*) is used because there were six beaks, not just one

Sator Square – (alternately: **Rotas-Sator Square**) a famous Roman graphic riddle or puzzle made up of a 5x5 grid of letters that are the same when read from left-to-right, right-to-left, top-to-bottom, and bottom-to-top; examples have been found etched into walls in excavated sections of Pompeii; the same graphic riddle reappears later in history as a Christian symbol, a magic charm, or a talisman believed to ward off evil, cure illness, and protect against fires; the internet provides fascinating examples and historical occurrences; Wikipedia provides illustrations and describes it as "a two-dimensional acrostic class of word square containing a five-word Latin Palindrome"

Saturnalia – a festival celebrating the god Saturn in ancient Rome that began on December 17; it was a night of upside-down social roles, where slaves played the role of their masters as their real masters served them food and drink and even entertained them

Scipio — Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, a well-regarded statesman and also the greatest of Rome's generals who, supposedly, never lost a battle; he defeated Hannibal, who commanded the forces of Carthage against the Roman Republic during the Second Punic War (218–201 BC); in Martha Marks's *The Ruby Ring*, one character makes a joke about "a herd of rabid elephants on a mountain pass," which is a semi-humorous reference to Scipio's confrontation with Hannibal's elephants

scribe – in ancient Israel, a member of a learned class who studied the Scriptures and served as copyists, editors, teachers, and jurists; in other ancient places, he was a person who copied and/or wrote letters, official documents, literary manuscripts, etc., usually for other people to read or otherwise use

Seleucia Pieria – seaport in the eastern Mediterranean that primarily served the ancient city of Antioch, Syria

servus – the Latin word for “slave”; it appears in Martha Marks’s *Rubies of the Viper* as a demeaning name that Theodosia’s brother tried to force his slave Alexander to answer to and accept

sesterce – an ancient Roman coin equal to one-quarter of a denarius

Sextus Julius Frontinus – a real-life civil engineer (circa AD 40–103), born in a Roman province that today is Provence in France, who led an impressive life of public service, including as *praetor* (a high-ranking magistrate) in Rome in AD 70; around that same time, he plays a key (albeit likely fictional) role in Martha Marks’s *The Ruby Ring*; he also was a Roman soldier who helped enable Emperor Vespasian’s victory in the civil war; the governor of Britain from 74 to 77 or 78; and the author of several texts that have survived to modern times, including *De aquis urbis Romae* (“Concerning the Waters of the City of Rome”)

Sicarii – modern version of the ancient Hebrew term *siqariqim*, (“assassins”), used to describe a radical splinter group of the Jewish Zealots that terrorized Judea during the first century AD; the word comes from *sica* (“dagger”)

Sicily – an island in the central Mediterranean Sea, south of the Italian Peninsula in continental Europe; one of the 20 regions of Italy

slingshot – a forked stick with an elastic band attached for shooting small stones; they were important weapons to ancient people who lacked more-sophisticated military technology; in skilled hands, they could be quite lethal

stola – a long, draped garment worn by Roman women; similar to the Greek chiton worn by women of ancient Greece and elsewhere

strigil – a long, curved metal instrument similar in appearance to a scoop; used by ancient Greeks and Romans for scraping oil or water off the skin after bathing or exercising

Sulpicii – plural form of the name Sulpicia or Sulpicius, one of Rome’s oldest patrician families; from the foundation of the Republic to the imperial period, the Sulpicii produced a succession of distinguished men, as represented in Martha Marks’s *The Ruby Ring* by Servius Sulpicius Galba, who briefly served as emperor of Rome in AD 68-69

talent – an ancient Roman coin that featured the image of a honey bee to symbolize wealth and prosperity; worth the equivalent of 20 years of a laborer’s wages; today, a talent would be worth between \$500,000 and \$1,000,000.

Terentii Varrones – plural form of the name Terentius Varro, which refers specifically to one branch (Varro, Varrones) of a wealthy plebeian (ie, non-noble) family (Terentius, Terentii) in ancient Rome; the most famous member of this branch of the family was Marcus Terentius Varro, generally known simply as “Varro” (116–27 BC), a polymath and prolific author who was in his time, and still is, regarded as ancient Rome’s greatest scholar; he is the ancestor of several fictional characters in Martha Marks’s Ruby-Viper Trilogy, including the protagonist Theodosia Varro and her son Dorus Terentius Varro

tertius gaudens – a strategy employed by General Titus Flavius Vespasianus the Elder, the future Emperor Vespasian, to defeat the Jews of Judea in the Roman-Jewish war; translated, it means “rejoicing third” or “the third man is happy” in a situation where a third party benefits from a conflict or dispute between two other parties; in Martha Marks’s *The Ruby Ring*, Roman characters discuss the concept and enthusiastically employ it for both military and political gain

Thessaly – a region of great importance in the ancient Greek world, possessing both agricultural abundance and a strategic position between north and south

timbrel – a type of ancient musical instrument similar to a tambourine; most commonly associated with the Israelites, but popular in Rome and other places as well

Titans – in Greek mythology, a race of powerful deities who ruled the world before the Olympian gods emerged; the twelve original Titans were the children of the primordial gods Uranus (Sky) and Gaia (Earth); the six males were Oceanus, Coeus, Crius, Hyperion, Iapetus, and Kronos/Cronos; the six females were Tethys, Theia, Themis, Rhea, Mnemosyne, and Phoebe; see also **Hyperion** and **Kronos**

toga – a loose outer garment worn in public by citizens of ancient Rome; the white *toga virilis* specifically marked a boy’s transition into manhood at age fifteen

triclinium – the formal dining room of an elite Roman home, named for the customary three cushioned couches arranged around a central table; the word derives from the Greek word *triklinion*, meaning three couches; diners typically reclined as slaves moved around to serve them

tribune – a Roman official with the function of protecting the plebeian citizen from arbitrary action by the patrician magistrates; also a military title referring to a senior officer in the Roman army who commanded portions of a legion

trireme – an ancient warship with three files of oarsmen on each side; similar to the **bireme** but altered by the Greeks to add a tier to the height, increasing the number of rowers to 180; it was faster, heavier, and more maneuverable than the bireme and thus a more effective weapon

triumph – a grand, state-sponsored celebratory parade held on occasion in ancient Rome to showcase a general’s great victory and show off the spoils of war; in Martha Marks’s *The Ruby Ring*, a triumph in AD 71 commemorates the victory of General Titus Flavius Vespasianus the Younger, the future Emperor Titus, over the Jews of Judea; treasures stolen from the Temple in Jerusalem were paraded before the cheering masses in the streets

Tullii – a real-life Roman family that originally descended from leaders such as Servius Tullius, the sixth King of Rome, who, despite coming from servile roots, reigned for about 35 years (578 - 534 BC) and formally divided Roman society into classes based on wealth; over hundreds of years, the family included both wealthy patrician and ordinary plebeian branches, including some individuals who had been slaves before being freed by their masters; in Martha Marks's *The Ruby Ring*, one fictional character describes himself as “an on-again, off-again scion of the sometimes-famous, sometimes-infamous, occasionally wealthy, occasionally destitute Tullii family”

tuff – a porous stone formed from debris ejected by an explosive volcanic eruption; used in ancient times to construct government buildings and temples before marble became popular; sometimes confused with **tufa**, which is limestone formed from hot springs and more generally known as **travertine** marble

tunica – tunic, the basic ancient garment for both men and women, a short-sleeved or sleeveless, knee-length for men and boys, and a longer, usually sleeved variation for women

Tyrrhenian Sea – based on the ancient Greek word for “Etruscan,” one name for the body of water that parallels the western coast of Italy; also known as the **Etruscan Sea**

Umbria – a region in central Italy bordering Tuscany, Lazio and Le Marche; local people are known as **Umbrians**

V W X Y Z

Via Appia — modern English Appian Way, a famously fast (for its time), arrow-straight (excepting its one bend toward the east) and stone-paved military road that was built starting in 312 BC; it left Rome near the Circus Maximus and went straight south before turning inland, away from the cities of Naples and Pompeii; in total, it extended 430 miles to the southeastern Italian coast; famous people like Julius Caesar and St. Peter walked the Via Appia, and in 71 BC some 6,000 rebel slaves, including Spartacus, were crucified along 120 miles south of Rome; of the 29 major Roman-era roads that fanned out from Rome, the Via Appia was the first and remains the best known

Via Popilia — a stone-paved road in southern Italia which branched off from the Via Appia (Appian Way) and continued south to the Strait of Messina (now Messina), which separates the Italian peninsula from Sicily; named after Roman consul Publius Popillius Laenaes, who was instrumental in building it, this road provided the only land route from Rome to the narrow straight across which travelers could reach Sicily; Publius Popillius also was involved in building a second “Via Popilia” in northeastern Italia

Via Postumia — an ancient military road in the Po Valley of northern Italy remembered mostly as the location of two key civil war battles in AD 69, now known as the Year of Four Emperors; constructed in 148 BC, it was named after Spurius Postumius Albinus Magno, the Roman consul who oversaw its construction; in later centuries pilgrims used, and still do use, the same road to travel through Italy from the east on their way to the shrine at Santiago de Compostela in Spain

Via Sacra — modern English ‘Sacred Way,’ ancient Rome’s original main street, which began at the top of the Capitoline Hill and ran through the Forum to the Flavian Amphitheater, better known today as The Colosseum; late in the first century AD, Emperor Domitian had built over the Via Sacra another ancient structure that still stands, the Arch of Titus, to commemorate his late brother Emperor Titus’s subjugation of the Jewish people in the Roman-Jewish War

Villa Publica – literally “House of the People,” the first public building constructed on the Campus Martius (“Mars Field”) in 435 BCE, it became the place where distinguished visitors, emperors, and conquering generals stayed and conducted official business

viper – from Latin *vipera*; literally, a venomous or reputedly venomous snake; figuratively, a vicious or treacherous person

window glass – Latin *fenestra vitrum*, a technology believed to have been produced first in Roman Egypt; unlike modern plate glass, it was formed as blocks meant to be embedded into the exterior walls of houses; like the heating system known as a “hypocaust,” such window glass was very expensive and thus considered a major upgrade from the use of wooden shutters to block rain and cold while admitting light

Yavne – an ancient Judean port that remains today as an archeological site on the Mediterranean; alternatively known to the Judeans as Yavneh and Jabne; known to the Greeks as Yamnia and to the Romans as Iamnia; all three versions are found, as appropriate to the speaker, in Martha Marks’s *The Viper Amulet*

Year of Four Emperors – a catchy and accurate name given to the year AD 69 when, after the death of Roman Emperor Nero, four rivals — Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian — put their people through a brutal civil war to determine who would rule the empire; this important historical event plays a key role in Martha Marks’s *The Ruby Ring*.

Yosef ben Matityahu – English translation “Joseph son of Matthew,” known to history as **Josephus**; the Judean scholar and military general who fought the Romans and was captured by them after the siege of Jotapata, but then went on to live out his natural life in Rome; author of an autobiography and the only surviving chronicles of the Roman-Jewish War, aka The Great Revolt; this historical figure plays an important role in two of Martha Marks’s *The Viper Amulet* and *The Ruby Ring*.

Zealots – members of a radical Jewish movement in the first century AD who sought to incite the people of Judea to rebel against the Roman Empire and expel it from their land during Roman-Jewish War; the Jewish historian Josephus used the related term “zealotry” to describe this particular type of sect during this period.

Zeus – the king of the ancient Greek gods and husband of Hera in mythology