

## Constructing power in Augustus' Rome

### Philanthropy & benefactors

rivos aquarum compluribus locis  
vetustate labentes refeci et aquam  
quae Marcia appellatur duplicavi, fonte  
nove in rivum eius inmisso.

*I rebuilt aqueducts in many places that  
had decayed with age, and I doubled the  
capacity of the Marcian aqueduct by  
sending a new spring into its channel.*

*Res Gestae Divi Augusti, Augustus*

Why does Augustus boast about rebuilding aqueducts?  
Are they likely to be as popular as the theatres or temples he built?

Do we get excited about water supply, sewage works, electricity or gas,  
or do we take these services for granted?



Top left: Aqueduct of Segovia (Spain), bottom left: Barcaccia Fountain (Rome)  
Top and bottom right: parts of the Aqua Marcia (Rome).

The Aqua Julia, one of Augustus' aqueducts, ran over 20km from the countryside into the centre of Rome, supplying the city with 48,000 cubic metres of fresh water every day, enough to supply about 500,000 modern households.

How great an engineering feat do you think this is?

Is this just a clever solution to the problem of water supply in a  
crowded city, or also a display of power over nature?