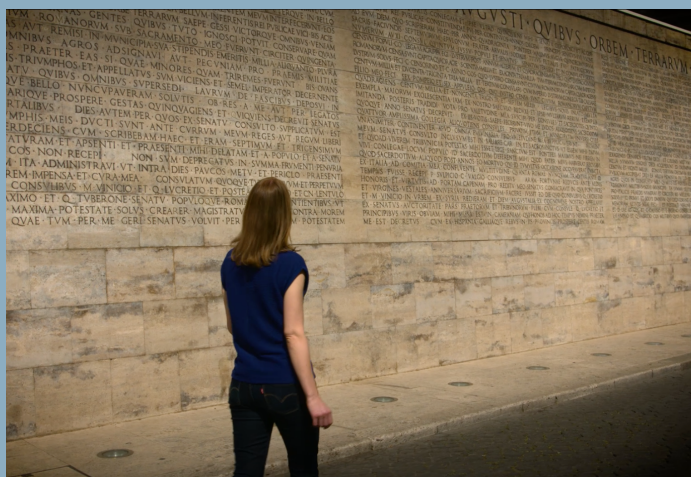
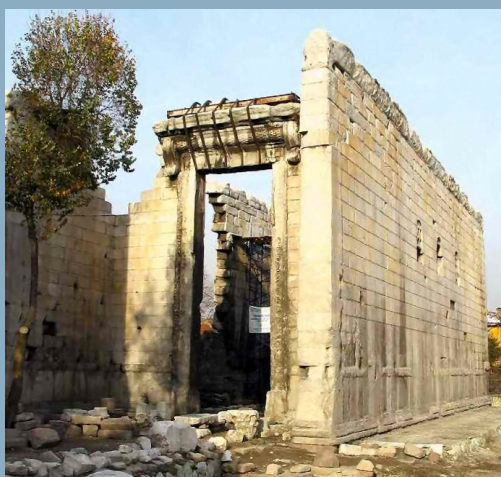


## Constructing Power in Augustus' Rome

### Augustus' *Res Gestae*

Below are some extracts from Augustus' autobiographical account of his achievements, the *res gestae divi augusti* - 'the deeds of divine Augustus'. It was written just before Augustus' death in 14 AD. This text was displayed after Augustus' death on bronze plaques outside of his mausoleum in Rome.

The *Res Gestae* was copied and translated onto monuments in various Eastern cities across the empire. Our copy survives from a temple in Turkey. A copy of the text can now be seen outside the *Ara Pacis* museum in the city of Rome (just opposite the mausoleum where it was originally displayed).



Left: ancient copy of the *Res Gestae* on temple in Ankara (Turkey).  
Right: copy outside Ara Pacis Museum (Rome).

What do these sections say to you about Augustus, his wealth and the city of Rome?

What variety of things did he spend his money on?

What kind of impression do you think this would have made on the Roman population?

What do you think the point might have been of displaying this text **after** his death?

#### *Res Gestae* Section 5

non recusavi in summa frumenti  
penuria curationem annonae, quam ita  
administravi, ut intra paucos dies metu  
et periculo praesenti populum universam  
liberarem **impensa et cura mea**.  
consulatum quoque tum annum et  
perpetuum mihi delatum non recepi.

*I did not decline at a time of the greatest  
scarcity of grain the responsibility of the  
grain-supply, which I so administered that,  
within a few days, I freed the entire  
people, **at my own expense**, from the  
fear and danger in which they were. I did  
not accept the consulship - either yearly,  
or for life -, which was then offered to me.*

plebei Romanae viritim HS trecenos numeravi ex testamento patris mei et nomine meo HS quadringenos ex bellorum manibiis consul quintum dedi, iterum autem in consulatu decimo ex patrimonio meo HS quadringenos congiari viritim pernumeravi, et consul undecimum duodecim frumentationes frumento privatim coempto emensus sum, et tribunicia potestate duodecimum quadringenos nummos tertium viritim dedi. **quae mea congiaria pervenerunt ad hominum millia numquam minus quinquaginta et ducenta.** tribuniciae potestatis duodevicesimum, consul XII, trecentis et viginti millibus plebis urbanae sexagenos denarios viritim dedi. et colonis militum meorum consul quintum ex manibiis viritim millia nummum singula dedi; acceperunt id triumphale congiarium in colonis hominum circiter centum et viginti millia. consul tertium decimum sexagenos denarios plebei quae tum frumentum publicum accipiebat dedi; ea millia hominum paullo plura quam ducenta fuerunt.

*To the Roman plebs I paid out three hundred sesterces per man in accordance with the will of my father, and in my own name in my fifth consulship I gave four hundred sesterces apiece from the spoils of war; a second time, moreover, in my tenth consulship I paid out of my own patrimony four hundred sesterces per man by way of bounty, and in my eleventh consulship I made twelve distributions of food from grain bought at my own expense, and in the twelfth year of my tribunician power I gave for the third time four hundred sesterces to each man.*

***These largesses of mine reached a number of persons never less than two hundred and fifty thousand.*** In the eighteenth year of my tribunician power, as consul for the twelfth time, I gave to three hundred and twenty thousand of the city plebs sixty denarii apiece. In the colonies of my soldiers, as consul for the fifth time, I gave one thousand sesterces to each man from the spoils of war; about one hundred and twenty thousand men in the colonies received this triumphal largesse. When consul for the thirteenth time I gave sixty denarii apiece to the plebs who were then receiving public grain; these were a little more than two hundred thousand persons.



## Res Gestae Section 19

curiam et continens ei Chalcidicum templumque Apollinis in Palatio cum porticibus, aedem divi Iuli, Lupercal, porticum ad circum Flaminium, quam sum appellari passus ex nomine eius qui priorem eodem in solo fecerat, Octaviam, pulvinar ad circum maximum, aedes in Capitolio Iovis Feretri Iovis Tonantis, aedem Quirini, aedes Minervae et Iunonis Reginae et Iovis Libertatis in Aventino, aedem Larum in summa sacra via, aedem deum Penatium in Velia, aedem Iuventatis, aedem Matris Magnae in Palatio feci.

*I built the curia and the Chalcidicum adjoining it, the temple of Apollo on the Palatine with its porticoes, the temple of the deified Julius, the Lupercal, the portico at the Circus Flaminium which I allowed to be called Octavia after the name of him who had constructed an earlier one on the same site, the state box at the Circus Maximus, the temples on the capitol of Jupiter Feretrius and Jupiter Tonans, the temple of Quirinus, the temples of Minerva, of Juno the Queen, and of Jupiter Libertas, on the Aventine, the temple of the Lares at the highest point of the Sacra Via, the temple of the Di Penates on the Velia, the temple of Youth, and the temple of the Great Mother on the Palatine.*

Use the interactive map at [digitalaugustanrome.org](http://digitalaugustanrome.org) to locate these buildings.



What do you make of the writing style of the *Res Gestae*?  
Is it an engaging read? Why (not)?

in privato solo Martis Ultoris templum  
forumque Augustum ex manibiis feci.  
theatrum ad aedem Apollinis in solo  
magna ex parte a privatis empto feci,  
quod sub nomine M. Marcelli generi mei  
esset. dona ex manibiis in Capitolio et  
in aede divi Iuli et in aede Apollinis et in  
aede Vestae et in templo Martis Ultoris  
consacravi, quae mihi constiterunt HS  
circiter milliens. auri coronari pondo  
triginta et quinque millia municipiis et  
colonis Italiae conferentibus ad  
triumphos meos quintum consul remisi,  
et postea, quotienscumque imperator  
appellatus sum, aurum coronarium non  
accepi decernentibus municipiis et  
colonis aequae benigne adque antea  
decreverant.

*On my own ground I built the temple of  
Mars Ultor and the Augustan Forum from  
the spoils of war. On ground purchased  
for the most part from private owners I  
built the theatre near the temple of Apollo  
which was to bear the name of my son-  
in-law Marcus Marcellus. From the spoils  
of war I consecrated offerings on the  
Capitol, and in the temple of the divine  
Julius, and in the temple of Apollo, and in  
the temple of Vesta, and in the temple of  
Mars Ultor, which cost me about one  
hundred million sesterces. In my fifth  
consulship I remitted thirty-five thousand  
pounds weight of coronary gold  
contributed by the municipia and the  
colonies of Italy, and thereafter, whenever  
I was saluted as imperator, I did not  
accept the coronary gold, although the  
municipia and colonies voted it in the  
same kindly spirit as before.*



*Left: Forum of Augustus (Rome). Right: theatre of Marcellus (Rome).*



ter munus gladiatorium dedi meo nomine et quinquies filiorum meorum aut nepotum nomine, quibus muneribus depugnaverunt hominum circiter decem millia. bis athletarum undique accitorum spectaculum populo praebui meo nomine et tertium nepotis mei nomine. ludos feci meo nomine quater, aliorum autem magistratuum vicem ter et viciens. pro conlegio XV virorum magister conlegii collega M. Agrippa ludos saeculares C. Furnio C. Silano cos. feci. Consul XIII ludos Martiales primus feci quos post id tempus deinceps insequentibus annis s.c. et lege fecerunt consules. venationes bestiarum Africanarum meo nomine aut filiorum meorum et nepotum in circo aut in foro aut in amphitheatris populo dedi sexiens et viciens, quibus confecta sunt bestiarum circiter tria millia et quingentae.

*Three times in my own name I gave a show of gladiators, and five times in the name of my sons or grandsons; in these shows there fought about ten thousand men. Twice in my own name I furnished for the people an exhibition of athletes gathered from all parts of the world, and a third time in the name of my grandson. Four times I gave games in my own name; as representing other magistrates twenty-three times. For the college of quindecemvirs, as master of that college and with Marcus Agrippa as my colleague, I conducted the Secular Games in the consulship of Gaius Furnius and Marcus Silanus. In my thirteenth consulship I gave, for the first time, the games of Mars, which, since that time, the consuls by decree of the senate have given in successive years in conjunction with me. In my own name, or that of my sons or grandsons, on twenty-six occasions I gave to the people, in the circus, in the forum, or in the amphitheatre, hunts of African wild beasts, in which about three thousand five hundred beasts were slain.*

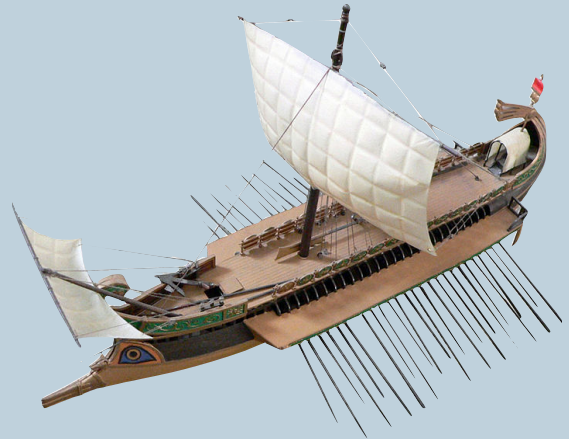


*Fresco from Merida (Spain) showing beast-fighter with spear facing lioness.*

Res Gestae Section 23

navalis proeli spectaclum populo dedi  
trans Tiberim in quo loco nunc nemus  
est Caesarum, cavato solo in  
longitudinem mille et octingentos  
pedes, in latitudinem mille et ducenti, in  
quo triginta rostratae naves triremes aut  
biremes, plures autem minores inter se  
confluxerunt; quibus in classibus  
pugnauerunt praeter remiges millia  
hominum tria circiter.

*I gave the people the spectacle of a naval  
battle beyond the Tiber, at the place  
where now stands the grove of the  
Caesars, the ground having been  
excavated for a length of eighteen  
hundred and a breadth of twelve hundred  
feet. In this spectacle thirty beaked ships,  
triremes or biremes, and a large number  
of smaller vessels met in conflict. In these  
fleets there fought about three thousand  
men exclusive of the rowers.*



*Left: Detail of a fresco from the Temple of  
Isis (Pompeii), showing a Roman trireme.  
Right: reconstructed model.*