

For it is my desire that all children whatsoever may partake of the benefit of education alike; but if yet any persons, by reason of the narrowness of their estates, cannot make use of my precepts, let them not blame me that give them fortune, which disabled them from making the advantage by them they otherwise might. Though even poor men must use their utmost endeavor to give their children the best education; or, if they cannot, they must bestow upon them the best that their abilities will reach.

EXTRACT TWO

1. What does Plutarch mean here?
2. Do you agree with him? Why/why not?
3. Do you think this is the case in Australia? Provide examples.
4. Do you think he means all children?
5. Who do you think he is ignoring?

PERSUASIVE SPEECH

In extracts one and two, Plutarch is attempting to persuade his readers of the importance of education. Imagine a friend of yours considers school to be a waste of time. Prepare a speech to convince this friend of the importance of education in today's world.

GLOSSARY

consuls: two Roman officials who were elected for a year and were in charge of law and order
democracy: a system of government in which political power lies with the people
emperor: like an all-powerful king. An emperor ruled the Roman Empire.
Etruscans: the people of Etruria, an area north of the Tiber River
gladiators: specially trained fighters who fought to the death in large Roman arenas
monarchy: a state in which a royal family rules
patrician: a rich Roman citizen, usually a landowner
plebeian: any Roman citizen who was not a member of the wealthy patrician class
province: an area of the Roman Empire that was ruled by a governor
republic: a country in which the head of state is elected
senator: member of the senate, a body of 300 men who ruled Rome during the Republic
toga: a loose outer garment worn by the citizens of Rome

ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY SOURCES: ROMAN EDUCATION

The following two extracts are taken from Plutarch's 'The Training of Children'. Plutarch was a Greek who lived in Rome sometime between the years AD 50 and AD 120. His writings on Rome have been very influential in the study of Roman history.

EXTRACT ONE

It is, indeed, a desirable thing to be well-descended; but the glory belongs to our ancestors. Riches are valuable; but they are the goods of fortune, who frequently takes from those that have them, and carries them to those that never so much as hoped for them. Yes, the greater they are, the fairer mark they are for those to aim at who design to make our bags their prize; I mean evil servants and accusers. But the weightiest consideration of all is, that riches may be enjoyed by the worst as well as the best of men. Glory is a thing deserving respect, but unstable; beauty is a prize that men fight to obtain, but, when obtained, it is of little continuance; health is a precious enjoyment, but easily impaired; strength is a thing desirable, but apt to be the prey of disease and old age. And, in general, let any man who values himself upon strength of body know that he makes a great mistake; for what indeed is any proportion of human strength, if compared to that of other animals, such as elephants and bulls and lions? But learning alone, of all things in our possession, is immortal and divine.

1. This is a difficult piece of writing. With a friend or in a group try to work out the meaning of each sentence.
 2. Rewrite each sentence in plain English.
 3. Do you agree with Plutarch or not?
 4. Write a short summary of your views on education.
 5. Think about the sorts of people who would agree with you and those who would not.
 6. Why do you think that some people have such different views about education?
- (Note: The language in extract two is challenging. Try to simplify it by deleting unnecessary words or substituting easier words for difficult ones.)