

What was the Roman army like?

Very big and very well organized. One reason why the Romans had such a large empire was because they had such a strong army to fight for it. At one time, there were as many as 450,000 soldiers.

Who could be a soldier?

Land-owning men between 17 and 45 could be forced to become soldiers for a while. By 100BC, most soldiers were full-time. They stayed in the army for 20 to 25 years.

How was the army organized?

In small groups, big groups and enormous groups. A group of eight soldiers was called a *contubernium*. Eight of these made up a group called a century. Centuries were grouped into cohorts, and eight cohorts made up a legion.



These ordinary foot soldiers have just finished a day's march.



This is a centurion. He is the man in charge of a century.

This soldier is a "tribunus militum", leader of a cohort.



Battle orders



This is a "legatus". He is leader of a legion.

An army horse

What were their army camps like?

There were two kinds of camp. One was made up of tents, which could be taken down and moved quickly. The other was built of stone.

All camps were set up very much like this.

Stores

Food is grown here to feed the soldiers.

The general in charge of the camp lives in the middle.

Stables

Hospital for the wounded

Stables

Stables

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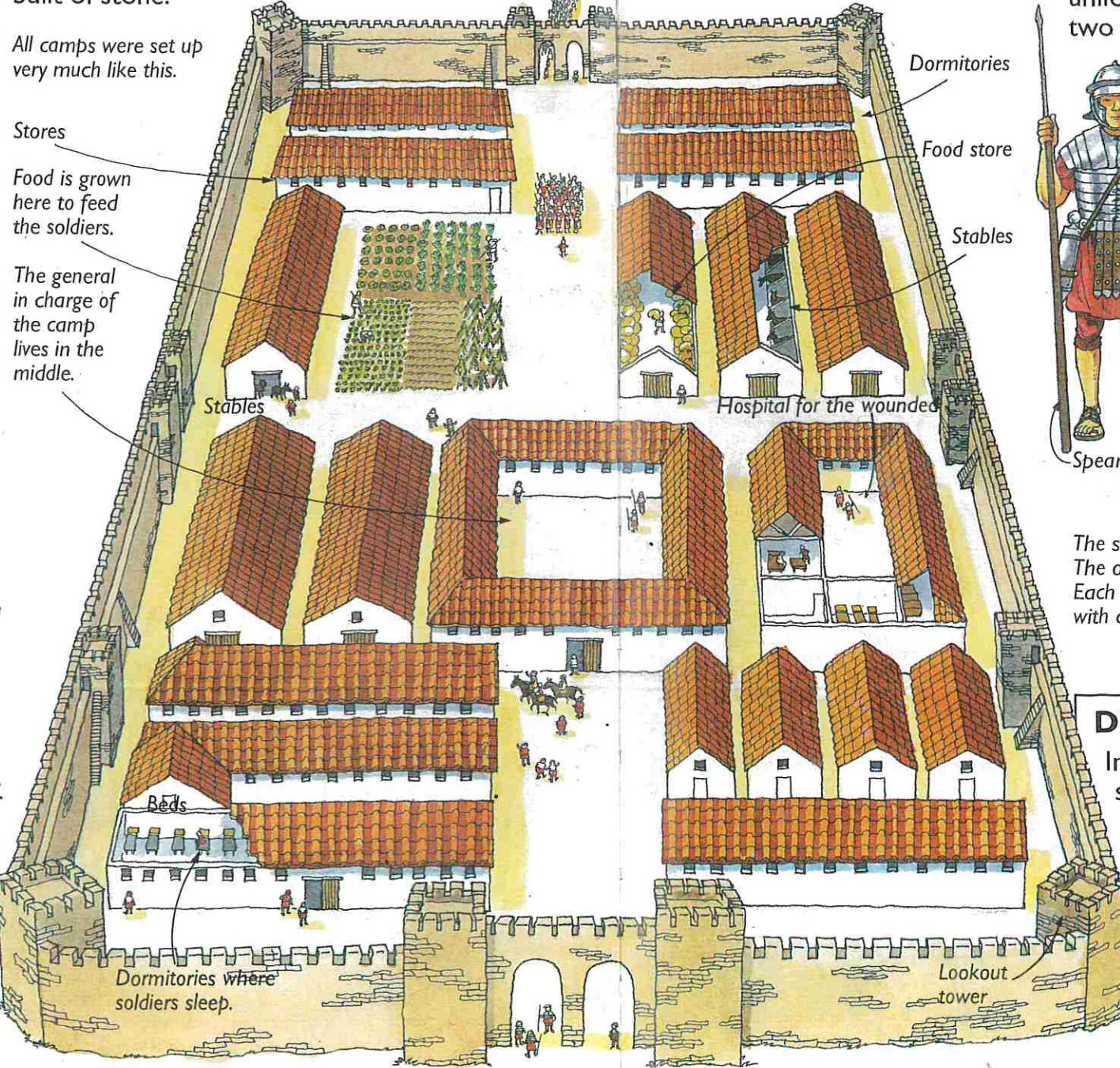
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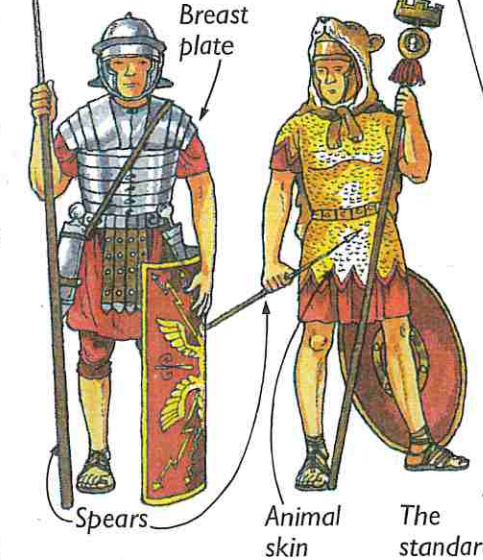
Stables



The soldiers in the camp are training. They have to march all day while carrying 30kg (67lb) of equipment.

What uniforms did they wear?

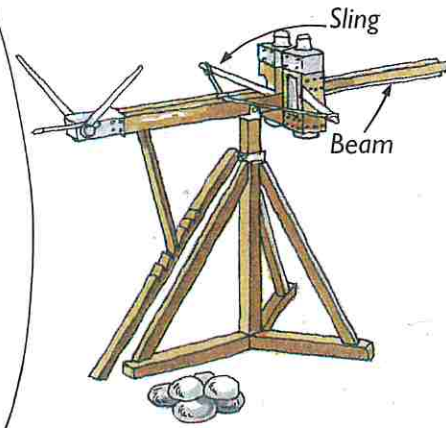
Different types of soldier wore different uniforms. Here are two examples:



The soldier on the left is a legionary. The other man is a standard bearer. Each legion had its own standard with an eagle on top.

Did they have guns?

No, but they had lots of weapons, big and small. The smallest was a dagger. The largest were siege towers, battering rams and catapults.



This Roman catapult can fire stones up to 30m (92ft).

A siege tower was a wooden tower on wheels. Soldiers could dash out of the tower onto the top of the walls of enemy forts.

Did you know?

In battle, Roman soldiers sometimes grouped together and held their shields all around them. They called this "the tortoise". The soldiers protected themselves in the same way a tortoise does with its shell.



A typical army tortoise