

# Representations of Pompeii and Herculaneum over time

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# Early Representations of Pompeii

Pompeii has been a public 'site of interest' since the beginning of its tragic downfall. Some of the site's notable tourists include:

- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
  - He explored the city in 1769 and it has been said that his opera, *The Magic Flute*, whilst set in ancient Egypt, was actually inspired by his time visiting Pompeii and witnessing the remains of the 'Temple of Isis'
- Karl Brullyov (Russian painter)
  - In 1828, Brullyov journeyed to Pompeii in hope for artistic inspiration
  - This journey saw him produce his most famous work, *The Last Days of Pompeii*
- Edward Bulwer-Lytton
  - Released his 1834 novel, *The Last Days of Pompeii* (as inspired by the book)
  - The novel paints first century life as decadent, sinful and ready for its end
  - The novel remained hugely popular at the time of its publication and after



Brullyov's painting

# In Popular Culture - Film

## Documentaries:

- *Pompeii the Last Day (2003)*, recreates the eruption of Mt Vesuvius and subsequent destruction of Pompeii
- BBC documentary, *Pompeii: Life and Death with Mary Beard (2015)*, provides an unprecedented behind-the-scenes access to the Great Pompeii Project
- Channel 5 Production, *Pompeii's Final Hours: New Evidence (2018)*, which features a live archaeological dig at Pompeii and Herculaneum

## Film:

- *Pompeii 2014*, an official movie
- Edward Bulwer-Lytton's famous novel *The Last Days of Pompeii (1834)* has been a source of filmic inspiration throughout the years
  - Silent films were produced in 1900, 1908 and 1913
  - *The Last Days of Pompeii (1935)* was the first sound version of the adaptation of the novel

# In Popular Culture - TV

**There have been various tv shows and series based on Pompeii. These include:**

- The Simpsons, series 17, episode 8
  - The site of Pompeii makes a brief appearance when the Simpson's travel to Italy. Lisa listens out for the description of the eruption and information regarding Fiorelli's plaster casts
- Dr Who, BBC
  - Pompeii features in series 4, episode 2 where the Doctor saves Caecilius and his family
- My Roman Mysteries
  - Featured an episode named, "The Secrets of Vesuvius"
  - Whilst the episode is not directly in Pompeii, it does dramatise the eruption of Mt Vesuvius and introduces historical figures such as Pliny the Elder

# In Popular Culture - Music

Since the mid 18th century, Pompeii has provided inspiration to various musicians including:

- Pink Floyd
  - In 1971, the rock band famously perform in Pompeii's amphitheatre
  - The footage captured was eventually released in a documentary called, *Pink Floyd: Live at Pompeii (1972)*
  - In 2016, David Gilmour, the lead singer and guitarist of Pink Floyd returned to the ampitheatre to watch him perform again
- Bastille
  - British band 'Bastille' produced a song called 'Pompeii' in 2013
  - In 2013, the British Museum hosted the band and they performed their hit song "Pompeii" in the museum's exhibition *Pompeii: Life and Death*

# In Museum Exhibitions

**There have been countless museum exhibitions detailing the events of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Some of these exhibitions include:**

- The Smithsonian Museum's 2006 exhibition, *Resurrecting Pompeii*
- British Museum's 2013 exhibition, *Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum*
- The J. Paul Getty Museum's 2007 exhibition, *The Herculaneum Women*
- Herculaneum exhibition, *SplendORI: Herculaneum & Luxury Ornaments*
- National Maritime Museum Sydney, hosted their international exhibition, *Escape from Pompeii*
- The Naples Archaeological Museum, *Alma Tadema e la nostalgia dell' antico*
- Melbourne Museum and Western Australian Museum, hosted the international touring exhibition *A Day in Pompeii*

# What these representations reveal

**The countless representations of Pompeii and Herculaneum ultimately reveal:**

- The site is a source of great human interest
- The themes present (human life, way of life and history) are something that remain interesting to humankind
- The representations also reveal that there is a story worth telling within Pompeii and Herculaneum