

## Beds in the Ancient World

Bed styles in ancient Egypt remained very much the same for over 2000 years. They are among the most intriguing of furniture items because of their structure. Many were slanted down at an incline from the headboard. A footboard ensured that the sleeper would not slip off in the middle of the night. Furniture makers also constructed side rails on many beds. Writes Sibal, "almost all beds featured legs in the form of animal legs, ranging from heavy bulls legs to gazelle-like forms with hooves, and the feline type with paw and claw, frequently identified as lions legs." The mattress was usually made of wooden slats, plaited string, or reeds, which then held woolen cushions or some other soft material. Sheets were made of linen.

Roman bed-frames were pretty much the same. It would have had a mattress on top of it, stuffed with feathers or straw, and wool blankets. But most Etruscan and Roman beds would have been made of wood and strung with wool or linen string. In the bedrooms, the ceilings were vaulted and lower above the bed, often making the room appear a cramped and stuffy place. Simple beds, to which shortly after the Homeric age a pillow for the head was added, continued to be used by the poorer classes among the Greeks at all times. Thus the bed of the orator Lycurgus is said to have consisted of one sheep-skin and a pillow.

In Ancient Greece, the beds of persons of high rank was covered with skins upon which the pillows were placed, and over these linen sheets or carpets were spread. Lastly, there was thick woolen cover or blanket for the sleeper. Poor persons slept on skins or beds of dry herbs spread upon the ground. These simple beds, had a cover or ticking of a mattress which was made of linen or woollen cloth and the usual material with which it was filled with was either wool or dried weeds. At the head part of the bed lay a round pillow to support the head; and in some ancient pictures two other square pillows are seen, which were intended to support the back. The covers of such pillows are striped in several pictures on ancient vases and were therefore probably of various colours. They were undoubtedly filled with the same materials as the beds and mattresses.

### Questions 1-4

Categorise the information in the questions into the following categories. Choose the correct letter (A-C) for your answer.

A = Ancient Egyptian

B = Ancient Roman

C = Ancient Greek

1. There was not much space in the bedrooms.
2. The beds were not flat and horizontal but rather angled downwards.
3. Pillows could be decorative.
4. No skins or pillows were used.