

Roman Archeobox TN v1

Julius Caesar came to England in 55BC and 54BC but didn't succeed in conquering the country. In 43AD the Emperor Claudius decided to add Britain to the Roman Empire. By then the Ancient Britons had been trading with Rome for many years, and the wealthy had developed a liking for Roman wine, houses and clothes!

This selection of replica artefacts is designed to help you find out more about everyday life in Roman Britain.

There are four different collections of replica artefacts:

- soldier's helmet
- soldier's sandals
- collection of jewellery
- collection of coins

1. What can you find out about Roman Britain by looking at a single artefact? You can use just one or all of artefacts to do this.

Typical questions you might ask an artefact:

1. *Look closely at the object.* If possible handle it. Draw it and label it - what are the key parts?
2. *How is it made?* What is it made of? Where was it made? Who made it? Is it big/small? Is it heavy/light? How can you tell?
3. *How old do you think it is?* New/Old/older/very old? How can you tell?
4. *What do you think it is/was used for?* How can you tell?
5. *Who would have used it?* Were they rich or poor? Where was it used? How did it change people's lives [significance]? How can you tell?

I'm sure you and your children will be able to think of many more questions. It is important to keep a list of those questions you *can't* answer and use those questions as the basis for further research into Roman Britain.

2. Split the collection into two - to do with the army, and to do with domestic life

- **What can you tell about the Roman army from these two artefacts?**

What can we tell about Roman soldiers by looking at the helmet and sandals together?

questions might include:

- why do the sandals have so many hob nails in the bottom?
- how comfortable would they be to walk in?
- how long might they last?
- why is the helmet so heavy?
- why is it so shiny?
- why does it have a crest on the top?
- what would it be like to wear? to walk 20 miles a day in? to fight in?

Pull it together by making three lists :

[a] what we can definitely tell about Roman soldiers from the two artefacts

[b] what we can probably tell about Roman soldiers from the two artefacts

[c] what we still need to find out about Roman soldiers despite examining the two artefacts

- **What can you tell about domestic life in Roman Britain from these two artefact collections?**

What can we tell about life in Roman Britain from the coins and the jewellery?

Examining the Roman coin collection'

1. Looking at an individual coin:

Get them to look carefully at just one coin - either as a class on a whiteboard or in small groups. The children could draw or rub their coin, and label it, as a way to encourage them to look closely at the coin.

Useful questions might include:

- when was this coin made?
- how old is it?
- is it new and shiny, or old and worn?
- who or what is commemorated on the coin?
- how much is it worth?
- what could I have bought with this coin?

You might also do some maths with the children at the same time. Finish up by asking two key questions:

- why do we have coins of different values?
- how useful is a coin as evidence? Is it primary evidence, or secondary evidence?

2. For the set of Roman coins as a whole:

The main thrust of the activity is to get the children to look carefully at the coins and use them as evidence of life in Roman Britain. The questions will reflect those from the 'starter' activity:

- what are the coins made from?
- what images do they have on them? Are all the images the same?
- are they all the same size/value/colour/from the same period?
- how well used are they?
- can we date them from the coins themselves?
- how do you think they were made?
- where do you think they were found?
- do you think they would be valuable today?

Some of these - and other questions the children might devise for themselves - you will not be able to answer simply from investigating the coins. For example, 'how were they made?' Use these unanswered questions as a basis to research Roman Britain.

Ask the children what they think they could have bought, at the time, with each of the coins. Then carry out some research to find out what each of the coins would really have bought. Compare the results with what coins of similar value might buy today.

Examining the Roman jewellery collection

1. Looking at an individual piece of jewellery

Useful questions might include:

- what is it?
- who might have worn it?
- what is it made from?
- is it valuable?
- does it have a special meaning?

2. For the set of Roman jewellery as a whole

We want the children to look carefully at the jewellery and use it as evidence of life in Roman Britain. What conclusions can they draw:

- about Roman women
- about how well off people were
- about religion in Roman Britain - are any of the pieces to do with gods and beliefs?
- how similar and how different was Roman jewellery to that people wear today?

Finally, pulling it all together.....

Again, you might pull this activity together by making three lists :

[a] what we can definitely tell about domestic life from the two artefact collections

[b] what we can probably tell about domestic life from the two artefact collections

[c] what we still need to find out about domestic life despite examining the two artefact collections

You want the children to begin to draw some conclusions about life in Roman Britain from what they have discovered - even if their main conclusion is that I need to find out more about life at the time before I can reach any strong conclusions. They should be able to make a list of unanswered questions they want to find the answers to!