

The Ancient World - Romans

Aimed at Key Stage 2

753 BC

Rome founded by Romulus and Remus

753BC



Julius Caesar was born
100 BC

Romans invade Britain

55 BC

Work started on Hadrian's wall

122 AD



Priestess

476 AD

Collapse of the Roman Empire

476AD

National Curriculum subject links

The Roman Empire and its impact on Britain

Coverage and links

The Roman Empire was, perhaps, the most impressive of the Ancient World. The legacy left by the Romans in all parts of the Empire is notable; buildings and sculpture, language, medicine and, not least, ways of thinking about the world. This enquiry question seems on the surface to be a simple one, but in undertaking any enquiry about similarity and difference, tentative conclusions about what we mean by 'Roman' show the complexity of the question.

The lessons investigate several aspects of the Roman world – the army, religious belief, entertainment – so that pupils can start to define what it meant to be a 'Roman'. In the first lesson, pupils investigate the Roman Empire itself, its size and location, and consider some of the reasons it was so large.

In the second lesson, pupils will turn their attention to aspects of daily life in the Empire, before finally looking at religious belief and the entertainment provided by gladiators. The sequence will conclude with pupils writing some statements about what it meant to be Roman, drawing on what they've learned across the unit.

This unit is only one that might be carried out on the Romans, and the films could be used in other ways and to different learning ends. This unit might follow a unit on the Roman invasion, first through Julius Caesar's failed invasion and then the more successful and lasting conquest by Claudius and his successors. In turn, it might be followed by work on resistance to the Romans under Boudicca.

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Suggested learning outcomes

By the end of these lessons, pupils will be able to...

- Describe the size and extent of the Roman Empire
- Say when the Romans occupied Britain
- Give examples of key features of life in the Roman Empire.

Pre-lesson homework

Pupils could be asked to research an aspect of the Roman world not covered in the unit, such as chariot racing. This could be extended into model making for some pupils.

Lesson 1 – How did the Roman Empire get so big?

Films to use

- **Introduction to the Romans**
- **Romulus and Remus**
- **A legionary's equipment**
- **Weapons – the gladius**
- **Builders and engineers**

Start the sequence by looking at **Map 1 of the Roman Empire** at its height. Ask the class:

- Do they recognise where this is?
- Are there any familiar countries?
- If we know that Rome is the centre of the Empire, what words would we use to describe its size?

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Lesson 1 – How did the Roman Empire get so big? ...continued

Then if you can zoom in (there is a higher definition version of the map available), you might also start asking about place names:

- Why are they different?
- What do they call England?

Any questions that get your pupils talking about the Roman Empire are worth asking at this stage.

Show **Introduction to the Romans**. The centurion in the film describes the Empire, and talks about why the Roman army needed to conquer it all.

Then introduce the enquiry question; What did it mean to be a Roman? After you've talked for a few moments about what this will entail – what the purpose of the enquiry is – then pupils will need to find out when the Roman Empire occupied Britain. Either on a class timeline or on pupils' own developing timelines, they should first mark the date of Julius Caesar's failed attempt to invade Britain, in 55BC. Then the invasion under Claudius, which happened in AD 44, and the Romans leaving Britain in AD 410. Ask your pupils about this passage of time:

- How long were they here?
- How many centuries is that?
- If they left today, what year would it have been when they arrived?

They will need reminding, perhaps, of what we mean by BC and AD. Note, there are 60 Second History films on **BC/AD** and **Timelines**. You might also put Roman Britain into the context of the dates of the Roman Empire. Indeed, you might decide to spend longer on the timeline, marking on other key moments in the story of Roman Britain if this is your opening Romans lesson. Of course, such activities would wait until you studied, say, the Boudiccan Revolt.

Then we need to get to this lesson's question: How did the Roman Empire get so big?

Show **Romulus and Remus**, in which a Roman priestess tells us the legend of how the city of Rome was established. This is the story that Roman people would have told each other at the time and the man she mentions as the writer – Titus Livius – wrote it

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Lesson 1 – How did the Roman Empire get so big? ...continued

in his history of Rome in about 30BC. Ask pupils whether it matters to us now that this story wasn't true – that it was a legend? Why would the story have been important to people living in Rome and in the Empire? Ask them about the legend that we have – Robin Hood, for example. Tell them that legends are stories that we tell because they have an important message. In the Romans' case, the story of Romulus and Remus told them that Romulus was the victorious brother, so Rome was clearly bound for great things.

Next show A legionary's equipment. Here, the legionary talks about what he carries as the army is out conquering new lands. At the end, ask what it must have been like to carry all that equipment. Then turn to what he tells us about how the army conquered new places; they travelled by boat and on foot. They carried a lot of equipment, so must have been very strong. Now show the next film, **Weapons – the Gladius.** This gives us other reasons why the Romans were able to conquer new lands. The army was very well trained and well armed.

The final film to show is **Builders and engineers.** This gives a final reason for why the Empire grew so big. Ask pupils to think about why building new bridges and sewers would help to conquer new lands. What would the people who had just been beaten by the army think about the Romans when they start building a wonderful new bridge over the river?

Now ask your pupils to draw a picture of a legionary with three speech bubbles. If the Roman Army was preparing to invade a new place, what would he tell you about why they will be successful?

- **What might he say about his skills in battle?**
- **What might he tell you about why Rome wants to invade?**
- **What will he tell you about why it would be good for the people who lived there?**

To end the lesson, go back to the enquiry question: What did it mean to be a Roman? What has been learned in this lesson that helps us to build an answer to this? When would it have been? Where would you have lived? What stories might you tell?

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Lesson 2 – Life in the Empire

Films to use

- **Living in a town**
- **Roman Baths**
- **Food**
- **Gladiators**

In this lesson, pupils will look at living as a Roman day-to-day. There are four films to watch and it would be useful to have access to other materials for pupils to do some of their own research from in the different areas.

Start the lesson by asking pupils to talk about what they learned in the previous lesson. What did they learn about the Roman Empire? Why was the army so important? How did the Roman authorities make the places they occupied better?

Then show **Living in a town**, in which the legionary talks about the streets, the shops and the important buildings in Rome. It is important to note that whilst he is talking about Rome, most towns built by the Romans had similar features.

Ask pupils:

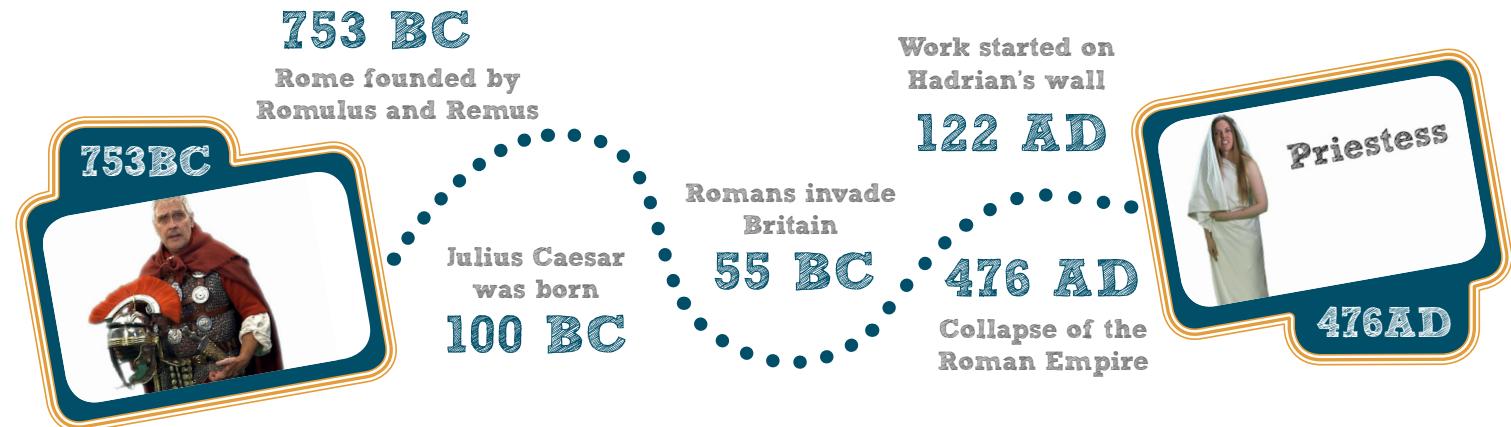
- **What it might have been like to go there.**
- What did a Roman town have that we still have today?
- **How was it different?**
- What would they like to have visited the most?

Either together as a class or with pupils making their own notes, keep a record of some of the key features of the towns as described in the films.

Now show **Roman Baths**. Ask your pupils what the Roman baths were for. Was it just keeping clean? They're sometimes there all day, after all. Then ask why the Roman authorities might spend money building such big bath houses for the people. You might want pupils to recall the discussion you had in the last lesson about building bridges and roads. Content, healthy people are less likely to rebel. At the end, record some of the key features again.

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Lesson 2 – Life in the Empire ...continued

Carry out a similar exercise for the last two films here – **Food** and **Gladiators**. Keep asking lots of questions about life in the town, drawing comparisons with our own lives. The gladiator trainer will be especially interesting. Surely we wouldn't go and watch anything so terrible today? Would we? Who might have become a gladiator knowing that it might end in death?

At this stage break the class into small groups – six groups would be ideal, but of course there are other ways of doing this exercise. Ask a group to find out a little more about

- Roman road-building
- Roman houses
- **Gladiators**
- Roman markets/shopping
- **Food/recipes**
- Public Health –water/baths/toilets and sewers.

Challenge each group to come back with, perhaps, five fascinating facts about their chosen topic. At the start of the next lesson, each group could do a short presentation on their findings and the rest of the class add to their record of the features of a Roman town.

To end the lesson, go back again to our enquiry question: What did it mean to be a Roman? We concluded the last lesson by saying where and when Romans lived and now we can say something about what Romans did.

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Lesson 3 – What did it mean to be a Roman?

Films to use:

- Slave woman
- Roman Priestess
- Which gods are which?

Start this lesson with the presentations prepared by the groups in the last lesson.

Other pupils should add to their notes of the key features of Roman life as they listen.

Now ask pupils to draw a plan of a Roman town, labelling as many features as they can.

It might be desirable to hand out a plan of the town and make the activity just about the labelling, if you have access to such a plan. In this case, the plan might have buildings and places named and the task would be about adding a sentence of information about that building or place.

Then draw all of this together with a few questions about life in the Roman Empire. Try to keep the tone as positive as possible – it was healthy, boys went to school, lots of food and other items could be found in the shops from around the Empire, and towns were impressive places to visit with lots to do and see. Then show **Slave Woman**. Here a Celt tells her story of how she became a slave and the work she did for her mistress. Ask whether this changes our view of what it meant to be Roman? It might be useful here to explain the different rights given to Roman citizens around the Empire, what it meant to be a citizen and what it meant to not have that status.

Then go on to show **Roman Priestess** followed quickly by **Which gods are which?** These films offer a final aspect of what it meant to be a Roman, so ask pupils what Romans believed in? How did these gods help them in their lives? These questions might start to get more abstract but pupils will notice that there were gods for all aspects of their lives, and that believing in the same religion does keep people together. To be a Roman meant believing in the Roman gods.

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Lesson 3 – What did it mean to be a Roman? ...continued

To end the enquiry, write a short essay that answers the question. They could write a series of paragraphs that start with:

- A Roman lived...
- People in the Roman Empire went...
- Many people would have liked...
- Some people who lived in the Empire...

There are other ways of doing this, of course, but the aim of the activity is for pupils to consider, after looking at all this material, what we mean when we talk about 'Roman'.

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Differentiation, assessment and reflection

Extension

There are opportunities in each lesson to extend pupils thinking.

- Some students could be challenged to rewrite the story of Romulus and Remus in the first lesson.
- Later in the sequence, more able students could be given jobs as group leaders in the research task.
- In the final lesson, pupils could be pushed to write other paragraphs, bringing in research of their own.

Scaffolding

- You could bring in some opportunities for role-playing some of the stories and people in the films before the writing tasks.
- New vocabulary and historical concepts should be displayed in the classroom.
- The essay at the end could be supported in several ways, but certainly the length of the written task could be reduced.

Formative assessment opportunities

- As pupils make their timelines in lesson 1, use the opportunity to check pupils' knowledge and understanding of the time period of the Roman Empire and what this means in terms of years and centuries.
- There is an opportunity to check pupils' learning during the group task in lesson two. Members of the group could be asked to comment on their findings so far.
- The group presentations will provide a further opportunity for formative assessment, both in terms of the presentations themselves and in the comments that classmates make about what they have heard.

Reflection

At the end of this sequence, pupils could do one further piece of writing, this time from the point of view of a Roman, either one living in Rome or a Briton living under Roman occupation. What did it mean to them to be 'A Roman'?

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Map 1 – The Roman Empire in 117 AD

