

YEAR 4 UNIT 2 – ROMAN BRITAIN:

What happened when the Romans came to Britain?

Related units:

Year 3 Unit 2: The Bronze Age and the Iron Age

Unit overview

In this unit, the children will learn about the Roman invasion of Britain and its impact on the lives of the Celts. They will consider whether the Roman settlement was a positive experience for all involved, and explore the long-term legacy of the invasion. They will use a variety of sources of evidence to investigate the topic, including visual sources of artefacts (the Vindolanda Tablets) and archaeological sites (Hadrian's Wall). The children will analyse written sources from writers such as Tacitus and Dio Cassius and consider why they interpreted events as they did. Wherever possible, take opportunities to link to prior learning undertaken in *Year 3 Unit 2: The Bronze Age and the Iron Age*. You may decide to incorporate a visit to a local Roman site or museum into the unit, and some ideas have been included on potential locations.

The Big Finish is a practical opportunity for the children to apply their knowledge of the Romans in a fun and engaging way. They will investigate how the Roman army was organised, before role playing a reconstruction of a Roman army drill. This session is included as the final learning experience within the unit, but you could cover this earlier if you prefer.

Knowledge, skills and concepts

In this unit, the children will:

- develop a chronologically secure knowledge and understanding of British history
- address historically valid questions about change, cause and significance
- construct informed responses that involve the thoughtful selection and organisation of historical information
- understand how our knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources
- note connections, contrasts and trends over time and develop the appropriate use of historical terms
- address and devise historically valid questions about similarity and difference.

Key vocabulary

Invasion, invasion, conquer, republic, empire, emperor, status, glory, barbaric, legacy, resistance, primary evidence, interpretations, conquer, client kings, centurion, tablet, Picts, heritage, forts, garrisons, camber, groma, impact, transport system, positive, negative, significant, representation, interpretation, legions, legionaries, auxiliaries, testudo, centurion, names of uniform and equipment.

Cross-curricular links

- **Art:** studying and creating Roman mosaics, Roman architecture, creating props for the Big Finish
- **Computing:** researching
- **DT:** creating models of Roman roads, aqueducts, catapults (trebuchet), writing tablets etc., designing coins, creating props for the Big Finish
- **English:** letter-writing, origins of words, Latin abbreviations, Latin etymology of English words
- **Geography:** researching Roman place names, map work, routes, transport systems
- **Maths:** investigating Roman numerals, the Roman calendar

Subject knowledge and teaching guidance

The Romans first came to Britain in 55 and 54 BC when Julius Caesar decided to teach the Britons a lesson for supporting the Gauls. However, they did not stay in Britain until Claudius invaded in 43 AD. In a few years, the Romans had control of much of southern England and, in 30 years, much of the west and Wales. However, their dominance was much less in the north, especially in Scotland. Overall, the Romans had control of about three-quarters of Britain. After some temporary successes further north, the border was the 73-mile Hadrian's Wall. Although there were Roman governors and administrators, many local rulers were left in charge as 'client kings'. They were largely left alone, provided they accepted the emperor of Rome and paid their taxes. There were rebellions – the most famous being that of Boudicca in 61 AD – although later troubles were often as much intrigues against the government in Rome. The army was dominant and much effort was directed to supporting it. Only Roman citizens could serve in the legions, but there were also many auxiliaries – many of them not actually from Rome. Although most people lived in the countryside, towns were established – some of them well laid out with walls, grid patterns and public buildings. These were either new or built on former Iron Age settlements such as Colchester, Silchester and London. Some were built largely for retired soldiers, e.g. Lincoln. Richer Romans lived in villas but this is not how many people lived at the time. Roman Britain also had a sizeable number of slaves,

and the treatment of women was often poor. Roman Britain reached its height in c. 160 AD. By the early 5th century, many Romans had left, and the links with Rome were largely severed by 410 AD.

This unit has a clear focus on the achievements of the Romans in Britain. It is intended that the children develop a strong understanding of how intelligent, organised and resourceful the Romans must have been to invade and occupy Britain for so long, and change things so radically.

The unit offers the opportunity to personalise your curriculum and use local sites where possible. The Historic England and Portable Antiquities Scheme websites are both invaluable in developing this aspect of your study. It is also worth contacting your local museum for support. To further enrich the children's studies, it may be possible to organise a visit to a local site or museum.

The unit is fully resourced with images of artefacts, but you may wish to introduce replica items where they are available. Contact your local museum to enquire if they loan boxes of artefacts, or provide workshops where the children can handle genuine artefacts. Local university archaeology departments may also be willing to support you in developing this aspect of the unit.

Related books for wider reading

- *The Leopard in the Golden Cage* by Julia Edwards
- *Across the Roman Wall* by Theresa Breslin
- *The Eagle of the Ninth* by Rosemary Sutcliff
- *V-Mail: Letters from the Romans at Vindolanda Fort Near Hadrian's Wall* by Katharine Hoare
- *A Roman Banquet* by Hawys Morgan (*Rising Stars Reading Planet*)

Places to visit

- A local Roman site (see Historic England/English Heritage for information)
- Grosvenor Museum, Chester
- Colchester Castle Museum
- British Museum, London
- Museum of London
- Verulamium Museum, St Albans
- Housesteads Fort, Hexham
- Vindolanda, Hexham
- Aquae Sulis Roman Baths, Bath
- Lullingstone Roman Villa, Eynsford
- National Roman Legion Museum, Newport, Wales

Assessment

Opportunities for assessment for learning are built in throughout the unit through questioning and activities. The children can both self and peer assess as appropriate using approaches familiar to them. The quiz is intended to be used during week 6, and will review knowledge, skills and concepts acquired during the unit. Two areas of The Rising Stars Progression Framework are assessed within this unit:

Assessment 1 focuses on: *significance and interpretations; understand how our knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources.* **This should be undertaken within week 2.**

Assessment 2 focuses on: *significance and interpretations; address and devise historically valid questions about significance.* **This should be undertaken within week 5. Detailed information on the tasks can be found on the key assessment opportunity sheets.**