

Romans

In this session the children take the role of Archaeologists, investigating the finds from a Roman site. They discover objects which help them to unravel the story of the inhabitants of a dwelling. Touching and discussing objects that are around 1900 years old, they piece together the evidence to reveal what life was like in Roman Britain. For example, the food they ate or the places they called home.

The children can test out a replica Roman 'gadget', demonstrating how the Romans used simple, but ingenious ways to make life easier. Some helpers will be needed to show how the Romans dressed. Who wore togas and why? How did a soldier's armour protect him? Why did a gladiator's helmet make fighting more difficult?



WHAT IS THIS OBJECT?

This is a samian ware dish. It is a type of pottery that was common throughout the Roman empire.

This dish is decorated with five vine leaves and was found in a cremation burial in Baldock. They are created by pressing fine clay into a mould and then the decoration is piped on.

FOOD OF THE ROMANS

Before the invention of bread, most Roman meals would be some form of pottage. This was a soup/stew that contained grain, pulses and beans, depending what was available. Later on they started making bread, eventually creating different types that varied in cost., white bread for the rich and then getting darker and cheaper for the poor.

The Romans tastes changed as the empire expanded and new recipes were discovered. They ate a lot of seafood. Oysters were farmed, but also snails and beetle grubs. Meat was reserved for special occasions and the wealthy. Romans would eat similar types of animal as we do today, but they also had some unusual tastes. These included cranes and dormice. The dormouse was so popular the government tried to ban it, so it wouldn't become extinct, however many people ignored this law.

Garum was a popular sauce, similar to tomato sauce or salt is to some people. A type of fish sauce, Garum was added on to most dishes and even drinks.

Suggested Activities: Roman Apple sauce

You will need:

500g of apples, core removed
One tablespoon of runny honey
One teaspoon of ground black pepper.

- ♦ Grate all the apples into a bowl
- ♦ Add pepper and honey
- ♦ Heat, stir continuously until it is bubbling,
- ♦ Eat. Enjoy!

(If you would like to make it even more Roman add a dash of thai fish sauce!)

The Roman world



OBJECTS WITH A MEANING

This is a Roman hairpin made of copper. It was a fashion item that was used to hold women's hairstyles in place. The cheaper versions were plain and carved from bone. This one is made of metal and has detailing on it which tells us it probably belonged to a well-off Roman woman.

The pin or bodkin shows a hand picking a pomegranate. This fruit was a symbol of the underworld because of the myth that tells the story of how Persephone became the queen of the underworld.

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Persephone was the daughter of Ceres, goddess of the harvest and Jupiter, king of the Gods.

One day Persephone was picking flowers in the fields near a volcano. Pluto, the god of the underworld, saw her and instantly fell in love. He kidnapped her, dragging the girl into the volcano and down into the darkest depths of the underworld so they could be married.

Persephone was so upset that she refused to speak to Pluto and she refused to eat.

Ceres, distressed by the loss of her daughter, cursed the land, vowing that until she had Persephone back nothing would grow. A famine took hold.

As time passed, Persephone was wasting away with hunger. Unable to bear it any longer, she ate half a pomegranate fruit.

Meanwhile Jupiter, wanting to restore order to the land, sent his son to retrieve his daughter from the Underworld. Mercury, god of messengers confronted Pluto and demanded the safe return of Persephone. Pluto refused, saying that she had eaten his food. If she left then she would have stolen the half pomegranate.

Mercury made a deal, as it was only half of the piece of fruit. She should spend half the year in the underworld and the other half on the surface. Pluto agreed.

So now for 6 months of the year, Persephone lives in the underworld with her husband Pluto. When she returns to the surface in spring, her Mother celebrates and makes all the plants and trees grow. However when Persephone has to return, Ceres cries. She stops everything growing, bringing on winter.

This is the Roman story of how the seasons were created.

