

Imperial Rome



Bronze head of Augustus
Roman
27-25 BC

Visit resource for teachers
Key Stage 2

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Before your visit

Background information

Early Rome

In myth, Romulus and Remus were the twin sons of the god Mars and a mortal priestess of the goddess Vesta. Romulus killed his brother in anger for jumping over the unfinished walls of the new city they were building and so became the first king of Rome. The Romans dated the foundation of the city to 753BC and calculated their dates from that year. Archaeological evidence indicates that people began to settle near the River Tiber from around 1000BC. They built small settlements on the Palatine and Esquiline hills close by the river. One of the main trading routes across the Italian peninsula at this time ran across the Tiber near these villages, and as a result they grew wealthy from trade. During the 8th century BC, the villages joined together to become a single settlement. This settlement gradually became larger and developed into the town of Rome.

Royal Rome

The early settlement at Rome was influenced by its neighbours, the Sabines, and Rome itself was ruled by both Roman and Sabine kings. In the 7th century BC, Tarquin I took control of Rome and turned it into a city. The Tarquins, who ruled until 510 BC, were Etruscans from north of Rome. Rome's position at a bridging point on the Tiber gave the Etruscans access to Latium and other regions to the south. The Etruscans introduced writing to the Romans, although the Romans kept their own language.

Republican Rome

In 510 BC, the reign of the last king of Rome came to an end. Rome became a republic ruled by an assembly of leading Roman citizens known as the senate. By the 5th century BC, Rome had become an important city. As Rome grew more powerful and wealthy it established settlements of Roman citizens (colonies) in the lands around the city. Then, in 390 BC, Celtic people from Central Europe captured the city of Rome and destroyed it. The Romans rebuilt their city and again began to expand until Rome controlled the whole of the Italian peninsula and overseas territory either through political alliances or direct conquest. In 44 BC, the Roman general Julius Caesar took over as sole ruler amid fears he would declare himself king. As a result, he was assassinated in March 44 BC and the Republic entered a period of unrest until Octavian, Caesar's adopted son, won control of Rome in 31 BC, became sole ruler and ended the Republic.

Imperial Rome

In 31 BC, Octavian became sole ruler of Rome. Four years later, in 27 BC, the senate granted Octavian the title of Augustus, making him the first Roman emperor. The senate continued to give advice about how the empire should be run but it was now under the control of the emperor. When Augustus died in AD 14, he passed the title of emperor on to his adopted son, Tiberius. Rome was ruled by emperors for the next 400 years. The Romans continued to expand the territory they controlled and built up a vast empire. Augustus made Egypt a Roman province in 31 BC, and the emperors after him added further territory to the growing empire throughout the 1st century AD. Some new provinces were gained by conquest, others by political agreement. The Roman empire reached its greatest extent under the emperor Trajan (reigned AD 98 to 117) when the Romans controlled territory in Europe, Africa and Asia. The next emperor, Hadrian (reigned AD 117 to 138), consolidated the frontiers of the empire and after his reign there were only small additions to the territory controlled by the Romans. During the later part of the 2nd century the Romans found themselves defending the empire against pressure from people outside the empire.

Later Rome

During the 3rd century AD, the Roman empire faced social, economic and political difficulties. In AD 395, the Roman empire was officially divided into a western and an eastern part and was never again ruled by a single emperor. During the 4th century AD, people from regions around the edge of the empire, such as the Vandals and the Visigoths, invaded the western empire and settled the land. The last emperor of the Western empire, Romulus Augustulus, was overthrown in AD 476 and Italy fragmented into many small kingdoms and states. Meanwhile, the eastern part of the Roman empire was ruled from the city of Constantinople (the modern-day Turkish city of Istanbul). The emperor Heraclius (reigned AD 610 to 641) changed the way in which the eastern empire was run and it became known as the Byzantine empire. In AD 1453, the Ottoman Turks conquered Constantinople and made it part of their Ottoman empire.

Resources

British Museum websites

Explore

Explore is an online database of over 5000 objects from the Museum's collection. To investigate Roman objects use the Explore option on the homepage:

www.britishmuseum.org

Ancient Civilizations website www.ancientcivilizations.co.uk

This is an interactive learning and information website with text, images and maps relating to a range of civilizations across the world and through time. The site includes information about the Roman world.

Books

For adults

Gabucci, Ada, *Ancient Rome*, British Museum Press, 2007

For children

Corbishley, Mike, *The British Museum Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Ancient Rome*, British Museum Press, 2003

Roberts, Paul, *Pocket Dictionary of Roman Emperors*, British Museum Press, 2006

Wiltshire, Katharine, *Pocket Timeline of Ancient Rome*, British Museum Press, 2005

Wiltshire, Katharine, *Timeline of the Ancient World*, British Museum Press, 2004

Woff, Richard, *Pocket Dictionary of Greek and Roman Gods and Goddesses*, British Museum Press, 2003

Gallery information

Room 70 contains objects which illustrate the rise of Rome from a small town to an imperial city which controlled the Mediterranean basin and north-western Europe. The gallery covers a period of approximately 1,000 years from Rome's legendary foundation in 753 BC, to AD324, when the emperor Constantine founded his new, Christian capital at Constantinople (Istanbul). Objects on display come from all over the empire. They range from stone and metal sculptures of emperors and gods to jewellery, silverware, pottery and glass, including the famous cameo glass Portland Vase.

What is it like to visit this gallery?

Room 70 is on the upper floor of the Museum and forms part of the through route which takes visitors round the upper floor. The gallery contains a large number of wall and free standing cases with a number of open display objects (principally imperial statues and busts). The central aisle of the gallery is a through route for Museum visitors viewing the upper floor though it is usually quieter at the sides of the gallery.

Case Numbers

Please note that case numbers are usually small, white and high up on the glass.

Preliminary activities

General introductory activities

- Locate the spread of the Roman empire on a map. Which modern countries are part of the empire?
- Look at Roman objects on Explore.

Activities to support gallery activities

- Look at a selection of modern coins. What shape are the coins, what materials are they made from, what pictures are used on the coins, what does the writing on the coin tell us?
- Ensure that the students are aware of the word profile when referring to a face which is shown from the side.
- Discuss the role of personal adornment – functional, decorative, display of wealth/status. Confirm vocabulary used to describe different types of jewellery, e.g. necklace, pendant, brooch, ring. Look at examples (real and in catalogues) of modern jewellery. What are they made from and how are they decorated?
- Discuss how different animals are found in different habitats. What animals are wild and what animals are kept by humans? Why do humans keep animals?

During your visit

Gallery activities: introduction for teachers

The gallery activities are a set of activity sheets which can be used by students working in Room 70. The sheets can be used as stand-alone activities or you may wish to develop work around particular sheets as suggested in the before and after sections of this resource.

- Where case numbers are indicated on a sheet, these are usually to be found marked in white numbers high up on the glass of that particular case.
- You are welcome to select the activities which are most appropriate for the focus of your visit and adapt sheets to meet the needs of your students.
- Each activity is designed to support the students in looking at, and thinking about, objects on display in the gallery.
- Individual activity sheets may be undertaken by single students, in pairs or as a small group.
- Where space is provided for recording this may be undertaken by the student or an adult helper as is most appropriate for the students involved.
- Familiarise the students and accompanying adults with the chosen activity sheets at school before the day of the visit. Make sure students and adults know what they are to do and are familiar with the vocabulary used on the sheets or which they may encounter in the gallery.

Gallery activities: briefings for adult helpers

Gallery activity: Face of the emperor

- Emperors would have statues of themselves put up across the empire. The emperor was also shown on coins where one side showed their head in profile.
- This activity encourages the students to study detail on statues and practise drawing a face in profile.

Gallery activity: Jewellery

- Wealthy Romans wore jewellery made from gold and precious stones. Jewellery could be purely decorative or have religious or social meanings.
- This activity requires both close observation of particular pieces and scanning across a number of objects.

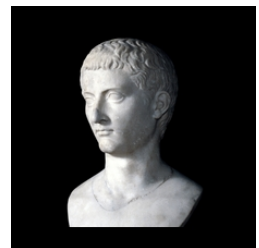
Gallery activity: Animals

- The Romans created pictures and figures of different animals found in different habitats across the empire.
- This activity encourages the students to collect information by looking across several cases.

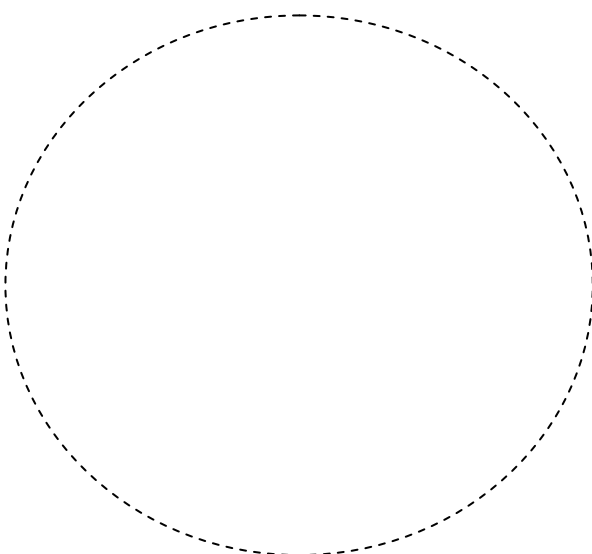
Face of the emperor

Roman emperors would have statues made of themselves which were displayed across the empire. This helped to make sure that everybody knew who the emperor was.

- Look around the gallery and find the three emperors shown below. When you find each one fill in the name of the emperor it shows.



The face of the emperor also appeared on all Roman coins. On a coin the emperor's head was shown in profile (from the side).



- Imagine that you have been asked to draw the emperor's profile for a new set of coins. Find another statue of an emperor in the gallery. Stand on one side of the statue and use the detail on the face to draw the emperor's profile on to this coin shape.

- I have drawn the profile of the emperor
.....

- Look at other Roman coins. Notice the way the emperor is shown in profile with information written around the edge of the coin.

Jewellery

Jewellery belonging to wealthy Romans was usually made from gold and precious stones. It might be worn on hands, arms, around the neck or in the hair.

- Look around the gallery and find an example of each of these types of jewellery. As you find each piece, imagine someone wearing it.

finger ring

necklace

earrings

hairpins

bracelet

pendant

- Look for the small animal brooches at the right-hand end of case 32. They are all made of metal and decorated with inlaid coloured shapes.



- This is part of the dog brooch. Can you find it?
 - What shape has been used to decorate the body of the dog?
 - What colours are these shapes?
- Look for the dove, panther and the rabbit brooches then draw your favourite animal brooch in the box below. Remember to mark on the shapes used to decorate the body of the brooch.

Animals

- Many different sorts of animal could be found in the Roman Empire. Look around the gallery and find these animals. Look in the cases and at the mosaics on the walls. Tick each one when you find it.

goose

fish

dolphin

horse

lion

scorpion

deer

octopus

crocodile

- For each animal decide whether you think it was a wild animal which lived in the natural environment or an animal kept by humans.

- Make a sketch of your favourite animal objects below.

view from the front	side view

- I have drawn a
- Look around the gallery for a further 5 minutes and see if you can see any other animals.

I also saw

.....

After your visit

Follow-up activities: introduction

Follow-up will encourage students to reflect on the work undertaken in the Roman gallery during their Museum visit.

- Some of the activities draw directly on the information gathered at the Museum while others encourage the students to draw on personal experience or undertake additional research in the classroom.
- Each activity includes a suggestion for classroom work and also an outcome which may be in the form of a written piece, drama presentation or artwork
- You may also wish to look at some of the activities available on the ancient civilizations learning website (www.ancientcivilizations.co.uk) which relate to your visit.

Follow-up activity: Face of the emperor

Curriculum links: history, art and design

- Using images from Explore discuss Roman coins with the class either on the interactive whiteboard or using print-outs in small groups. What can the students see on the coins? What information can we gather from the coin?
- Provide the students with an outline for a Roman coin and ask them to design a coin for one of the Roman emperors. When drawing the profile they can use the drawing they collected in the Gallery 70 during their visit or create a new profile using an image from Explore.
- This activity can be extended by asking the students to create a design for the other side of the coin as well which will need to feature a symbol appropriate to the emperor or ancient Rome such as a god or goddess. Examples can be found on Explore.

Follow-up activity: Jewellery

Curriculum links: history, art and design

- Ask students to study their gallery drawing or use an example from Explore. Use the drawings to make a class Roman jewellery catalogue.
- Compare with examples of modern jewellery – what is the same and what is different?

Follow-up activity: Animals

Curriculum links: history, art and design

- Remind the students about the mosaics they saw in the gallery – many of which had animals on them.
- Discuss how a mosaic is formed from small pieces of coloured stone.
- Ask the students to select one of the animals they saw in the gallery and design a mosaic with this animal at the centre. Examples of Roman mosaics can be found on Explore. The students could then make their design up using pieces of coloured paper or coloured tile.

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