Notes for teachers

Key Stage 2: Eating and drinking in Roman Britain

The final page of these notes can be copied and given to students who you think may need additional support during the session, or to adult helpers.

About this session
During this gallery based session students will investigate how archaeologists find out about the past by working with clue cards to locate specific objects, using a Roman recipe as the stimulus for finding out about utensils and food preparation, handling Roman pottery and extracting information from a single object. The students will work in small groups across Room 49 (the Roman Britain gallery) coming together as a whole class for the introduction, activity feedback and the plenary. The session lasts 45 minutes.

The Museum would very much appreciate it if students attending could wash and dry their hands before the session to help conserve the handling objects. We also recommend that students wash their hands after the session, particularly if they go straight into their lunch break.

Session outline
- The session begins with a whole class introduction to eating and drinking in Roman Britain and the role of evidence in helping archaeologists find out about the past.
- The students will take part in three small group activities across the gallery with short whole class feedback sessions after each activity. During these activities students will work in small groups using clue cards to locate specific objects and extract information about eating and drinking, following a Roman recipe to identify utensils used for food preparation in Roman Britain and finally handling/matching pieces of Roman pottery.
- The session will finish with a whole class plenary during which a single object will be interrogated to find out about elite dining in Roman Britain.

Key themes for this gallery session are eating and drinking in Roman Britain and how we can find out about the past using a variety of sources of information - in particular the use of excavated objects displayed in a museum.
- Key vocabulary includes evidence, archaeology, utensils, recipe, storage, preparation, cooking and pottery.

Preparing for your session
- Introduce/revise the key themes, vocabulary and chronology listed above.
- Make a timeline for Roman Britain and mark on major historical events.
- Discuss different sources of information (e.g. objects, written documents, and drawings) which archaeologists use to help them reconstruct the past.
Notes for teachers

beyond living memory. Think about how primary sources are made available to us today through archaeological excavation, preservation in an archive or display in a museum.

- Look for objects from Roman Britain under the Explore section of the British Museum website at www.britishmuseum.org Show them to your students on the interactive whiteboard and discuss them.
- Ask your students to browse objects from Roman Britain on ‘Museum Explorer’ in the Discover section of our children’s website Young Explorers www.britishmuseum.org/youngexplorers

Following up your session

- Undertake further research into what types of food would have been eaten in Roman Britain, how it was prepared and how people ate their food. This information could be presented in a non-chronological written account, via reconstruction drawings (what would a Roman kitchen have looked like and what food would be prepared in it?) or through role-play (act out the preparation and consumption of a Roman banquet).
- Discuss the importance of correct sequencing and clear instructions when recording a recipe. Ask the students to write a recipe for a simple, modern dish before asking a partner to read to check if it is easy to follow and in the correct order.
- Using a Roman recipe, students could create a recipe card with supporting illustrations showing the food being prepared. Students may find it useful to look on Explore to locate the particular utensils needed for each step of the recipe.
- Consider the difference between primary sources (such as those listed above) and secondary sources (history books, information on the internet or filmed reconstructions) where people have used primary sources to present their own view of the past.
- Students could visit the British Museum ancient civilizations website www.ancientcivilizations.co.uk and use the section on Roman Britain.

Galleries with related objects
Room 49: Roman Britain Gallery: a wide range of objects relating to life in Roman Britain.
Room 69: Life in Ancient Greece and Rome: Farming (Case 15); Transport amphorae for olive oil, wine, grain and fish sauce (between Cases 16 and 17); Roman Household Utensils (Case 11).
Room 70: Imperial Rome: The Chaourse Hoard (Case 31).

Curriculum links
KS2 History: Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings in Britain
An overview study of how British society was shaped by the movement and settlement of different peoples in the period before the Norman Conquest
and an in-depth study of how British society was affected by Roman or Anglo-Saxon or Viking settlement.
KS2: Eating and drinking in Roman Britain
summary sheet

In this session you will learn about:
• eating and drinking in Roman Britain
• how to use objects to find out about the past

Key words
- evidence, archaeology
- utensils, recipe
- storage, preparation, cooking
- pottery, rim, body, base

Object clue cards
• You will use clue cards to investigate objects in the gallery and gather information about different sorts of Roman food.

Roman recipe
• You will look for utensils in the gallery which the Romans would have used to help them when they were following a recipe.

Roman pottery
• You will handle some pieces of Roman pottery and learn some words used by archaeologists to describe pottery.
• You will look in the gallery for examples of Roman pottery like the pieces you have handled and find out about the different types of pottery used by the Romans.

Roman tombstone
• You will look at a Roman tombstone to find out about eating and drinking at a Roman banquet.