

THEME 4: THE ROMANS THROUGH THEIR POTS

This section takes the most ubiquitous archaeological find from Roman sites, pottery, and uses to explore Roman trade and its impact on local populations.

The following stand-alone activities can be used to inform the development of a large sculptural piece described in the Resources section.

AIMS

- To inform students about the geography and economics of the Roman Empire and to compare this with the modern world.
- To look at the various roles of coinage in commerce and propaganda in the Roman World.
- To look at the transfer of ideas, religion across the Empire.
- To develop an understanding of ceramic technology and basic clay working skills including the use of moulds.
- To develop an understanding of display and curatorial skills.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

Introduction & activities 1, 2:

Replicas and/or *photographs of:

Roman pottery: amphorae, Samian Ware, cooking pots, mortaria, lamps, *garum* flasks, flagons, cups, Roman altars, head pots, figurines of deities and votives.

Introduction: Roman clothes, ships etc

Activity 1: *Lists and more lists

Activity 2: A small block of wood for each student 10cm X 5cm X 5cm

Newspaper

A screw-in cup hook or screw-eye

Air drying clay

Activity 3: *Large printed map of the Roman world based on Ptolemy with the names of countries removed.

Two sets of labels, one with Roman names for countries and the other with modern names.

* See Resources section

INTRODUCTION: Trade & Transport

The Romans lived in large towns and cities where there were enough people to make mass production and marketing possible and profitable. These commodities in particular were widely traded throughout the Empire to meet this demand:



Mortarium, face pot and amphora, all pottery types introduced by the Romans.

Image © Graham Taylor, Potted History

	Olive Oil	Wine	
Sauce		Figs & Dates	Fish
	Pottery	Textiles	
		Slaves	

- How would this have compared with pre Roman Britain?
- Using the replicas and/or photographs consider how the commodities listed were traded across the Roman world, they were transported

MAIN ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: a pot for a purpose

The Roman army used a standard set of equipment and appear to have had specific requirements for pottery that was used for preparing, cooking, and serving food.

- Look at the culinary and domestic handling collection and discuss the uses of the various pots. What would be a modern equivalent?
- Consider the diets and living conditions of Britons, Roman soldiers and wealthy Romans. How these compare with the modern life of the students?

Activity 2: Religious expression

Using the photographs and/or replicas as a starting point, look at religion around the Roman world. What religions did the Roman introduce? Look at the way the Romans assimilated local deities. Consider temples, household shrines, dedicated altars, votive offerings.

Altars were used as a way of communicating with the gods. What messages do the students want to convey to their deities? How can they use the design of their altars to represent this?

How to make miniature Roman altars using air drying clay

- Wrap the wooden block in newspaper.
- Roll out a thin slab of clay, at least 11cm wide and 22cm long. Wrap this around the block to cover the four long sides and seal the edges together. Trim the clay flush with one end and leave slightly longer than the block at the other, leave the two ends open at this stage.
- Stand the block on the end that has been cut flush and fold in the slight overhang at the other end to create an in-turned rim, wet this rim and rub it to make it sticky.
- Roll out another strip of clay 5cm wide and 10cm+ long, lay this over the top of the block so that it is centred and the two ends drape down opposite sides of the block evenly. Press down on the top to fix the strip to the wet flange, closing the top of the altar.
- Now wet the outside surfaces of the flaps that are draped down the sides of the block and roll them up so that they sit like two scrolls on the top edges of the block. This is your basic altar.

- Customize the altar by applying symbols and patterns to the sides with additional clay, scratched designs etc.

Activity 3: Map of the Roman world

- Using the map identify the countries that made up the Roman Empire. Discuss the ancient names for places and the names we now use; many of them will be similar, why is this?
- Work out possible trade routes within and outside the Empire. What natural obstacles did traders need to overcome?
- Apply as many labels to the map as possible.

PLENARY/ONGOING LINKS ETC

- Working in groups the students make a selection of items from the handling collection and/or photographs and label them using the knowledge they have gained.
- Use the skills and knowledge gained to have a go at 'Gaius' Map of the Roman World' in the Resources section.



Where in the World?

Students from Burnside Community College, Wallsend, seek to identify European countries from Ptolemy's map.