

Roman Curse Tablets



Materials needed

Pieces of paper/pencils/container (well/natural spring) to 'throw' the curses into.

Information to give the children

The Romans believed that water could carry messages to the gods, and natural springs were treated with respect and awe. Sometimes altars or temples were built at these special places and messages written on thin sheets of metal were placed into the water. At the Roman Baths in Bath, 130 **curse tablets** have been found – many of them asking the goddess Minerva to bring revenge on thieves or enemies.

Instructions to give the children

1. Imagine someone has 'wronged' you – what have they done?
2. Pick a Roman god for help.
3. Write a message to the god, including:
 - The name of the god
 - The person who has wronged you
 - What they have done
 - What action you would like the God to take
 - Draw a picture of Mercury, the Messenger god.
4. When you have finished, fold the message up and throw it into the 'well'.
5. The 'well' will be excavated later on in the day/topic!

Optional note: to eliminate sensitive classroom issues....

- Make all of the notes anonymous
- Put all the names in a hat and everyone pulls out a name – this way EVERYONE gets cursed and nothing is personal!

Follow-on activities

Find out what happens to rain once it lands on the ground - where does the water go?

What is: a) a reservoir b) groundwater c) a natural spring

Search for your nearest natural spring by visiting *Streetmap* online and entering your postcode/town. Set the zoom level to: 1:25000 - any natural springs will be shown as: Spr- or Sprs. You may have to search for quite a long time before you find one!

Imagine your group are visitors from a different world. Pick someone in the group to be a tourist guide, who is showing the rest of you around planet earth. The guide must explain to the group what a natural spring is. Take it in turns to be the guide – how many different explanations can you come up with?