

What did the Romans do
for us?

▶ When the Romans came to Britain, they were unimpressed with our way of life. The Roman way of life was a lot more advanced and so the Romans brought lots of new things to Britain that we still use today.

▶ It is important to remember that the Romans didn't invent all of these ideas but they developed them so that they could be used widely.

▶ Watch the following videos to give you an idea of some of the things that the Romans brought to Britain

▶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/clips/zwjhfrd#:~:text=Many%20of%20our%20buildings%20and,all%20introduced%20by%20the%20Romans.>

▶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/clips/zxy3cdm>

Roads

- ▶ When the Romans arrived in Britain, it was run by Celtic tribes, who didn't have much of a road system. It was important for the Romans to be able to move their armies and all their equipment around quickly and easily. So they built roads that would allow them to march soldiers from one place to another by the shortest and safest possible route.
- ▶ The Romans built their roads in a very particular way. First, they would dig a trench, which they would layer with big stones, then pebbles and sand, then cement and broken stones, before using neatly cut paving stones for the surface.
- ▶ The roads would slope down from the middle to ditches on either side to allow the rain to drain away.
- ▶ They were unlike any other roads the world had seen before.
- ▶ Some of the main towns built by the Romans, such as London, Bath and Chester, were connected by long and straight Roman roads. The roads were so well built, you can still see some of them today. Many modern day roads are in the same place as Roman ones over two thousand years later.

▶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/history-ks1--ks2-explain-this-roman-roads/z7c8wtj>

▶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/clips/zdgrkqt>

Coins

- ▶ The ancient Romans thought the use of coins was really clever. They did what they always did when they found something clever - they copied it. At first, the Romans put pictures of gods and goddesses on their coins, an idea they borrowed from the ancient Greeks. Pretty soon, they began to put pictures of buildings on their coins. They were the first to add symbols like stars and eagles on their coins. Some of their coins pictured current emperors. These coins were supposed to help make an emperor popular.
- ▶ Our coins are based on a Roman design and some of the lettering is in Latin. Written around the edge of some £1 coins is the phrase 'decus et tutamen' which means 'glory and protection'.



Aureus 200 BCE-305 CE
7g, - 20mm



Solidus 310-693 CE
4.5g, - 20mm



AE3 315-400 CE
2.4g, 18mm



AE4 383-400 CE
0.5-1.5g, - 14mm



Denarius 211 BCE-241 CE
3g, - 19mm



Tremissis 380-367 CE
1.5g, - 14mm



Antoninianus 215-295 CE
3-5g, - 21mm



Siliqua 310 - 650 CE
1-3g, - 18mm



Sestertius 23 BCE-250 CE
20-30g, - 35mm

Central heating

- ▶ To most people, the knowledge of the Romans was that they "invented central heating." Not the type we know today, but a form of underfloor heating that also warmed the walls. There were no such items as radiators in the Iron Age, but they did manage to use a form of heating that was radical for its day. Up until the Romans arrived, the British only knew how to heat one room by using a fire. The danger from this was not only due to the materials in their homes, but also from the smoke that could become trapped and suffocate the dwellers through smoke inhalation.
- ▶ Rich Roman houses had central heating which was under the floors. This heating system was called a hypocaust. The floors were supported on stacks of tiles and hot air was circulated under the floor from a furnace stoked outside the building.

Sewage systems

- ▶ Roman toilets drained into the sewer pipes underneath them. Then the Roman sewers just dumped raw sewage into the river, which was better than leaving it lying around in the streets, but still did spread germs sometimes.
- ▶ The Romans didn't have any way of treating sewage to kill the germs, as we do today. And they didn't understand that germs made people sick.
- ▶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/clips/z8xtsbk>

Christianity

- ▶ Before the Romans came, the native Britons were **pagans**. They believed in lots of different gods and spirits.
- ▶ The Romans were pagans too, but they didn't believe in the same gods as the Britons. They let the Britons worship their own gods, as long as they were respectful of the Roman ones too.
- ▶ Christianity arrived in Britain during the second century. At first only a few people became Christian. When Christianity started to get popular, the Romans **banned it**. Christians refused to worship the Roman emperor and anyone who was caught following the new religion could be whipped or even executed.
- ▶ By the beginning of the 4th century, more and more people were following Christianity. In AD313 the Emperor Constantine declared that Christians were free to worship in peace. By 391, Christianity was the official Roman religion, but pagan beliefs were still popular in Britain.

Written language and numbers

- ▶ Before the Romans came, very few people could read or write in Britain. Instead, information was usually passed from person to person by word of mouth.
- ▶ The Romans wrote down their history, their literature and their laws. Their language was called **Latin**, and it wasn't long before some people in Britain started to use it too. However, it only really caught on in the new Roman towns - most people living in the countryside stuck to their old Celtic language.
- ▶ We've still got lots of words and phrases today that come from Latin. Words like 'exit', which means 'he or she goes out', and 'pedestrian', which means 'going on foot'.

Towns

- ▶ The Romans introduced the idea of living in big towns and cities. Roman towns were laid out in a **grid**. Streets criss-crossed the town to form blocks called 'insulae'. In the middle was the '**forum**', a big market square where people came to trade.
- ▶ After the Romans, the next group of people to settle in Britain were the Anglo-Saxons. They were farmers, not townspeople. They abandoned many of the Roman towns and set up new kingdoms, but some Roman towns continued to exist and still exist today.
- ▶ If a place-name has 'chester', 'caster' or 'cester' in it, it's almost certainly Roman (for example, Gloucester, Doncaster and Manchester). The word 'chester' comes from the Latin word 'castrum' which means 'a fort'.
- ▶ London was a Roman city too, although they called it 'Londinium'. When the Romans invaded, they built a fort beside the River Thames. This was where traders came from all over the empire to bring their goods to Britain. It grew and grew, until it was the most important city in Roman Britain.

Activity:

- ▶ We would like you to create a poster with the title ‘What did the Romans do for us?’. You can draw pictures to show all the different things that the Romans brought to Britain and write some sentences about them using the information from the powerpoint.
- ▶ There are also some more information sheets uploaded on the Year 3 page which shares even more things that the Romans brought to Britain.