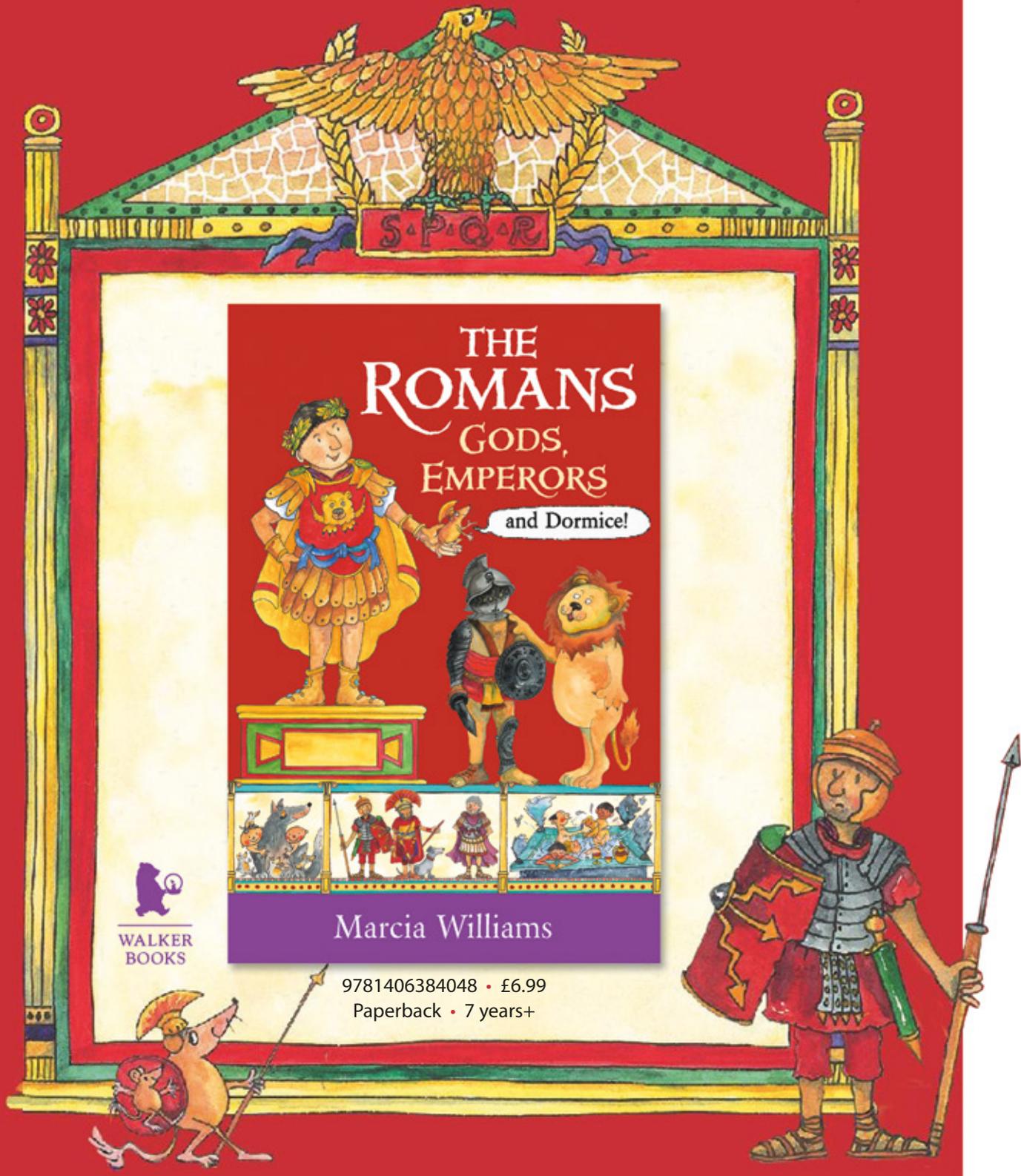


TEACHERS' NOTES

# THE ROMANS

GODS, EMPERORS and Dormice!

Marcia Williams



THE  
ROMANS  
GODS,  
EMPERORS

and Dormice!

  
WALKER  
BOOKS

Marcia Williams

9781406384048 • £6.99  
Paperback • 7 years+

*These notes have been written by the teachers at the CLPE to provide schools with ideas to develop comprehension and cross-curricular activities around this text. They build on our work supporting teachers to use quality texts throughout the reading curriculum. They encourage a deep reading of and reflection on the text, which may happen over a series of reading sessions, rather than in just one sitting. We hope you find them useful.*

## Reading aloud and key talking points:

- Share the front cover of the book with the children and ask them if they have heard of the Romans before. If so, what do you already know or think you know about the Romans? Collect the children's initial thoughts and ideas around a copy of the front cover of the text to come back to as you read and learn more.
- Create a class timeline that supports the children in seeing where the Roman Era sits within other areas of familiar history, such as the Stone Age, Ancient Egypt, the Shang Dynasty, Ancient Greece, the Mayan Civilization, the Vikings, the Anglo Saxons, the Middle Ages, the Tudors, the Victorians, the World Wars and the present-day and defines for them how long ago the Romans lived.
- Look carefully at the cover of the book and read the title. What do you expect from this book? What kind of book do you think it is? Do you think it is a fiction title, non-fiction, or a combination of the two? What makes you think this? You can also ask if there is anything they would like to know about the Romans that this book might support them to find out. Take a note of these points and come back to these if they come up in your reading or look at where else you could look for this information if these are not covered.
- Look at the title ***The Romans: Gods, Emperors and Dormice***. Do they know what Gods, Emperors and Dormice are? Discuss these key words with the children, clarifying meanings where necessary with dictionary definitions supported by photographs or images to support children's growing understanding of words in context. Do any of the words seem out of place in the title? What words come to mind when you think of god and emperors? Do these same words fit your perceptions of a dormouse?
- Look at the opening letter, starting on p.8 of the book. Think about the greeting ***HAIL, READER!*** What do you think this means? You could cross-check this in a class or online dictionary if the children are unsure, e.g. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/hail>. Now you know the meaning, how do you think this greeting should be delivered? Look for clues in the use of font and punctuation, and have a go at reading this in different ways together. Why do you think the dormouse has chosen to start the letter in this way? How does he perceive us as readers?
- Read the letter aloud. There is quite a lot of vocabulary in the letter which may be new or unfamiliar to the children, which will be key to children's understanding of the Roman era moving forwards, such as: ***gladiator, civilization, Ancient, ancestors, scroll***. Check the children's understanding and clarify these words with the children after reading, if necessary. After reading, ask the children to consider what they have already learned about the Romans from this brief introduction. What insights does the dormouse give us about how the Romans might have perceived themselves? What do you learn about what they did and how they might have behaved? What do you learn about their history? Go back to the text and highlight, text mark and annotate specific information that gives you clues about the Romans and their lives.
- Look at the sign off that Dormeo Augustus uses: ***Semper vale et salve***. What does this mean? With the Roman invasion, many languages took on the influence of Latin and many words in our language today have their roots in Latin. You could



### *The Romans: Gods, Emperors and Dormice Teachers' Notes*

© The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

You may use this teaching resource freely in your school but it cannot be commercially published or reproduced or used for anything other than educational purposes without the express permission of CLPE.

go on to investigate this more widely in spelling sessions. You could explore Latin roots and English derivatives such as:

Latin:	Meaning:	English derivatives:
pictura	picture	picture, picturesque, pictorial
villa	villa, house	villa, village, villager
magna	large, great	magnify, magnificent, magnitude
longa	long	longitude, longevity, long
prima	first	prime, primary, primitive, primeval
fama	fame	fame, famous, infamous
lingua	language	language, lingual, linguistics
populus	people	populous, population, popular
obscura	dark	obscure, obscured, obscurity
sub	under	subway, subterranean, suburban
trans	across	transport, transmit, transaction
antiqua	antique, old	antique, antiquity, ancient
figura	figure, shape	figure, figurine, figment, figurative
nota	noted	noted, note, notice, notable, noticeable
occupare	to occupy	occupy, occupation, occupational
quieta	quiet	quiet, quietude, disquiet
servare	to save	serve, conserve, preserve
aqua	water	aquatics, aquarium, aqueduct, aqueous
vulnerare	to wound	vulnerable, invulnerable, vulnerary

- Look at the letter as a whole again. Why do you think the author has chosen to include this at the start of the book? What is the purpose of the letter? What does it lead you to expect from the rest of the book?
- Does this give you any more ideas about the kind of book you think this is? Do talking dormice really exist? Do you think the information in the letter is factual? What makes you think this? Why do you think the author chose to use the dormouse to introduce the book and present the information?

## Chapter 1: From Muddle to Mankind!

- Read aloud the first part of the chapter, up to **...particularly the Ancient Greeks!** and give the children time to consider what they have heard. Again, check children's understanding of any new and unfamiliar words, such as: **conquered** and **conquerors, boundaries, vanquished, acquisitive**. What more do we learn about the characteristics of the Romans from what we have read? What in the text makes you think this? Encourage the children to go back and scan for specific language that justifies their opinions. You could text mark a larger copy of the text to record the children's thinking.
- Now read aloud the rest of the chapter. Come back together to explore the concepts that have been introduced. Consider the Roman creation story. How is it similar and how is it different from other creation stories that you know? Allow children of different faiths and backgrounds to share examples of creation stories that they know and look for common factors across these stories, such as the creation of people, animals and the world and the ways in which these are different. In separate read aloud sessions, you may wish to read and explore a wider range of creation stories from a range of faiths and cultures to broaden children's experiences. You may then be able to categorize these into stories with different patterns.



*The Romans: Gods, Emperors and Dormice Teachers' Notes*

© The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

You may use this teaching resource freely in your school but it cannot be commercially published or reproduced or used for anything other than educational purposes without the express permission of CLPE.



WALKER  
BOOKS  
walker.co.uk

- Re-read the story again, and this time think about the characteristics of the Gods you hear about. How did they behave? What were they like? How did they perceive themselves? How did they treat the humans and other creatures they created? If you were to summarize your thoughts and feelings about them in a phrase or sentence, what would this be and why?
- Record the children's ideas to come back to at a later point. How do your ideas about the Gods compare with your initial ideas about the Romans?

## Chapter 2: The Gods and Goddesses

- Read aloud the first part of the chapter, up to **for your own safety and well-being, not to mention mine!** and give the children time to consider what they have heard. Do they have any initial questions? Were there any words, phrases or concepts that they didn't understand? Look at words like **bribery, famine, pestilence, whims, sacrifices, capricious** and **revered** which are key to understanding more about the characters of the Gods. Take a moment to clarify the children's understanding together, working as a group to reach shared understandings.
- Come back together to discuss: What does this initial part of the chapter make you think about the Gods and their relationship with the people? Encourage children to draw on key vocabulary which helped them to shape their perceptions.
- Now read the rest of the chapter, stopping after each God that is introduced to summarize your understanding and thoughts about them. Keep short summary notes about each as you go, to come back and refer to.
- When you have read the whole chapter, come back to discuss the Gods as a whole. Think about the things that they were Gods of (war, love etc.). What do these things tell us about life in Ancient Rome, if these were the Gods that were **revered** so highly? What do you think were important aspects of Roman life and character?
- Support the children in their understanding of the relationships between the Gods by constructing a family tree showing their relationships and what each God was God of. You might decide on different symbols for this to make these aspects easy for the children to reference and remember. Demonstrate for the children how to go back and skim and scan for information from the text to check their understanding. Allow opportunities for the children to share and discuss any questions they have about the different relationships.
- Come back to talk about which Gods or Goddesses interest the children most. They may wish to do some additional research around their chosen God or Goddess and create a fact card about them to display in the classroom. Decide together on subheadings that could help them categorize different information about their chosen God or Goddess and which readers could then use to cross-reference information between the different Gods and Goddesses chosen. Talk about how to summarize information effectively so that readers can quickly grasp the basic information about each God or Goddess, e.g.:

### Mars

Parents: Jupiter and Juno

Siblings: Vulcan, Minerva, Diana, Apollo, Mercury

God of: war

Characteristics: aggressive



*The Romans: Gods, Emperors and Dormice Teachers' Notes*

© The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

You may use this teaching resource freely in your school but it cannot be commercially published or reproduced or used for anything other than educational purposes without the express permission of CLPE.



WALKER  
BOOKS  
walker.co.uk

## Chapter 3: Romulus and Remus and the Founding of Rome

- Look at the chapter title together. Have the children ever heard of Romulus and Remus before? Explain that this is one of the most well-known Roman Myths. Ask the children if they know what a myth is or if they know any other myths – they may for example be aware of some of the Greek myths if they have already looked at this period of history. Look at the definition of myth in a dictionary, or on an online dictionary, such as: <https://kids.britannica.com/kids/search/dictionary?query=myth> and talk about how we might be able to define when a story is a myth. Make a note of the children's ideas to come back to after reading the chapter.
- Now read the whole of the chapter aloud to the children. Come back to the ideas the children had about how to define whether a story is a myth. What tells you that this story is a myth? What features or characteristics does it have that would make this story fall into the realm of mythology?
- Think again about the story that you heard. Work with the children to define the big shapes of this story; the key events that are central to the structure of the story. Summarize these in an accessible way, e.g.:
  - Mars travelled to Earth to marry Princess Silvia. They had twin sons.
  - King Amulus, Silvia's uncle, was afraid the twins would grow up to reclaim the crown he stole from his brother, King Numitor.
  - When Mars returned to the heavens, Amulus threw the twins into the River Tiber.
  - The boys were found and raised by a she-wolf.
  - The boys were found by a shepherd, who brought them home to bring up with his wife. They named the boys Romulus and Remus.
  - After they are involved in a fight with local boys, the judge who comes to adjudicate recognizes the boys as his grandsons. He is the former King, Numitor.
  - Romulus and Remus return to their rightful home, kill Amulus and return the crown to their grandfather, Numitor.
  - The boys missed the wilderness and leave the city to build their own out in the hills.
  - The brothers' competitive nature results in them fighting over the greatness of their cities and Romulus kills Remus with a devastating blow.
  - Romulus takes charge of both cities and names the combined city Rome.
  - Romulus's desire for power leads him to expand the city by attacking tribes and taking land.
  - In the midst of a thunderstorm, Romulus vanishes. Rumours are that he was either assassinated by his senators or he was spirited back to the heavens by his father, Mars.
- Allow the children to map out these key events for themselves in groups on a story map. Then, explain to the children that they will be working together in groups to retell this story to the larger group. Make sure they know that the history of these stories has come through an oral tradition so, whilst it has to have the same storyline, they don't have to retell it word for word as it was in the book.
- Re-read the chapter again, pausing throughout to allow the children time to add any additional details around each key event that they think are relevant to the storytelling on their map.
- Now, ask the children to think about how they would describe this story to someone else. If they could use just one word or phrase, what would it be? Collect these words together to come back and reflect on.
- Looking at the collection of the words and phrases, think about how these might help us to prepare a retelling of the



*The Romans: Gods, Emperors and Dormice Teachers' Notes*

© The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

You may use this teaching resource freely in your school but it cannot be commercially published or reproduced or used for anything other than educational purposes without the express permission of CLPE.



WALKER  
BOOKS  
[walker.co.uk](http://walker.co.uk)

story. For example, if the children used words or phrases like 'dramatic' or 'full of twists and turns'; how will this help to decide how to use our voices to tell the story or how to pace the story? If the children don't have experience of hearing or telling stories orally, you may wish to listen to examples of oral storytelling, such as these versions of Aesop's Fables by accomplished storytellers Daniel Morden and Hugh Lupton: <http://classictales.educ.cam.ac.uk/stories/fables/>

- Give time for the children to prepare a group retelling of the story. They can do this in their group in any way they wish. They may choose to pass round sections of the story or to collaborate on certain parts.
- Once the children have had time and space to compose and rehearse their storytelling, allow time for each group to perform to the rest of the class, and a chance to reflect on and evaluate each other's performances.
- The children may wish to go on to record their stories to share with a wider audience, for example on a school website or blog.

## Chapter 4: The Seven Kings of Rome

- Read aloud the first part of the chapter, up to **...which made the great Roman kings increasingly powerful!** and give the children time to consider what they have heard. What do you learn about how Rome expanded? What do you think you know about the characters and motivations of the kings? Make a note of these ideas to come back to after reading the rest of the chapter.
- Read the rest of the chapter, pausing after each king to reflect on what you have heard and to summarize the information you have found out. Keep a note of this information to return to.
- Come back together to discuss some of the key ideas introduced in the chapter:
- Why do you think kings were prone to being assassinated or even vanishing into thin air?
- What achievements were made during this period? How did this enable the Romans to enhance their lives?
- What do you think is the role of a good king? What characteristics should a good king have? Do you think all of these men were good kings? Why or why not?
- In a separate History session, you could explore the other achievements and inventions of the Romans, and how these developed and shaped the societies they ruled over.
- Now, consider the actions of the final two kings. Servius Tullius created a class system in Rome. What does this mean? Now, take some time to think more deeply about the ramifications of this:
  - Why would a hierarchical system be of benefit to the kings themselves?
  - What else does this tell you about the characteristics of the kings?
  - Are you surprised that a man who was born a slave created this system? What might his motivations have been?
- Think about what Tiberius Superbus did to the poppies and what he said to his son: **"That's what you do to those who think they can rise above you."** What does this tell us about his character?
- Take some time to consider the continued divide between rich and poor. In 2016, the UK Government's State of the Nation Report reported that: "from the early years through to universities and the workplace, there is an entrenched and unbroken correlation between social class and success." What does this mean? What is the continued impact of the class system? Who does it benefit and who is disadvantaged by it? How do you think we could change society to become fairer for all people?



*The Romans: Gods, Emperors and Dormice Teachers' Notes*

© The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

You may use this teaching resource freely in your school but it cannot be commercially published or reproduced or used for anything other than educational purposes without the express permission of CLPE.



WALKER  
BOOKS  
[walker.co.uk](http://walker.co.uk)

- Finish by thinking about what happened at the end of the chapter. Why do you think the Roman people **rebelled** and drove Tiberius and Sextus **into exile**? What do you think will happen next? Do you think a new king would solve the problem? Why or why not?
- Think about how different countries operate now. Do they all have kings or queens? What other types of leadership are in place? What decisions need to be made in a society? Does a society need a leader? What would it be like if no-one was in charge? Who would be responsible for making decisions about how aspects of society operate, like education, health and transport? Can you think of any other ways Rome could operate without just one person in charge as king?
- In a separate citizenship session you may wish to expand children's knowledge about leadership by introducing them to the concepts of parliament and government. This video from UK Parliament gives a good introduction for primary-aged children: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qs-9B3FRXCA>

## Chapter 5: Rome, the Republic and the Beginnings of Empire

- Look at the chapter title together. Have the children heard the words **Republic** and **Empire** before? What do they think these words mean? Take time to share the glossary at the back of the book. Ask the children if they have seen a glossary before and if they know what a glossary is for. Then share the definition of these words in the glossary. What does your new understanding of these words tell you about how Roman society might move on after the rebellion? After reading the descriptions, do they think any changes will be for the better? Why or why not?
- Now read the first part of the chapter, up to **my Aunt Vera told me that!** What do you think the dormouse is saying about the qualities of leadership? Should a society always follow a leader, just because they are in charge? What powers do people have over their leadership in the UK today? How can people hold their leadership to account? If you watched the UK Parliament video, the children might talk here about the voting system and the ability to vote local and national leaders in or out of office. They may also refer to people's right to protest, if they have seen recent demonstrations about world issues on the news. The right to peaceful protest in the UK is expressly guaranteed under the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR). Why do you think the right to protest peacefully is important? How does this help people's voices to be heard in shared topics of concern?
- In a separate citizenship lesson, explore the European Convention of Human Rights in more detail, thinking about why this is important for the Council of Europe's state members and their citizens. More information about the convention is available via Amnesty International: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/what-is-the-european-convention-on-human-rights>. Amnesty International also provides lots of resources and ideas for exploring the subject of Human Rights more broadly, which you should go on to explore with your pupils as part of the citizenship curriculum. This will enrich and enhance children's understanding of some of the topics and themes touched on in the book. You can find these here: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/education/human-rights-young-people-schools>.
- Continue to read the chapter, up to **...Rome became its capital city** (p.82). Take some time to clarify the important vocabulary introduced in this part of the chapter, **republic, senate, consuls, lictor, democratic, ambitious**, using a dictionary and the glossary to support you.
- Come back together to consider the concept of democracy, introduced in this part of the chapter. Look at the origin of this word, from the Greek *demokratia*. *Demos* meaning the people and *-kratia*, power, rule.
- Do you think Rome was truly ruled by the people? Who made up the senate? Who was able to vote for the senators who made the decisions? Do you think these people were representative of the whole Roman society? If the leadership of the republic was going to be truly representative, how would the voting system and even the people who could join the senate have to change?



*The Romans: Gods, Emperors and Dormice Teachers' Notes*

© The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

You may use this teaching resource freely in your school but it cannot be commercially published or reproduced or used for anything other than educational purposes without the express permission of CLPE.

- In citizenship, you could extend this to explore the voting system in the UK, including the work of the Chartists to gain political rights and influence for the working classes and the Suffragettes' battle to win the vote for women from 1832-1929.
- Continue reading up to p.90, **Work was scarce and rents unaffordable**. Consider the word **barbarian**, used to describe anyone who wasn't Roman. Look at a definition of this word, e.g. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/barbarian>. Is it fair that the Romans thought that anyone from the outside was uncivilized and violent? What does it mean to conquer land? Why did the Romans want to do this? What would this have meant for the people who lived on the land before? Why do you think the Gauls might have attacked Rome?
- In a separate history session, look at those who fought back and resisted Roman occupation. You could build in a study of the Roman invasion of Britain and the resistance led by Boudicca, starting in East Anglia.
- Consider the actions taken by the senate at the end of this part of the chapter. What do we learn about those leading Rome from the actions they decided to take? What or who do you think the leaders were governing in favour of? Who was disadvantaged by the actions of the leadership? Do you think this was democratic leadership?
- Now read to p.92 ...**was very possibly true**. What do we learn about Julius Caesar? Consider the senate's decision to make him a dictator. What does this mean? Look at the definition in the glossary, plus a wider definition, such as: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/dictator> What more do you learn about the qualities of Caesar from these definitions? What do you think the qualities of a good leader should be? How should they behave towards their own and other people?
- Continue reading to the end of the chapter. Why do you think Cassius and Brutus hatched a plot to kill Caesar? Why do you think they thought he would **bring an end to democracy and the Roman republic**?
- Think about what happened after Caesar's death. What happened in Rome when there was no strong leadership? Why is leadership important in a society? What should a good leadership be working for?
- Consider the new emperor, Octavian, or Emperor Augustus. How was his style of leadership different from those who came before him? What did he focus on as a leader? What did his leadership do for the lives of citizens and their well-being and prosperity?

## Chapter 6: Roman Emperors - Good and Bad!

- Look at the chapter title together. What do you think this says about the period that lies ahead? Do you think Rome will continue to prosper and thrive? What makes you think this?
- Read up to the end of p.104 ...**all hail to his spirit!** What do you think the most effective leaders in Rome have been like? What have they done or focussed on? How does this compare to the least effective? Do you think the fate of a society rests on the effectiveness of its leader? What makes you think this?
- Read the rest of this chapter aloud. Stopping after each Emperor to summarize their leadership, clarifying any new vocabulary or concepts where necessary. How did they choose to rule? What did they focus on? What did they achieve? Did their choices make them a good leader for Rome? Why or why not?
- Come together to discuss the leadership you have seen across the book so far. If you were in charge of selecting the next leader for Rome, what would you look for in a candidate? What would you want them to be like? What would you want them to prioritise?
- Look at how this works in terms of democracy in Britain. Look at how each person running for MP in every constituency has to outline their priorities to voters. You could look at those eligible to run in your local area, compare their profiles and pledges and think about which would be most appealing to you if you were a voter.



*The Romans: Gods, Emperors and Dormice Teachers' Notes*

© The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

You may use this teaching resource freely in your school but it cannot be commercially published or reproduced or used for anything other than educational purposes without the express permission of CLPE.

- In citizenship, you could also look at the work of Youth Councils and how these exist to give young people the opportunity to have a voice, to discuss relevant issues, engage with decision-makers and contribute to improving the lives of young people within their communities. This may be something they may be interested in becoming involved with when they reach secondary school. Look at how this relates to any current in-school opportunities to become involved with, such as school council and how this system exists to give pupils a voice to discuss issues, contribute to decisions and improve the experiences of pupils in the school.

## Chapter 7: Rome at Work

- Before beginning this chapter, revisit the classes that Severus Tullius organised the Romans into: **patricians, equites, plebeians, slaves** and **barbarians** and what these terms meant.
- Read the introduction to the chapter, to the end of p.122 ***It is their quality of life that is a true marker of the empire's greatness.*** Consider this sentence as you continue to read aloud the first section of the chapter about slaves.
- Come back together to discuss what you have found out about slaves. Think about the idea that a slave ***was a slave for life*** the repeated idea that if slaves were ***lucky*** they may be granted opportunities available to other classes, that ***abandoned children could be brought up as slaves***, that ***fathers could sell their children if they needed the money***, the fact that ***there were slaves who were treated cruelly*** and that any slaves who were ***lucky enough to achieve freedom*** were identified with a special hat and were still unable to vote or to become a Roman. What do these descriptions suggest about the quality of life of people forced into the institution of slavery? Do you think that this is a good reflection of the ***greatness of the empire?*** Who would have benefited most from this system, and who did it work against?
- Think also about all the essential jobs that enslaved people were used for – working in mines or on building sites, in public buildings, for the government, and even as teachers, librarians and doctors. Does it surprise you that such people didn't have the most basic of rights?
- Think back to what you looked at in the European Convention of Human Rights. Go on to look at how the United Nations was formed and at the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that was announced in 1948. Article 4 of the Declaration states that: ***No one should be held as a slave, and no one has the right to treat anyone else as their slave.*** Why do you think an International Body came together to draw this declaration together? What is its purpose? How does it strive to ensure a better society for all? Look at the time that passed from the Roman era to the announcement of the Universal Declaration of Human rights in 1948. Why do you think there was such a long duration in time before this legislation came to be?
- In citizenship, go on to look more broadly at the importance of Human Rights. The Amnesty International resource: Learning About Human Rights in the Primary School provides excellent materials for looking in depth at Human Rights with children of primary school age. This can be found at: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/learning-about-human-rights-primary-school-resource-pack>
- Now read the section on ***Plebeian Family Life***. What were the living and working conditions of the Plebeian families like? Go back over this section, skimming and scanning for details that showed the hardships and dangers for these hard-working families. Think about the talents that these people had and the essential services they provided, as ***craftsmen, shopkeepers or on food stalls***. Reflect on this, and the essential services of the enslaved people. What benefits did these people bring to Roman society as a whole? Who benefits from their work and service? Do you think they were rewarded for the essential services they provided? Is this fair and a good reflection of the ***greatness of the empire?*** Look again at the repeated use of the phrase ***if they were lucky***. Do you think that these people could be classed as lucky in any way? Who were the people with the most luck and opportunity in this society? Did they have to work as hard for the opportunities they had?



*The Romans: Gods, Emperors and Dormice Teachers' Notes*

© The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

You may use this teaching resource freely in your school but it cannot be commercially published or reproduced or used for anything other than educational purposes without the express permission of CLPE.



WALKER  
BOOKS  
walker.co.uk

- Now read the final section on **The Roman Army**. What was life like for a soldier in the military? Who tended to join the army, and why might they have chosen to join? What advantages were there to joining the army? Do you think these advantages rewarded the soldiers adequately for their efforts? You could also explore the exclusion of women and why you think the Romans would not let women be part of the military. In history and citizenship, you could follow this up with a focus on the history of women in the military, looking at key dates and achievements such as the fact that women were not officially recognised as part of the UK Armed Forces until 1948 and that it was only in 2018 that women were eligible to apply for all roles in the British forces. You could look at the history and achievements of women in war using the Royal British Legion timeline: <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/stories/women-at-war>
- Come back to the sentence in the introduction to the chapter: **It is their quality of life that is a true marker of the empire's greatness**. Do you think that the working people in Roman society did have a good quality of life?
- In citizenship you could go on to look at the continuing social and economic disadvantage gap in the UK and how many people are in essential, low paid employment. Work together to think how a truly fair and democratic society could operate that rewards people for their service to society as a whole.

## Chapter 8: Rome at Play

- Read the title of the chapter and the speech bubble next to Dormeo Augustus. What do you think he means when he says **Play is a fine thing nibblers meus, but it can be a luxury**. How could play be seen as a luxury? Revisit the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and think about Article 24: **Everyone has the right to rest and leisure time**. There should be limits on working hours, and people should be able to take holidays with pay. Based on what you found out in the previous chapter, do you think all the people of Rome had this right?
- Read the opening sentence of the chapter up to **...more money to spend on relaxing pursuits**. Do you think this is fair? Why might the people who worked the hardest need more access to leisure? Do you think this is still true today? You could look at things like the price of tickets for the cinema, theatre or an art exhibition and think about whether these leisure pursuits are accessible to everyone or just to people with more money.
- In a linked geography session, you could go on to look at the availability of free access to leisure activities in your local area. Do many of the homes in your local area have gardens where people can relax and enjoy time outside or exercise? Do you have a library, park, free to use outdoor gymnasium, free entry art gallery or museum nearby? How costly is it to take part in leisure activities like swimming, going to the theatre or cinema, or visiting paid-for local attractions? You could go on to look at the Minimum Wage, the National Living Wage and the Real Living Wage (see: <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/what-real-living-wage>) and think about how many of these activities would be available to people on low-income jobs. If there is an imbalance of free and paid for activities in your local area, you could go on to think about how you could make sure there is a balance of free and paid for leisure activities.
- Now read on to p.151 **...at least by most men**. What view do you form of the patricians from reading this chapter? How do they behave towards each other? What are their attitudes and how do they do they behave towards others – especially those in the lower classes? What differences are there in the way that men and women, and therefore boys and girls are treated? In citizenship or geography, you could go on to explore the continuing inequality between men and women in today's society, in particular in the workplace where the gender pay gap and balance of men and women in the highest positions in employment continues to be in favour of men.
- Read aloud the final part of the chapter: **Feasts and Festivals**. What similarities did you see between Roman festivals and festivals and celebrations that we have today? Spend some time discussing different festivals and special days celebrated by the children and other leisure pursuits that people take part in and how these relate to the ways in which the Romans celebrated.



*The Romans: Gods, Emperors and Dormice Teachers' Notes*

© The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

You may use this teaching resource freely in your school but it cannot be commercially published or reproduced or used for anything other than educational purposes without the express permission of CLPE.



WALKER  
BOOKS  
[walker.co.uk](http://walker.co.uk)

## Chapter 9: The Fall of Rome

- Read the chapter title together. What do you expect from this chapter?
- Now read the chapter as a whole. Come back together to reflect on and discuss what you heard. What do you think were the causes of the fall of the Western Empire? What do you think the Romans should have learnt from their behaviour over this period of history?
- Now think about the current climate we live in. What can you see reflected in the problems of Roman society that are still evident in today's society? What do you think we could learn from to improve society moving forwards? What do you think needs to change for all people to thrive and lead a better life?
- Draw your ideas together in your own manifesto for a world that benefits all members of society fairly and justly.

### Drawing the learning together:

- Read the final pages of the book, which shares **10 Terrific Things You Didn't Know About the Romans**. Discuss these facts and children's reactions to some of the information they find out. Do they believe all the facts? Confirm that these are all true and begin to think about how Marcia Williams might have found out about all these and the other information in the book. Where do you think she would have got her information about the Romans from? What do you think she would have had to do before writing the book?
- Use this to start a discussion about how important historical research is to ensure that any information presented to others is reliable. Where could we go to find out more factual information about this era? How do we know which sources are reliable? How might we recognize if something is inaccurate or biased before we report it ourselves?
- Now, allow the children to begin to explore their responses to the texts shared through booktalk with the help of what Aidan Chambers calls 'the four basic questions'. These questions give children accessible starting points for discussion:
  - Tell me... What did you like about each text?
  - Was there anything that you particularly disliked?
  - Was there anything that puzzled you?
  - Were there any patterns... any connections that you noticed... Did it remind you of anything else you've read or seen?
- The openness of these questions, unlike the more interrogative "Why?" question, encourages every child to feel that they have something to say. It allows everyone to take part in arriving at a shared view without the fear of the "wrong" answer.
- Asking these questions will lead children inevitably into a fuller discussion than using more general questions. You may, for example, ask the children if they had favourite parts of the story, and why this was.
- Extend the children's thinking through more evaluative questions, such as: Why do you think she chose the character of a dormouse to lead you through the text? Think about how these books compare with a more traditional information text. Do you like the way she has chosen to present facts about the period in this way? Why or why not?
- Leave multiple copies of the books in the book corner for the children to revisit and re-read in independent reading time, by themselves or socially in a group.



*The Romans: Gods, Emperors and Dormice Teachers' Notes*

© The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

You may use this teaching resource freely in your school but it cannot be commercially published or reproduced or used for anything other than educational purposes without the express permission of CLPE.



WALKER  
BOOKS  
walker.co.uk

## After reading, you could also:

- Think about different ways to share your knowledge of this period in history. This could include turning your classroom into a class museum at the end of the work and using different activities to share information, such as:
  - Sharing the children's retellings of the Romulus and Remus myth in video, audio or live performances.
  - Presenting information about the Roman Gods, Kings and Emperor's to teach other people about them, their qualities, their achievements and their deaths or downfalls.
  - Sharing their knowledge of the class system built by Servius Tullius and how the social class system continues to impact today's society.
  - A scale model of the Roman Forum, with information about this thriving place at the height of its success.
  - Comparative diagrams or models showing the differences between how the rich and poor would have lived.
  - Models of Roman armour or weaponry, with information about the soldiers, how they lived and worked and notable battles.
  - A model of an amphitheatre or the Colosseum with information about Romans leisure pursuits.
  - Creating maps and informational presentations about the growth of the Roman Empire.
  - Sharing information about the achievements of the Romans, for example: developing straight roads aqueducts, advances in plumbing, the introduction of currency, using models, diagrams and writing about these.
  - Sharing information about the ways in which people rebelled against Roman rule, including the rebellion against King Tarquinius Superbus and Boudicca's rebellion against Caesar's invasion of Britain.
  - Talks or presentations on different aspects of Roman history to give at an open day for your class museum, where parents/carers or other classes in the school are invited to attend.
  - Articles on different aspects of the Roman era for a class magazine to give out at the open day.
  - Information about different aspects of the Roman era for a class blog or webpage to share information beyond the class museum.

## Other links to support the widening of historical knowledge explored in the texts:

The British Museum – Key Stage 2 resources on Ancient Rome:

<https://www.britishmuseum.org/learn/schools/ages-7-11/ancient-rome>

The History Channel – Ancient Rome:

<https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-rome/ancient-rome>

Dorling Kindersley Find Out! – Ancient Rome:

<https://www.dkfindout.com/uk/history/ancient-rome/>

The Museum of London – Pocket History: Roman London:

<https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/application/files/6314/5434/0203/life-in-roman-london.pdf>

BBC Bitesize – Roman Empire:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zwmpfg8>



### *The Romans: Gods, Emperors and Dormice Teachers' Notes*

© The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

You may use this teaching resource freely in your school but it cannot be commercially published or reproduced or used for anything other than educational purposes without the express permission of CLPE.

These Notes may contain links to third party websites. Walker Books does not endorse such website(s) or their contents and is not responsible for such contents and makes no representations or warranties regarding the contents, accuracy or functionality of such website(s).