

The Roman Legionnaire

Year 4

Theme: Romans in Britain

Please note this planning is part of an article written as a guide to using drama for learning. The full article is available on request.

Overview of learning:

- History: To explore in the impact of the Roman occupation of Britain
- Geography: To study how physical and human characteristics change over time.
- To develop a contextual understanding of people from the past

Interesting aspects:

- The Roman army and its methods
- Hadrian's Wall and the conflict with the indigenous people
- How Roman soldiers came from different parts of the world

Inquiry questions:

- What might life be like for a Roman soldier stationed in northern Britain?
- See end of document for further inquiry questions

Narrative:

A Roman soldier, stationed on Hadrian's Wall, sits alone in the barracks of a hill fort carefully carving a small statue of an elephant. As he carves he thinks of his home and his family, hoping one day to have children of his own.

Expert team: A legion of Roman soldiers

Client: The Emperor of Rome

Commission: To protect the northern border of the Roman empire in Britain

Other points of view: The indigenous people in the surrounding area on both sides of the wall

Tasks:

1. To study the Roman soldier as represented by a teacher in role (TIR)
2. To listen and discuss a narrative describing the soldier and his actions
3. To create personal items owned by the other soldiers in the barracks
4. To create the barracks through drawings
5. To represent through drama the legion and to investigate their training

Links to curriculum:

- History: The Roman Empire and its impact on Britain
- Geography: Human impact and physical changes over time, map reading, and exploring maps from the past
- RE: Contrasting religious beliefs of the Romans and the Celtic people
- English: Writing of different texts, such as letters home, reports of battle, rules and regulations

Steps:

Step 1: Introducing the context

Beside the teacher is an empty chair. She tells the children when she sits on the chair she is going to represent a Roman soldier, a Roman soldier far from home, sitting in the barracks of a fort close to Hadrian's Wall. As the children watch the teacher moves onto the chair. She sits quietly for a moment staring at something in her hands. Then she moves, turning the object over and looking

at it intently. After a moment or two she makes an action, as if she is carving a tiny line into the object with a tool. She then blows off the dust and looks closely at it again, a small smile forming on her lips.

This done, she stands up. "What did you notice?" she asks. There follows a short conversation where the teacher supports the class to use descriptive language. She encourages them to be precise.

She then asks them, "What would you like to know?" The children form questions - What is he doing? Why is he there? What has he got in his hands? - she listens, but doesn't answer.

Step 2: The narrative

The teacher invites one of the students to take on the role of the soldier (SIR). She asks them only to repeat what they saw, not to invent anything new.

As the student repeats the action of the soldier the teacher begins to speak in the voice of a narrator:

"He sat there all alone. Around him where the beds of his comrades in arms, empty now, but soon to be full. He stared at the object in his hands, made from stone, grey like the skin of the animal it would soon represent. He was good at this, he had practiced. First taught by his father, long ago, now he was the master. He hoped he would one day have children of his own and teach them in the same way. He turned the stone over in his hands, the strong body and stocky legs of the creature were now in place, the ears either side of the long oval face were well formed, and he started to pay attention to the trunk. Using his carving tool he began to make marks in the stone, carefully scraping and then blowing off the dust. Pleased with the result, he smiled."

The teacher then stops her narration and asks the students to discuss what they have heard, she reminds them of their questions. She is now outside the fiction, becoming part of the investigation - "I wonder why he is alone and not with the other soldiers?"

In this way she encourages them to speculate - maybe he's injured, maybe he's just arrived, maybe they don't want him with them. Drawing on their ideas the teacher makes implications - If he's injured, will he be allowed to go home? I wonder what is going through his mind if he has just arrived? Why wouldn't the other soldiers want him with them, what could he have possibly done?

in this way, rather than answering the students' questions, the teacher extends their thinking and encouraging them to inquire more deeply.

Step 3: Bringing in the other soldiers

"I wonder what the other soldiers have with them that reminds them of home?" Discussion.

Step 4: Creating personal items owned by the other soldiers in the barracks

"Please take one of these small bits of paper and spend a little time drawing something you think a soldier might have with them, something personal, something they wouldn't want to lose. I suppose it might be valuable in the sense of being made of a valuable material, like silver, but its true value will be in what it means to them." Students draw images, the teacher suggests looking in the topic books or online if they are short of ideas. She walks round supporting those who need help.

Step 5: Developing the soldiers' backgrounds

"When you're ready could you make a note on the back about your soldier, how old he is, what part of the empire he come from, how long has he been in the army. Then, why is this object important to him, who gave it to him, perhaps it was a gift, and where he keeps it safe."

Step 6: Creating the barracks through drawings

Using a large sheet of paper the students start drawing out how the barracks are arranged. The teacher shows them images from the internet: <https://romanrecruit.weebly.com/barracks-and-duties.html> - <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/463237511656015008/?lp=true> - <http://dickschmitt.com/travels/England/hadrianswall/barracks.html> - <http://www.saalburgmuseum.de/museum/pics/stube450.jpg> - <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/62/91/44/629144e7bc278edd00e063fe3b8824ad.jpg> - <http://lostfort.blogspot.co.uk/2009/05/room-sharing-roman-style.html>

Step 7: Representing through drama the legion and investigating their training

"What do the soldiers look like when they are on duty?" There is a discussion, followed by examples provided by the students and guided by the teacher. She is looking to develop an understanding about discipline and personal control. Working with the students' ideas and providing them with further information, there follows an investigation about how Roman soldiers trained and worked together. The teacher stresses the importance of working in formation (she uses a guide from the internet <http://www.romanarmy.net/pdf/Members%20Handbook%20%28Part%206%29-Drill%20Manual.pdf>) She contrasts this with the individualism of the Celtic tribes and their reliance on personal bravery. Looking for opportunities to use Heathcote's model to deepen the inquiry.

For example:

The soldiers practice moving in formation - Action
To become a more effective fighting body - Motivation
This takes time and endurance - Investment
They are drilled by their centurion - Model
Above all else power and order are important in battle - Values

Further planning ideas

- Investigate the marks and scars carried by the soldiers. What do they mean, where were they picked up, what was happening at the time? Discussion, possibly enactive, opportunity for writing (battle report, mentioning acts of heroism?).
- Explore the rest of the barracks, the different buildings and their purpose, the chores of the soldiers (repairing walls, guard duty, cooking and cleaning). Rules, regulations, punishments. Organisation, hierarchy, orders, reputation of the senior officers (are they draconian, do they take unnecessary risks, can they be trusted to make the right decisions), what do the soldiers say about them?
- Letters home. Life on the Wall, battles with the enemy, information about the land, the people and the weather, experiences, feelings, questions about home, news, descriptions of events and colleagues, complaints, hopes and wishes.