

Roman York: Meet the People of the Empire

Teachers Exhibition Pack



Chronology: The Romans

**Yorkshire
Museum**

Contents

Section One: How to use this resource -----	3
Section Two: Introduction to Roman York -----	5
Section Three: Star Objects -----	6

Section One: How to use this resource

This resource will help you get the most out of a visit to our Roman galleries at the Yorkshire Museum. It contains:

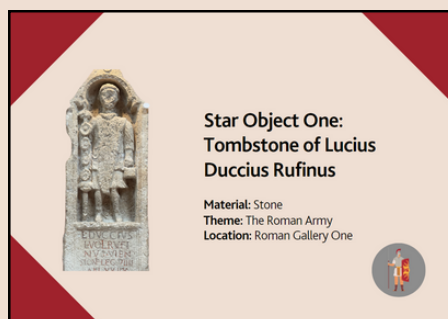
- An introduction to the **Roman York: Meet the People of the Empire** exhibition.
- Information about ten **Star Objects** in the exhibition, which you **may wish** to look at with your pupils when visiting.

You can use this resource to familiarise yourself with our Roman galleries **before your visit**. You may also find it helpful to **share** these notes with the other **adults** who will be accompanying the class on your visit to the museum.

Please be aware that this resource contains images of human remains.

Flash cards

A condensed version of these notes is available to borrow on the day of your visit. These come as a set of **flash cards**, which you can use to guide your pupils around the Star Objects in our Roman galleries.



Each Star Object corresponds to one of the themes that can be found within our Roman galleries. These are:



People and Romanisation



Pastimes and Fashion



The Roman Army



Myths and Beliefs



Emperors

Curriculum Links

A visit to our Roman galleries can be used to cover the following curriculum areas:

Key Stage Two

Pupils should be taught about:

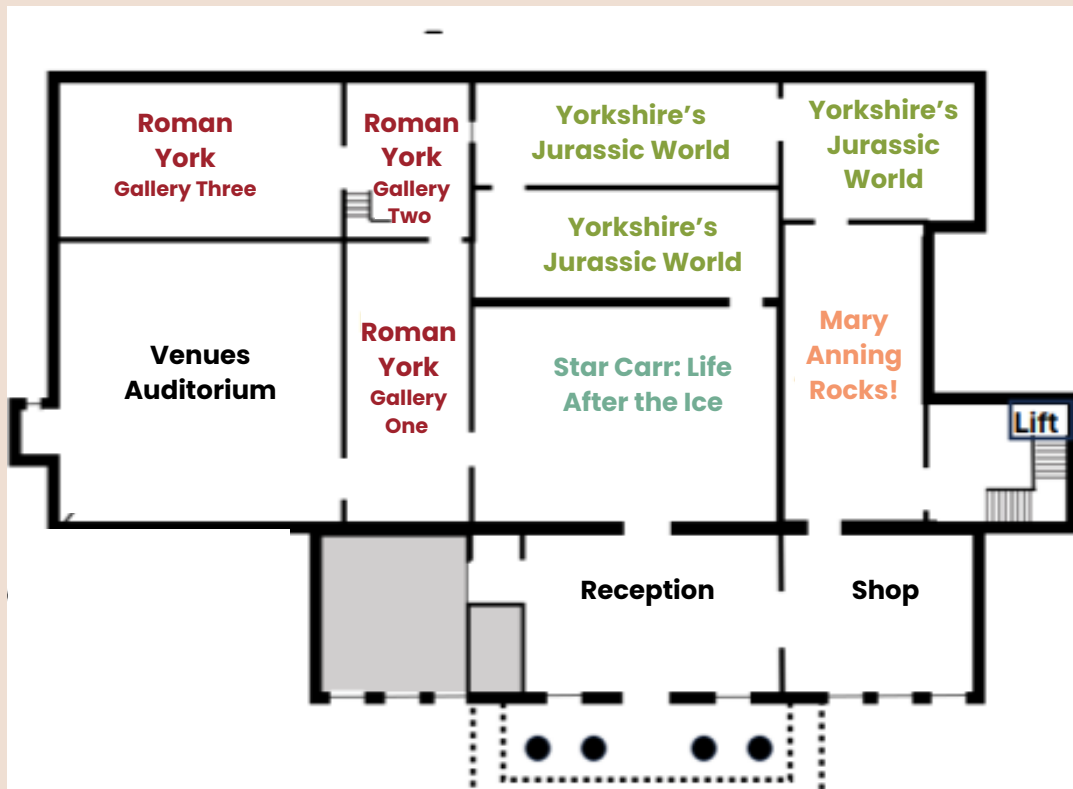
- The Roman Empire and its impact on Britain

This could include:

- The Roman Empire by AD42 and the power of its army
 - Successful invasion by Claudius and conquest
 - British resistance
 - 'Romanisation' of Britain: the impact of technology, culture and beliefs, including early Christianity
- A local history study

Gallery Map

The **Roman York: Meet the People of the Empire** exhibition is split into three rooms. A full map of the Yorkshire Museum can be downloaded from our [website](#).



Section Two: Introduction to Roman York

The development of Roman York

- The Roman army arrived in the north of England in 71AD. Northern England, as far as the Scottish Lowlands, was inhabited by the **Brigantes**. The Brigantes were ruled by **Queen Cartimandua** who favoured good relations with Rome. Her husband **Venutius**, however, wanted to resist the Romans and launched a rebellion against his wife.
- The **Ninth Legion** was sent from Lincoln to support Cartimandua. To control the area, the legion built a **fortress** between the **Rivers Ouse** and **Foss**.
- A **civilian** settlement grew up around the fortress, which supplied the soldiers with food and goods. This grew into a more developed town with **baths** and, possibly, an **amphitheatre** for gladiatorial games.
- The Romans called this settlement **Eboracum**. This may have come from a British word meaning '*the place of the yew trees*'.
- When the **emperor Caracalla** (198-217AD) divided Britain into two regions, Eboracum became the **provincial capital** of northern Britain (*Britannia Inferior*).

People of the Empire

- People travelled from different parts of the empire to work and live in Eboracum. The tombstone of **Lucius Duccius Rufinus (Star Object One)** tells the story of a soldier from the Ninth Legion who was originally born in France and died in Eboracum at the age of 28.
- Though on the empire's frontier, Eboracum became the centre of the Roman world when emperors visited. For example, the **emperor Septimius Severus** visited the city between 208-211AD and brought fashions from **North Africa (Star Object Three)** and religious beliefs from **Egypt (Star Object Seven)** with him.

Everyday life

- The artefacts in our galleries tell stories about Eboracum's inhabitants. For example, the discovery of **gaming counters** in a Roman **sewer (Star Object Four)**, tells us that people went to the public baths to socialise as well as to get clean.
- Whilst goods, such as pottery and foodstuffs, were brought into Eboracum from across the empire, materials made in the city were also sold overseas. **Jet**, a black gemstone, was mined by the Romans in **Whitby**. Craftsmen in York then used jet to make decorative objects like hair pins, rings, and brooches (**Star Object Ten**), which were then sold.

Section Three: Star Objects

The **Star Objects** listed below have been chosen because they can provide us with an intriguing insight into life in Eboracum.

Each Star Object comes with:

- A brief **description** of the object, the **materials** used to make it, and why we think it is **important**.
- Suggested **enquiry questions** which you can use to lead a discussion with your pupils. Some of these are designed to be shared with pupils **before** the object information.

Flash cards

A condensed version of these notes is available to borrow on the day of your visit. These come as a set of **flash cards**, which you can use to guide your pupils around the Star Objects in our Roman galleries.



**Star Object One:
Tombstone of Lucius
Duccius Rufinus**

Material: Stone
Theme: The Roman Army
Location: Roman Gallery One



The image shows a stone relief of a Roman soldier standing in a niche, with a Latin inscription below. The inscription reads: EDVCCIVS / EVOLRVET / NVS AVIEN / SIGA LEG VIII / ARI VV IXX. To the right of the relief is a circular icon of a Roman soldier in full armor, holding a spear and a shield.

Star Object One: Tombstone of Lucius Duccius Rufinus

Material: Stone; **Theme:** The Roman Army; **Location:** Roman Gallery One

What is it?

- This is the **tombstone** of a soldier named Lucius Duccius Rufinus. He was a **signifier** (standard bearer).
- The signifier's role in battle was to ensure that soldiers knew where their officers were, and to keep the men's spirits up.
- Lucius carries the **standard** in his right hand and holds a small **box** in his left. This box might refer to the responsibility signifier's had for the **pay** and **finances** of their unit.
- The inscription on the tombstone reads :*"Lucius Duccius Rufinus, son of Lucius, of the Voltinian tribe, from Vienne, standard bearer of the Ninth Legion, 28 years old. He is laid here"*.

Why is it important?

- The tombstone shows how Roman soldiers in Eboracum often came from different parts of the empire, in this case **France** (which the Romans called **Gaul**).
- Lucius is shown wearing a **torque** around his neck. Torques were metal neck rings that were commonly worn by Gallic peoples.

Enquiry question

- Look at the objects Lucius is holding. What can these tell us about his role in the army?
- Can you find any other places in the empire that Roman soldiers served before coming to Eboracum?



Star Object Two: Samian ware

Material: Pottery; **Theme:** Pastimes and Fashion; **Location:** Roman Gallery One

What is it?

- Samian ware was an expensive type of pottery which was mainly used to present food. Because of its cost, it would only have been used by Eboracum's wealthy inhabitants. It was largely produced in factories in Gaul (France). Popular designs included scenes of gladiators, hunting, parties and nature.
- These pieces of Samian ware show us that the wealthy inhabitants of Eboracum liked to keep up with Roman fashions, and they imported objects they wanted from different parts of the empire.

Why is it important?

- The **grave goods** that this woman was buried with provide evidence for how Eboracum was **connected** to the wider Roman Empire.

Enquiry question

- What patterns and decorations can you see on these objects? What can these tell us about the people who used them?



Star Object Three: Head Pot

Material: Pottery; **Theme:** People and Romanisation, Emperors;

Location: Roman Gallery One

What is it?

- This style of pottery was brought to Eboracum from **North Africa** by **Emperor Septimius Severus**, who visited the city in 208AD. Severus was born in **Leptis Magna** in the Roman province of **Africa** (Libya).
- It is likely that potters from North Africa travelled with the emperor and made pots resembling his son, **Caracalla**, as well as his wife, **Julia Domna**.
- Head pots, like this, were often used to bury the **cremated** remains of people.

Why is it important?

- This pot is evidence for how fashions travelled from one part of the Roman Empire to the other.

Enquiry question

- Who do you think is represented on this pot?



Star Object Four: Roman Gaming Pieces

Material: Bone, glass; **Theme:** Pastimes and Fashion;

Location: Roman Gallery Two

What is it?

- The objects we discover can tell us fascinating stories about what life was like in Eboracum. These gaming pieces – **counters** made of **glass** and **stone** and a **bone die** – were discovered in one of Eboracum's **sewers**. We think that they were lost by someone visiting the **city baths**.

Why is it important?

- These objects show us that Romans liked to play **games** to pass the time. They also tell us that going to the baths was a chance to **socialise** with friends and acquaintances, as well as getting clean.

Enquiry questions

- Are there any other objects nearby that the Romans used when visiting the baths?
- What are some things that you like to do to socialise? How is this different to socialising in the Roman times?



Star Object Five: Legionary Column

Material: Stone; **Theme:** The Roman Army; **Location:** Roman Gallery Two

What is it?

- Strong **columns** like this were created to support the roofs of the large stone buildings that were constructed in the Roman **fortress** at Eboracum.
- The Ninth Legion began the work of building the fortress when they arrived in the area that became York in 71AD.
- It is estimated that 60,000 tonnes of **limestone** were used to build the walls of the fortress alone.

Why is it important?

- The large stone buildings and walls of the fortress would have sent a clear message to local people about the **power** of Rome and its army.
- This object reflects that the Roman army wasn't just made up of soldiers. It also contained **specialist craftsmen** and **builders**.

Enquiry questions

- How would you describe the surface of the column? Can this give us a clue about where in the fortress it might have stood?
- Take a look around this room. Can you find any other objects that were made by Roman soldiers?



Star Object Six: Serapis Stone

Material: Stone; **Theme:** Myths and Belief; **Location:** Roman Gallery Two

What is it?

- The writing on this stone tells us that Claudius Hieronymus, the **Legate** (leader) of the **Sixth Legion**, paid for the construction of a temple to the god **Serapis** in Eboracum.
- Serapis was a god who was originally worshipped in **Egypt**. We know that **Emperor Septimius Severus**, who visited York in 208AD, worshipped Serapis. It is likely, therefore, that Claudius built the temple to **please** the emperor.

Why is it important?

- Inscriptions like this one provide **evidence** for some of the most important **buildings** in Eboracum – even if we haven't discovered the remains of the building itself.
- This inscription shows that gods from **across the Roman Empire** were worshipped in Eboracum.

Enquiry question

- Can you find evidence for other gods who were worshipped in Eboracum?



Star Object Seven: Head of Constantine

Material: Marble; **Theme:** Emperors; **Location:** Roman Gallery Three

What is it?

- Constantine was proclaimed emperor in Eboracum by the Roman army in 306AD. The city celebrated by changing an existing statue - probably of **Hercules**, a mythical hero famed for his strength and **power**, - to look like him.
- We know this is a statue of Constantine due to the **oak-leaf crown** on his head and because he has **no beard**. By studying coins - which often show the faces of emperors - we know that Constantine was the first emperor since Trajan (98-117AD) not to wear a beard.

Why is it important?

- Constantine was one of the most important Roman emperors. He founded the city of **Constantinople** (now Istanbul, Turkey) and played an important role in converting the Roman Empire to **Christianity**.

Enquiry question

- Take a close look at the object. How can you tell it shows someone important and powerful?
- Can you find any other objects in this room that show the faces of Roman emperors?



Star Object Eight: Four Seasons Mosaic

Material: White limestone, red brick, black stone; **Theme:** Pastimes and Fashion; Location: Roman Gallery Three

What is it?

- This **mosaic** was discovered in the remains of a Roman house. Mosaics were **expensive**, and were made by **specialist artists** who used small squares (**tesserae**) to make a picture.
- The four figures on the mosaic are **gods** that represent the **four seasons**. Spring is symbolised by a small **bird** (a swallow), summer by **grapes**, autumn by a **rake**, and winter by a **bare branch**.

Why is it important?

- The mosaic shows us how rich Romans **decorated** their homes. Two other mosaics have been found in the house where this object was discovered. This suggests that someone **important** lived there.

Enquiry question

- Look at the four characters on the mosaic. Each one represents one of the four seasons. Which season do you think each character represents?
- What do you think would have been shown in the mosaic's central panel?



Star Object Nine: Medusa Pendant

Material: Jet; **Theme:** Myths and Belief; **Location:** Roman Gallery Three

What is it?

- **Jet**, a black gemstone, was mined by the Romans from **Whitby**. It was then brought to York where it was made into goods that could be sold. The Romans thought that jet had **magical properties**, and they believed that using it to carve jewellery with **spirits** and **gods** would enhance its power.
- This pendant has been decorated with the face of **Medusa**. Medusa was a mythical creature who had snakes for hair and turned anyone who looked at her into stone. We think that the pendant was designed to protect the wearer from **evil spirits**.

Why is it important?

- This object provides information about Roman **beliefs**. They believed that evil spirits were active in the world and that magical objects were needed to provide **protection**.

Enquiry question

- Can you find any other objects made of jet in this room?

