



# Making Roman Ink

The Romans used many different materials to write with and write on. In this activity you can have a go at making Roman ink and learn some simple words in Latin.

## You will need:

- 5 teaspoons of soot (you can make this by grinding up sticks of charcoal. Fine soot is best)
- 2 teaspoons of gum (gum arabic can be bought in most art shops)
- 4 teaspoons of vinegar
- Paper
- A dipping pen, preferably a feather quill or replica metal stylus
- A mixing pot and stirrer

## Activity:

- 1 Measure 5 teaspoons of soot into a mixing pot
2. Add 2 teaspoons of gum to the soot and stir gently
3. Pour out 4 teaspoons of vinegar and mix these into the sooty paste
4. Dip the end of the feather quill into your ink mixture
5. Write! Try to use some Latin phrases for that authentic Roman touch! (see attached for suggested phrases for a Roman style postcard)

## Useful questions:

- Why is gum added to the recipe?
- Would your Roman writing survive under the ground?
- How do we know the Romans wrote like this?

## Research Opportunities:

- Words and phrases in Latin
- Roman numerals
- How organic materials such as paper decay

## Useful Websites:

[www.vindolanda.com](http://www.vindolanda.com) - archaeological site where writing tablets have been discovered and the messages on them preserved and translated

[www.bbc.co.uk/schools/romans/families.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/romans/families.shtml)

[www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass](http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass)

Latin phrases

The Romans spoke a language called Latin. Can you use the words and phrases below to write a letter to someone? Good Luck!

English	Latin
Hello	salve
How are you?	ut vales?
I am well	bene valeo
I am not well	non ita bene
I am happy	ego laeta sum (if you're a girl)
I am happy	ego laetus sum (if you're a boy)
I am going	vado
I am writing	scribo
these words	haec verba
in Latin	linguam Latinam
by the sea	ad mare
in the country	ruri
I have...	mihi est
been swimming	natare
been playing football	ludere pedifollis
For lunch I ate...	prandium edo ...
Tomorrow	dies crastinus
Every day	in dies
Here	hic
I am	sum
We are	sumus
They are	sunt
There is	est
It keeps on raining	imber tenet
The weather is hot	caelum calidum est
The weather is cold	caelum frigidum est
To	ad
Goodbye	vale
Wish you were here	volo ut hic fueris

	National Curriculum	QCA Unit
<b>KS 1</b>	Science: Sc1; Sc3 History: 2b; 4a, b; 5b English: En3	Science: 1c
<b>KS 2</b>	Science: Sc1; Sc3 History: 2a, b; 4a; 5b; 9 English: En3	History: 6A Science: 3c; 6d

This activity was donated by the Young Archaeologists Club.

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Young Archaeologists' Club

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