



# CLASSICS NEWSLETTER

*This is the newsletter for anything to do with ancient Mediterranean cultures, including Greece, Rome, Egypt and the Persian empire.*

## Ancient Egypt's boy-king:

This edition's cover image is taken from the tomb of one of Ancient Egypt's most famous Pharaohs - Tutankhamun, the boy king who ascended the throne aged 9 years old and died under mysterious circumstances just ten years later...

Although the sensational theory that King Tut was murdered by one of his political enemies by a blow to the back of the head gained a lot of popularity in the late 1970s, scientists now think that the teenager died from an infected broken leg that, coupled with a family history of inbreeding (it's thought that his parents were siblings) and a life of ill-health, proved ultimately fatal.

You can read more about the circumstances surrounding the young Pharaoh's death here:

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

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*A Roman Feast* by Roberto Bompiani showcases the gluttony of the Romans; paintings like this make it unsurprising that the myth of the vomitorium gained popularity in contemporary times (read more on page 2)

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# The Hunger Games and Ancient Rome

If you've read *The Hunger Games* series, then you'll know that in *Catching Fire* Katniss was horrified by the strategies that the Capitol elite used to stop themselves from getting full too quickly at extravagant parties; namely stuffing themselves with food, then drinking a specially made liquid that made them throw up so they could return to the festivities with an empty stomach(!).

What you might not have known, however, is that Suzanne Collins incorporated this notion into her series as a nod to practices of the ancient Roman world; the Roman elite at this time were known for throwing lavish parties where they would overeat, vomit and go right on eating throughout the night - there's even a popularly perpetuated urban legend that the Romans had special "vomitoriums" specifically designed for these kinds of activities (although this was later disproved; it turns out that vomitoriums have nothing to do with vomiting, and were actually used to describe the amphitheatre entrances that Roman visitors would "spew" out of after watching a fight. Ugh.)

Of course, a lot of the Hunger Games universe was inspired by the world of ancient Rome - from the gladiatorial fights held in "arenas" that all 12 Districts were forced to participate in, to the parading of costumed tributes in chariots just before the games, to the classical Latin names of many of the well-known side characters, including Seneca Crane, Caesar Flickerman and Coriolanus Snow. And while the parallels drawn by Collins between the world of Ancient Rome and her dark, dystopian future are not particularly flattering, they still help to show the profound influence that the Roman world (and our views on it) has had on our literature and modern pop-culture to this day.

Jude Shayeb, 115



# The 2020 Latin GCSE Trip to Bath



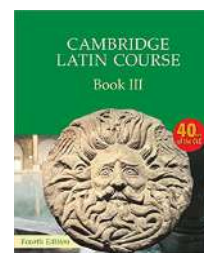
This time last year, the Year 10 Latin students (now Year 11) visited the Roman baths in Bath. Our assembly about the trip should have been on the last day of school before the first lockdown, but was obviously cancelled due to Covid restrictions. We thought we'd take this opportunity to tell you all about it instead!

Known to the Romans as Aquae Sulis, Bath is famous for the naturally hot spring water that comes out at a temperature of 46°C. The Roman Baths were public baths built in around 60-70 AD, designed both for people to use for exercising and to get clean, but because the hot water naturally comes out of the ground at the site, the Romans also thought that it was a sacred place where they would be healed. They built a temple dedicated to the goddess Sulis Minerva as part of the public baths complex.

Going to the baths was an important part of our Latin GCSE as we studied the Roman baths as part of our civilisation unit about Life in a Roman Town, and one of the curse tablets on display in the Museum is one of the artefacts on our literature unit on Superstition and Magic.



Not only that, but the baths at Aquae Sulis are the setting of Book 3 in the Cambridge Latin Course so we really enjoyed getting to see the site and artefacts in real life!



During our visit, we had a lesson where we learnt how to decode Latin inscriptions on tombstones and we found out more about the baths themselves and the Roman process of bathing. We also had a handling session where we could touch Roman objects and learn how they were used in the baths.

We then had lunch and were given the freedom to roam around the square surrounding the baths. Many of us followed Dr Kerr to a fudge shop which she might have mentioned a few times (repeatedly) in previous lessons. There was also a second fudge shop which we visited and there began the rivalry of the fudge shops. We also had the chance to visit an ice-cream shop which had extremely overpriced gelatos.



Dr Kerr's favourite: divinity white chocolate fudge from the San Francisco Fudge Factory ☺

After our lunch we were able to spend the rest of the afternoon looking round the baths. You can find some of our favourite aspects of the complex on the next pages...

**THE GREAT BATH** In Roman times this would have had a curved roof and was the tallest building in Britain, but the roof has long fallen down. Once you have gone through the museum then you can walk around the Great Bath. On our visit there were re-enactors pretending to be from local Celtic tribes, who gave us far more information about Roman toilet practices than we wanted!

The Great Bath is naturally heated by the hot spring, and the combination of the warm water and the open air sunlight means that the water is nowadays filled with dangerous amoebae and dirty algae. Swimming was banned in this pool in 1978 and there are lots of signs saying do not touch the water!



**THE SACRED SPRING** The sacred spring is still pumping out water at 46oC at a rate that can fill a bath tub in 8 seconds.

**THE TEMPLE PEDIMENT** There was a temple to the goddess Sulis Minerva, and this pediment would have been on the front of the temple. The pediment features the famous carving of what looks like a male gorgon. This carving is the logo of the baths and is also featured on the front of Cambridge Latin book 3! A lot of the pediment is missing, but the museum has a light display to recreate what it should have looked like.

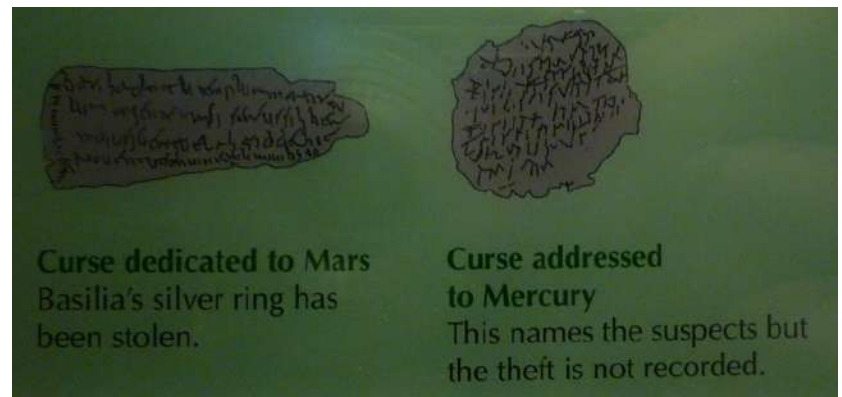


**THE OVERFLOW** A lot of us were fascinated by the overflow to the great drain. This is the original Roman engineering for the drains, and as it is the overflow of the sacred spring, the steam from the hot water makes it very atmospheric. 34 tiny gemstones have been found in the Roman drains. It is likely that they fell out of people's rings when they were bathing in the warm water.



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**THE CURSE TABLETS** An aspect of our GCSE literature unit on Superstition and Magic is curse tablets. Curse tablets are small pieces of lead that have had curses scratched into them. Bath is famous for having over 130 curse tablets, which had been thrown into the sacred spring as people wanted the goddess Sulis Minerva to help them. Most of the curse tablets are about the writer wanting to get a stolen item back. They ask the goddess to curse the thief unless they return the item.



### **THE INSCRIPTION OF LUCIUS MARCIUS MEMOR**

We were very interested to see the inscription of Lucius Marcius Memor. We studied the inscription in our teaching session before lunch and learned how to translate it.

Memor was a haruspex, which was a type of priest who told the future by looking at the entrails of sacrificed animals. There were only 60 of these in the Roman empire, so it is very exciting that there was one in Bath.

Memor is also a character in Cambridge Latin book 3, and we are studying the job of a haruspex as part of our GCSE literature unit, so it was very interesting to see this artefact in real life.



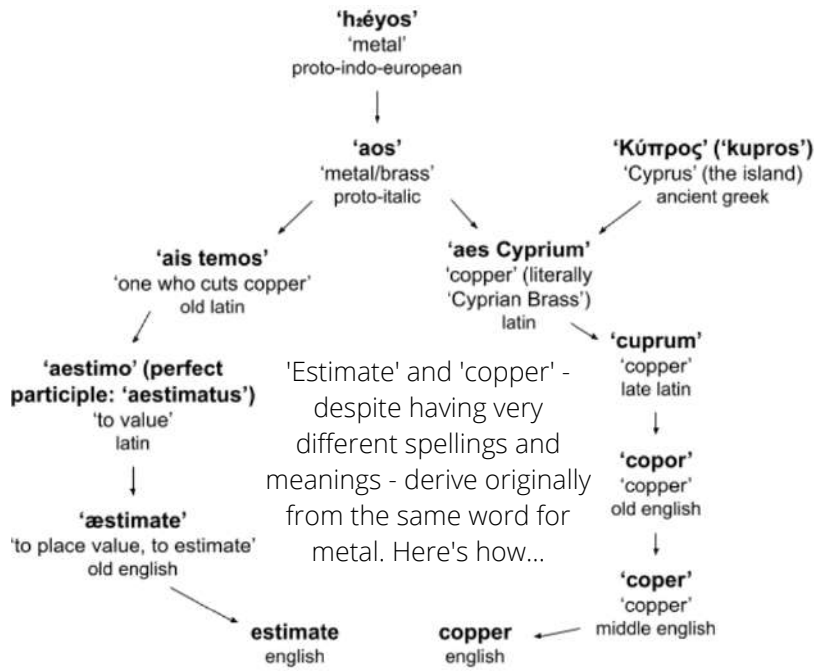
**TASTING THE WATER** Although the water in the Great Bath is poisonous, there is the opportunity to drink clean spring water from a tap at the end of the museum. It's warm and tastes like coins! Clean spring water is also used in the pool at the Thermae Spa across the road from the Roman baths.

**With thanks to everyone in the 11P Latin class who contributed to this article, and to Dr Kerr for sharing her photos**

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# Did you know?

## Etymology Spotlight by Anna Cooke 12S



Meme sent in by Aleezah Latif 8W

You may have seen in the latest Maths Newsletter that the old symbol for pence in Britain's pre-decimal currency was 'd' - but did you know that this is because it is named after the Roman denarius coin?!

#709 credit to cappuccinos-and-cumberpatches

Automatically translating all the Harry Potter spells as you read them.

[latin-student-problems.tumblr.com](http://latin-student-problems.tumblr.com)



## JOKE

I struggle with Roman Numerals until I get to 159, then it CLIX.

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## Classics in the News...

### Archaeologists discover a ceremonial chariot in Pompeii

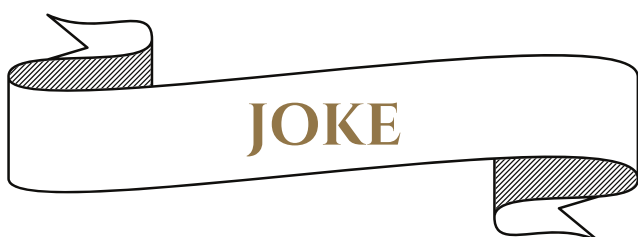
Tasnime Boujamaa (10L) spotted this article about how an elaborately decorated chariot has been unearthed in a stable just north of Pompeii. Archaeologists took weeks to excavate it, as it was so delicate. The photo below shows archaeologists carefully cleaning away the material covering the chariot with small brushes; the decorations on the chariot can be seen on the left.



Ancient historians think it could have been used by priestesses, or perhaps to transport a bride to her new home. Roman weddings involved a procession from the bride's house (usually where she would have lived with her parents) to the house where the married couple would live.

**You can read more about this here:**

**<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-56222992>**



There are 11 types of people in the world. Those who understand Roman numerals, and those who do not.

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# Classics Competitions

## Athena's Owls: Creative Writing Mythology Competition



Athena's Owls is holding a new competition for myth enthusiasts to **retell a Greek myth from the monster's perspective**. The competition is open until **11th April**, with prizes of Book Tokens for the winners in each of the three age categories (5-7 years, 8-11 years, 12-14 years). The competition is open to those in the UK/ROI and entry is free.

Simply choose from one of these monsters and get creative!

**The Sphinx – Polyphemus the Cyclops – The Minotaur – Medusa – Typhon – The Hydra**

There are three age categories and word limits for this competition:

Category 1: 5-7 years old – up to 300 words

Category 2: 8-11 years old – up to 500 words

Category 3: 12-14 years old – up to 750 words

**For full details see the website:**

**<https://athenasowls.wordpress.com/2021/02/27/athena-s-owls-competition-the-monsters-tale/>**

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## EMACT Latin Reading Competition

Fancy trying out your best Latin pronunciation and winning a £20 book token? The East Midlands Association of Classical Teachers is running a competition for KS3 Latin students to record themselves (audio only) reading out a certain passage of Cambridge Latin Book 1 **in Latin**. There are only limited entries allowed for each school, so **please contact Dr Kerr** if you are interested in entering. The closing date for entries is **Friday 28th May**, so you've got plenty of time to practise!

**For full details, including pronunciation help, see the website:**

**<https://emact.wordpress.com/2021/02/10/emact-latin-reading-competition/>**