



# ROMAN Colchester

COLCHESTER MUSEUMS  
Learning  from Home

## Week 3

### Roman Homes

Colchester + Ipswich  
Museums



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

# Learn

## Homes in Roman Britain?

### Insulae

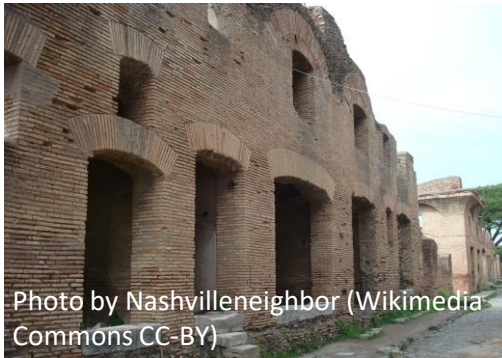


Photo by Nashvilleneighbor (Wikimedia Commons CC-BY)

Many Romans living in towns would live in an insula. These were high apartment blocks.

### Villas



Photograph taken by Carole Raddato (Flickr CC-BY)

Wealthier Romans would often have a house in the countryside called a villa. These were large and extravagant places where they could manage farms and show off their wealth.

### Roundhouses



Flag Fen. Photo by Midnightblueowl (Wikimedia Commons CC-BY)

The people who were living in Britain before the Romans arrived lived large round houses made of mud, sticks and animal poo.

### Domus



Image by Wolfgang Sauber (Wikimedia Commons CC-BY)

The domus was a large house in the town. They all had a very similar layout

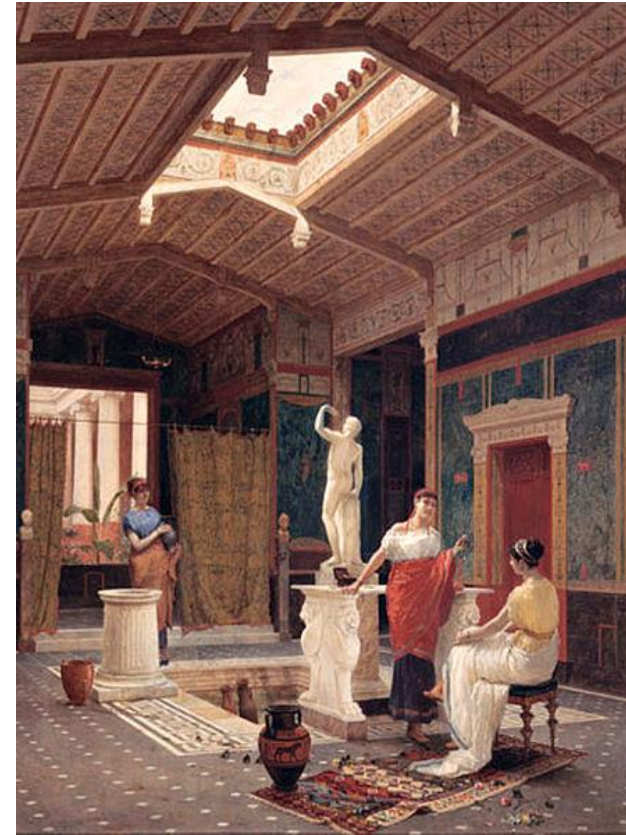
# Learn

## Where did the Romans live?



The Roman home was called a **Domus**. Many of these followed a similar layout of rooms.

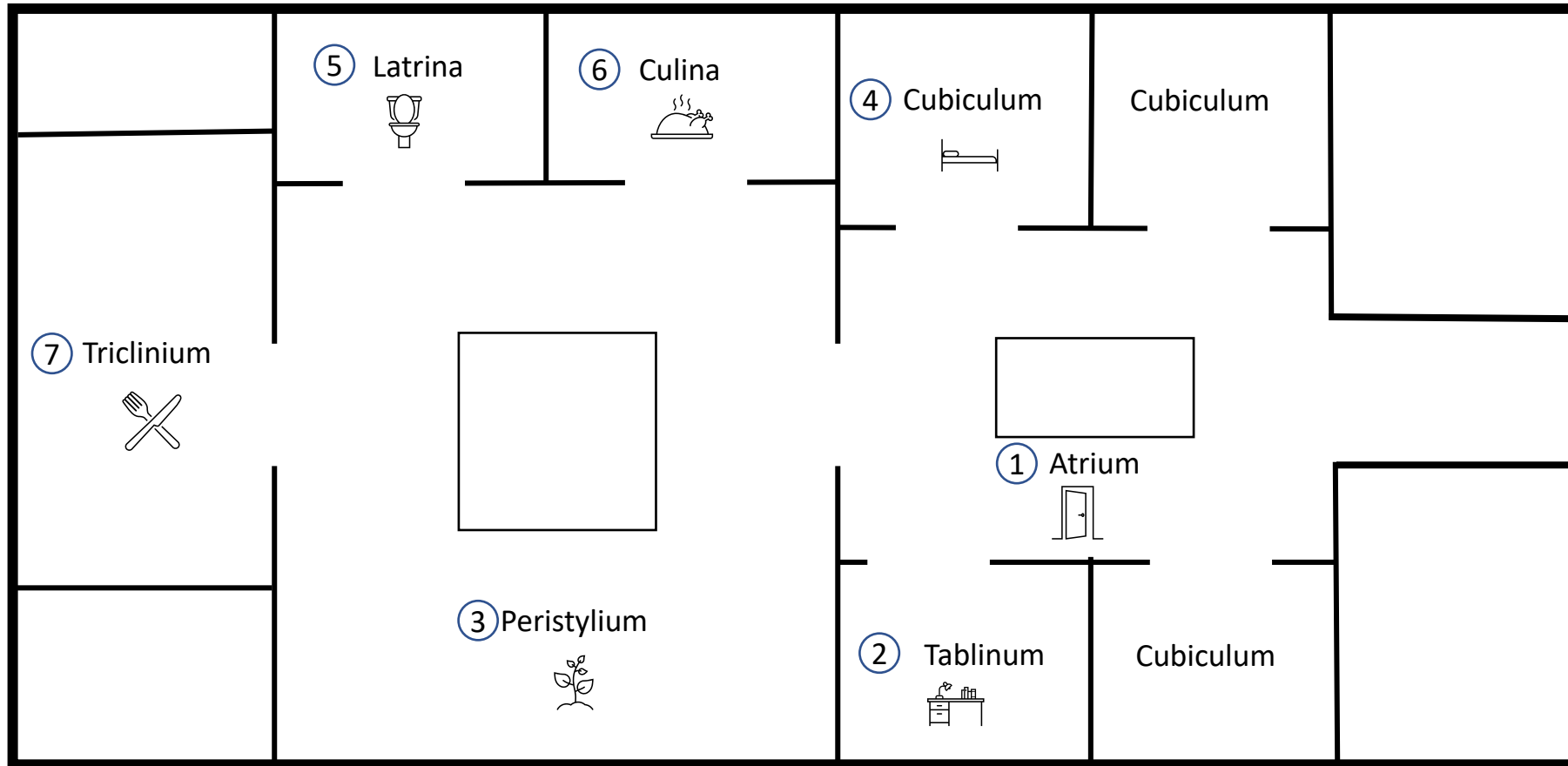
The Romans had many of the same rooms you might have in your own homes. As we explore the Roman home, keep an eye out for similarities and differences with your own rooms!



Painting of "a Pompeiian interior" by Luigi Bazzani. Painted in 1882.

# Activity

## The Roman home



Can you guess what the following rooms might have been used for?

# Learn

## The Atrium



Roman lararium (House of the Vetii, Pompeii, Italy)

The **Atrium** was the first room you would enter in most Roman homes. This was a hallway where the homeowner (or sometimes one of their slaves) would greet visitors. This would also often contain the household shrine (**Lararium**) for worshiping the guardian spirits of the home.



# Activity

## Greetings

| English      | Latin            | Pronunciation           |
|--------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Hello        | Salve            | Sal-vay                 |
| How are you? | Quid agis?       | Kwid agis               |
| Good         | Bene             | Ben-ay                  |
| Bad          | Male             | Ma-lay                  |
| And you?     | Et tu?           | Et too?                 |
| Thank you    | Tibi gratias ago | Ti-bi grah-tee-as ah-go |
| Goodbye      | Vale             | Va-lay                  |

The Romans spoke Latin.  
Here are some phrases you can practice with your friends and family!



# Learn

## The Atrium



One of the key features of a Roman atrium is the pool (**impluvium**) in the centre, which collected rainwater. This water could then be used in the house for drinking or cleaning.

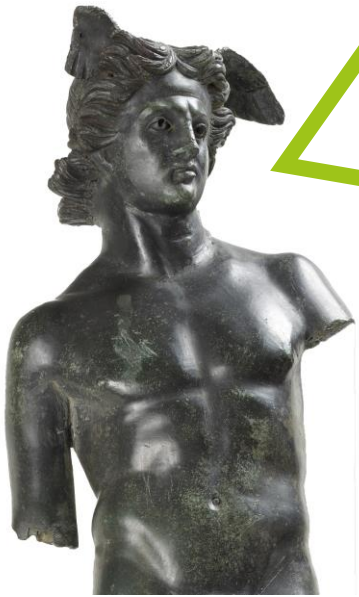
There was a hole in the ceiling (**compluvium**) to allow the rain to fall in.



Roman impluvium (Paestum, Italy)

# Learn

## Tablinum



The **tablinum** (study/office) is where many Romans would do business, such as managing finances or meeting with clients, within their own homes.

It was also a space where they could study or write letters to family and friends.



Fresco of a woman from Pompeii, Italy. In the National Archaeological Museum of Naples.

# Activity

## Tablinum

### Instructions for making a writing tablet

1. Cut two rectangles of cardboard, roughly 15cm x 20cm
2. Cut a rectangle out of the middle of one of the pieces of cardboard, roughly 13cm x 18cm
3. Glue the two pieces of cardboard together using PVA or whatever you have available. Leave to dry.
4. **Ask an adult:** melt some candlewax and fill the gap with wax. You could also use playdough to fill the gap (basically anything soft that will mould into the space).
5. Use a pointed tool, like a pencil or a stick, to write on your tablet.



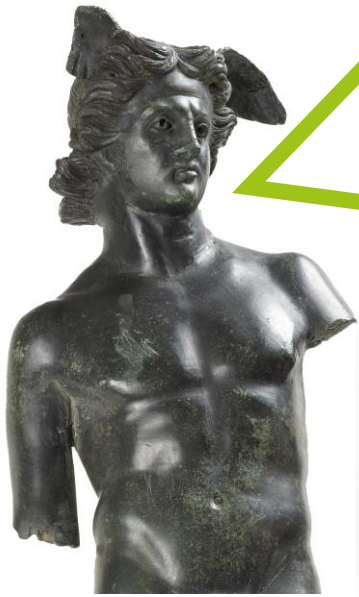
The Romans would often make notes using a **tabula rasa** (wax writing tablets) and a **stylus** (writing tool).

Have a go at making your own writing tablets to send letters and notes to family and friends.



# Learn

## Peristylum



The **Peristylum** is the central courtyard in many Roman households. There would often be lots of plants and a colonnade running around the outside edge to give shelter from the sun.

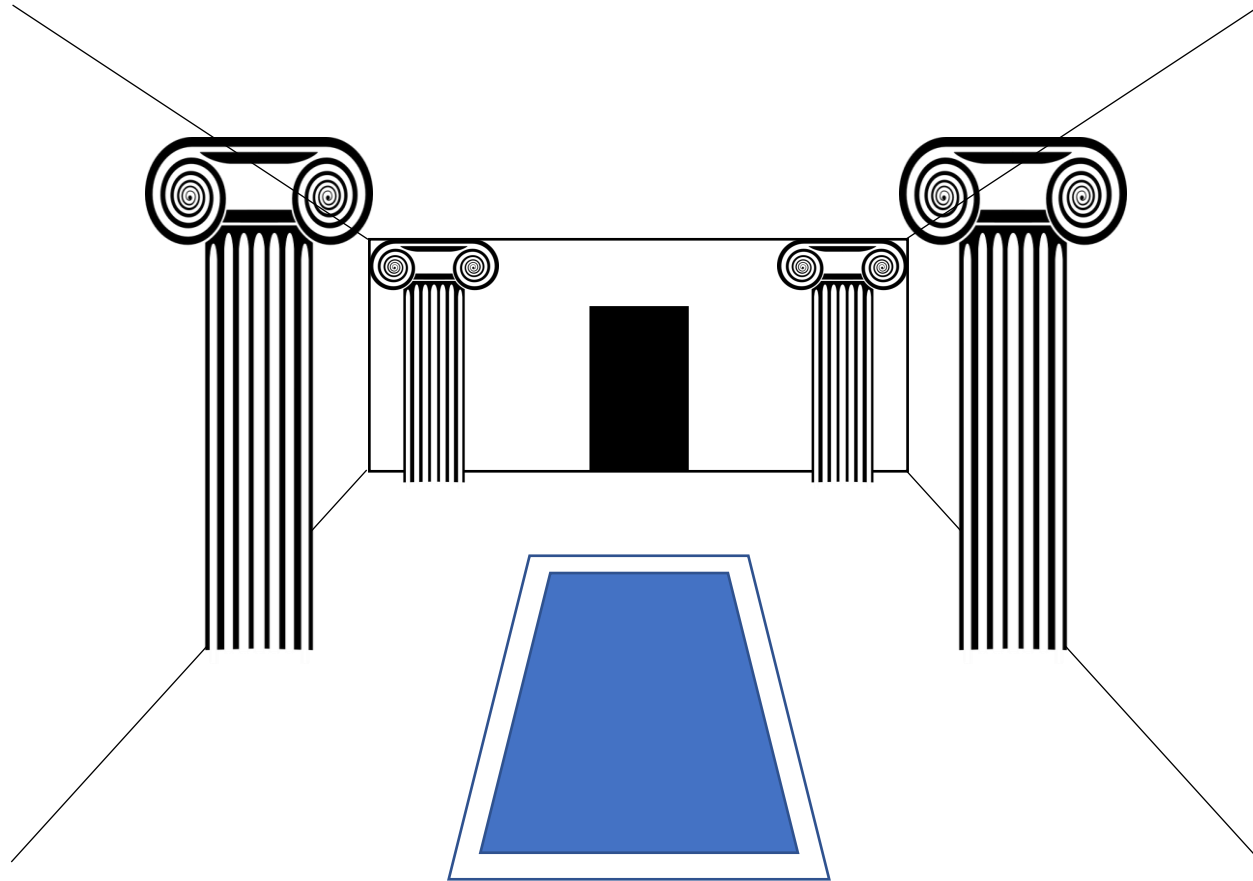
There was also often a pond (**piscina**) in the centre of the courtyard. Some of these may have contained fish! So the Romans had pet fish like some people do today.



Reconstruction of the peristylum in the house of the Vetii (Pompeii, Italy)

# Activity

## Peristylum



Have a go at designing your own peristylum!

Think about what sort of plants and statues you might want decorating it.



# Learn

## Cubiculum



Some painted plaster in Colchester Museums' collection. Found at a villa in Rivenhall, Essex.

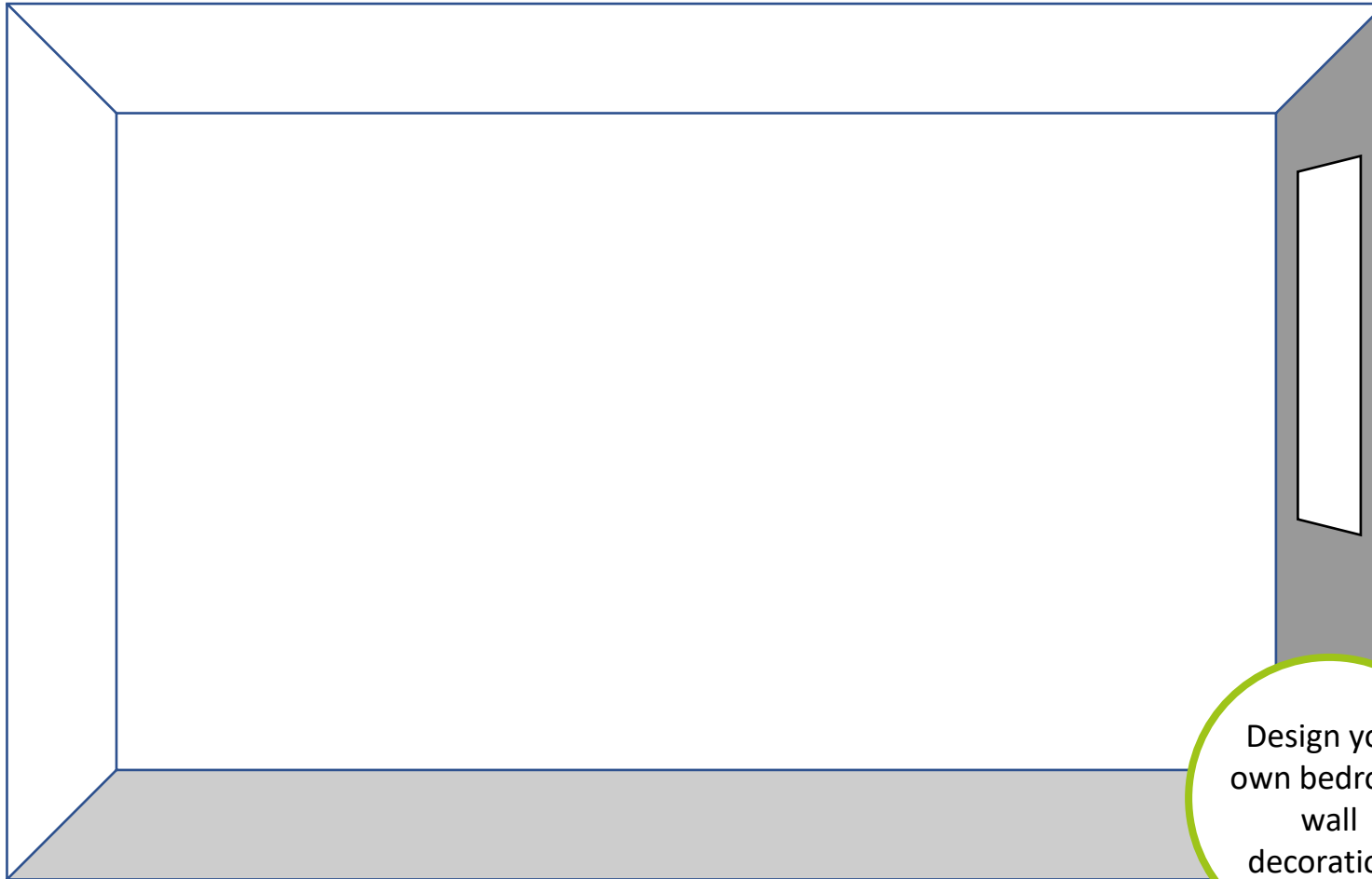
The **Cubiculum** is the Roman bedroom. It was seen as the most private space in the home, so sometimes business deals would also occur here, away from prying ears.

Most cubacula were decorated with beautiful **frescos** (wall paintings). They would often feature outdoor scenes, including flowers and animals.



# Learn

## Cubiculum



Design your  
own bedroom  
wall  
decoration!



Wall painting from the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale, Italy.

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**Learning from Home**

# Activity

## Latrina



Roman public toilets (Ostia, Italy).

The wealthiest of Romans would have their own personal **Latrina** (toilet) within their home.

Most would use public toilets, which had no way of separating you from other users. How would you feel about using public toilets without doors to separate you?



# Learn

## Culina



Reconstructed Roman kitchen from the Museum of London.

Few households would have a **Culina** (kitchen), as most Romans would head to the streets to buy quick food from street vendors.

Those that did would have a special slave called a **coquus** (chef) to cook meals for them.



# Activity

## Culina

Why not have a go at eating a Roman diet!

**ientaculum (Breakfast):** Bread (toasted if you like) with honey.



**prandium (Lunch):** cold meat or fish, bread and vegetables.



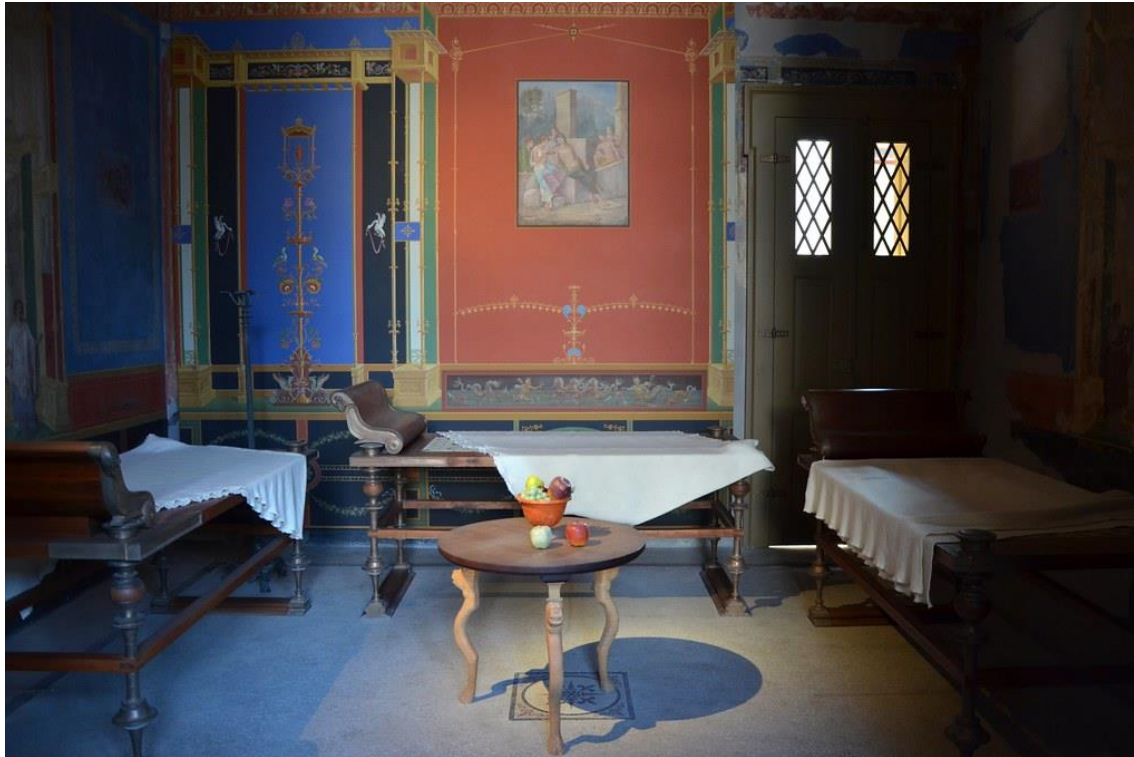
**cena (Dinner):** isicia omentata (hamburgers) and grilled vegetables



Wall painting from the house of Julia Felix in Pompeii, Italy.

# Learn

## Triclinium



Reconstruction of a Roman triclinium (The Pompeiianum, Aschaffenburg, Germany)

Most Roman households would have a **Triclinium** (dining room) that looked out over the garden.

The format was usually three long couches around a table, which is how the room gets its name.

**Tri** – three

**Clinare** – to lie down



# Activity

## Roman food

**Find the Roman food  
in the wordsearch!**

Mus (mouse)  
Panis (bread)  
Malum (apple)  
Olivum (olive)  
Piscis (fish)  
Garum (fish sauce)  
Caro (meat)  
Cepa (onion)  
Fructus (fruit)



|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
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| A | Y | V | S | N | I | P | O | T | R | T | P | D | I |
| R | A | F | J | L | B | X | A | P | L | U | A | S | V |
| O | C | S | R | H | K | O | M | N | K | M | M | W | U |
| P | I | S | C | I | S | P | D | L | I | B | L | N | M |
| G | K | L | Y | T | P | A | I | W | K | S | Y | Q | C |
| S | F | Q | M | A | L | U | M | V | N | L | T | A | X |
| A | E | G | O | T | B | E | F | R | U | C | T | U | S |

See how much you can remember about the Roman home...

1. In what room would you eat your dinner?
2. How would a Roman say “hello”?
3. What might a Roman have for breakfast?
4. Name the four types of home in Roman Britain.
5. Which of these would you find in a **cubiculum**  
a) Oven   b) bed   c) shrine   d) toilet



Vindolanda tablet 291 found at Vindolanda, UK.

# Answers

## Activity 1 : The Roman house

- 1 Atrium – Entrance Hall
- 2 Tablinum - Study
- 3 Peristylum - Courtyard
- 4 Cubiculum - Bedroom
- 5 Latrina - Toilet
- 6 Culina - Kitchen
- 7 Triclinium – Dining Room

## Activity 8 : Summary

- 1 Triclinium
- 2 Salve
- 3 Bread and honey
- 4 Insula, Roundhouse, Villa or Domus
- 5 b - bed

## Activity 7: Wordsearch

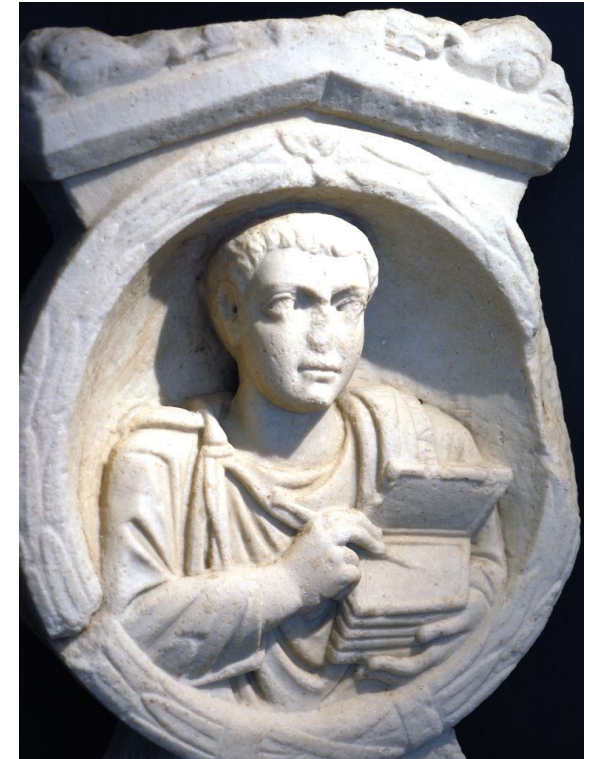
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| A | E | G | O | T | B | E | F | R | U | C | T | U | S |

# Extension



Why not write a diary entry, imagining you live in a Roman **domus**. What would you do throughout the day? You might leave the house and go to the **forum** (market), **templum** (temple) or **theatrum** (theatre).

Have a look at session 2 to remind you of other buildings found in a Roman town.



A relief (carving) from a tomb in Flavia Solva, Austria.