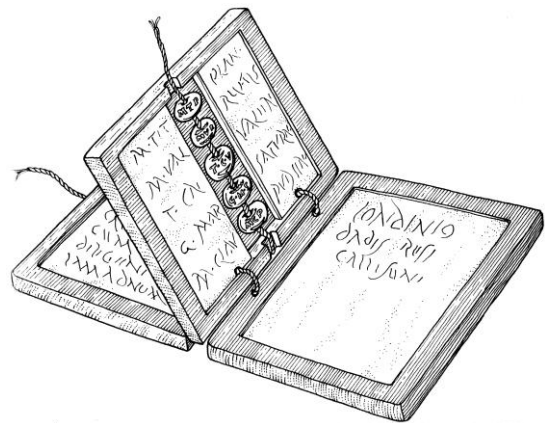


INVESTIGATING AND MAKING A WRITING TABLET

PART ONE

Introduction activity

Watch the 'Writing tablet' video clip explaining that this wooden tablet seen at the beginning of the clip is an actual Roman artefact and the reason it survived was because it was left in wet conditions and so did not dry up and crumble over time.



Talk about how the writing tablet was constructed – it was a piece of wood with wax set into a rectangular recess. It could be linked to others and held together by cord hinges which protected the writing area inside.

Also explain that the writing could also be kept fairly secret as the wooden parts could be bound together, keeping the writing quite hidden. Some writing tablets had seals made of wax sealing the binding for extra security.

A Roman Londoner receiving this tablet could tell if someone else had opened and read the writing as the binding would have been tampered with.

As a class think of what the traders and other Roman Londoners would write on these writing tablets and make a class list of ideas.

Main part of the lesson

Explain that in this lesson the class are going to construct their own writing tablet using stiff card and string.

Ask the class to make an initial design perhaps using their sketch books, of the parts they will need and how they are going to construct the writing tablet.

Explain that the tablets we viewed in the video clip did not have designs on the front but they may have had an address written in ink on the front cover or, if it was an official government document, it may have had a branded stamp so that those who received them would know they were official. Suggest the pupils design such a stamp or write an address.

Explain that in the following lesson we are going to investigate Roman writing and write our own messages for the writing tablet.

Pupils can then sketch out and make their own writing tablet.

Plenary

Show the pupils the image of the two different replica writing tablets and explain that they are both made in the same way using wood and beeswax but the black writing tablet has had soot mixed in with the beeswax so that it becomes black. This is so that the lettering will show up better as the colour of the wood shows through the wax.

