



# Roman language and customs

By Michael Coleman

- NARRATOR:** Britons at the time of the invasion spoke a language called Common Britonic; the Romans spoke a language called Latin. Nearly all books and documents were written in Latin, but whether Britons learned to speak it isn't really known. They probably did. After all, even Britons today know some Latin...
- TEACHER:** Latin homeworks, please! Simkins, have you got yours?
- SIMKINS:** Nah! Ridiculous language!
- TEACHER:** Really? You've just used a fair amount of Latin yourself.
- SIMKINS:** Yer what?
- TEACHER:** Ridiculous comes from the Latin word rideo, meaning 'laugh' and language comes from the Latin word lingua, meaning 'speech'.
- SIMKINS:** Cor, you learn something every day!
- TEACHER:** And here's another one for you: teneo meaning 'hold', is where we get 'detention' from Simkins – which you're in for not doing your Latin homework!
- NARRATOR:** In one way, though, life in Britain didn't change much at all. The land still had to be cultivated to grow food. Wheat for making bread, barley for making beer and oats for animal feeds were the main crops. Cows, goats, sheep, pigs and hens were raised in Roman Britain, exactly as they are today. Also like today, farmers knew that a good harvest was at the mercy of the weather. But the weather, they believed, was controlled by the gods. Jupiter, the god of the sky, must have been in great demand...



## History Clips: The Romans

- JUPITER: Oh, who'd be a god! Here they come again. Oh, divine Jupiter..
- FARMER: Oh, divine Jupiter, I beseech you to send rain this day for my thirsty crops...
- HOSTESS: Divine Jupiter, I'm holding an awfully important outdoor party today. Be a dear god and don't allow it to rain.
- JUPITER: I'd better help or they'll never stop. I know - the party can have a dry day...and I'll give the crops a good soaking tonight. Ha-ha. Who's a clever god, then!
- NARRATOR: Visiting a temple to ask the gods for help was a part of everyday life. And the help wasn't always for good crops or a sunny day. It could be a request for the god to do something nasty to your enemy! You went to the temple and wrote your request on a thing called a curse tablet. A bit like this...
- MARCUS: I hate you, Vesuvia Whinius!
- VESUVIA: And I hate you, Marcus Moanius!
- MARCUS: I hate you so much I've just written a curse tablet about you. 'Divine Jupiter,' I wrote, 'strike Vesuvia Whinius by lightning!'
- VESUVIA: Well, I've just written one begging Jupiter to do the same thing to you, Marcus Moanius...after throwing your curse tablet away first, of course!

