

Teacher Notes

Letters from Vindolanda

Synopsis

Julia pieces together what life was like in the Roman fort of Vindolanda, from letters preserved and dug up there. She looks particularly at those of Barates and Adriana.

Resources:

Comprehension:

Seven questions testing a variety of skills (retrieval, summarising, etc.) to check and reinforce learning from the animation.

What Makes a Useful Source?

A diamond 9 exercise where children rank various reasons why the Vindolanda tablets are a useful source.

Profiles and Questions:

Children create profiles of Barates and Adriana. They then decide which letters they would use to answer various questions and justify their answers.

Key questions to consider:

What makes the Vindolanda tablets such unique and valuable sources?

What can the Vindolanda letters tell us about life in a Roman frontier fort?

What can the Vindolanda letters tell us about life in the Roman Empire?

What are the limits on what the Vindolanda letters can tell us?

History curriculum objectives:

- Note connections, contrasts and trends over time and develop the appropriate use of historical terms.
- Regularly address and sometimes devise historically valid questions about change, cause, similarity and difference, and significance.
- Construct informed responses that involve thoughtful selection and organisation of relevant historical information.
- Understand how our knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources.
- NI: Movement of people in the past.
- NI: Some of the characteristics of past societies and distinctive features of life in the past.
- Welsh Progression step 3: I can understand the difference between facts, opinions and beliefs, and consider how this may affect the importance and usefulness of evidence.
- SOC 2-01a: I can use primary and secondary sources selectively to research events in the past.

Comprehension

What is Vindolanda and where is it?

What was discovered at Vindolanda in 1973?

Why are the Vindolanda letters such a valuable source for historians?

Write five short headings which summarise the different things the Syrian archer talks about.

Explain two things that the letters and other discoveries at Vindolanda tell us about Roman marriage.

What evidence is there in the animation that in everyday Roman life people from a wide variety of places lived and worked together?

Explain the similarities between the Saturnalia festival and Christmas.



Comprehension

What is Vindolanda and where is it?

A Roman fort and village in the north of England

What was discovered at Vindolanda in 1973?

Letters and notes written on thin bits of wood

Why are the Vindolanda letters such a valuable source for historians?

They contain unique details about everyday life, written by people at the time who were not trying to present their version of history.

Write five short headings which summarise the different things the Syrian archer talks about.

Various answers, for example: His history of battles. The endless rain. Horse-riding. Auxiliary soldiering. Regina, his love.

Explain two things that the letters and other discoveries at Vindolanda tell us about Roman marriage.

That people from different parts of the Empire met and married, and that some Roman soldiers took their wives and families with them when they were sent to Britain.

What evidence is there in the animation that in everyday Roman life, people from a wide variety of places lived and worked together?

Julia says that 'people from different parts of the Roman Empire met and married', like Regina and the archer. Different *auxiliaries* are mentioned as well: Gauls, Spanish, Syrians and North Africans.

Explain the similarities between the Saturnalia festival and Christmas.

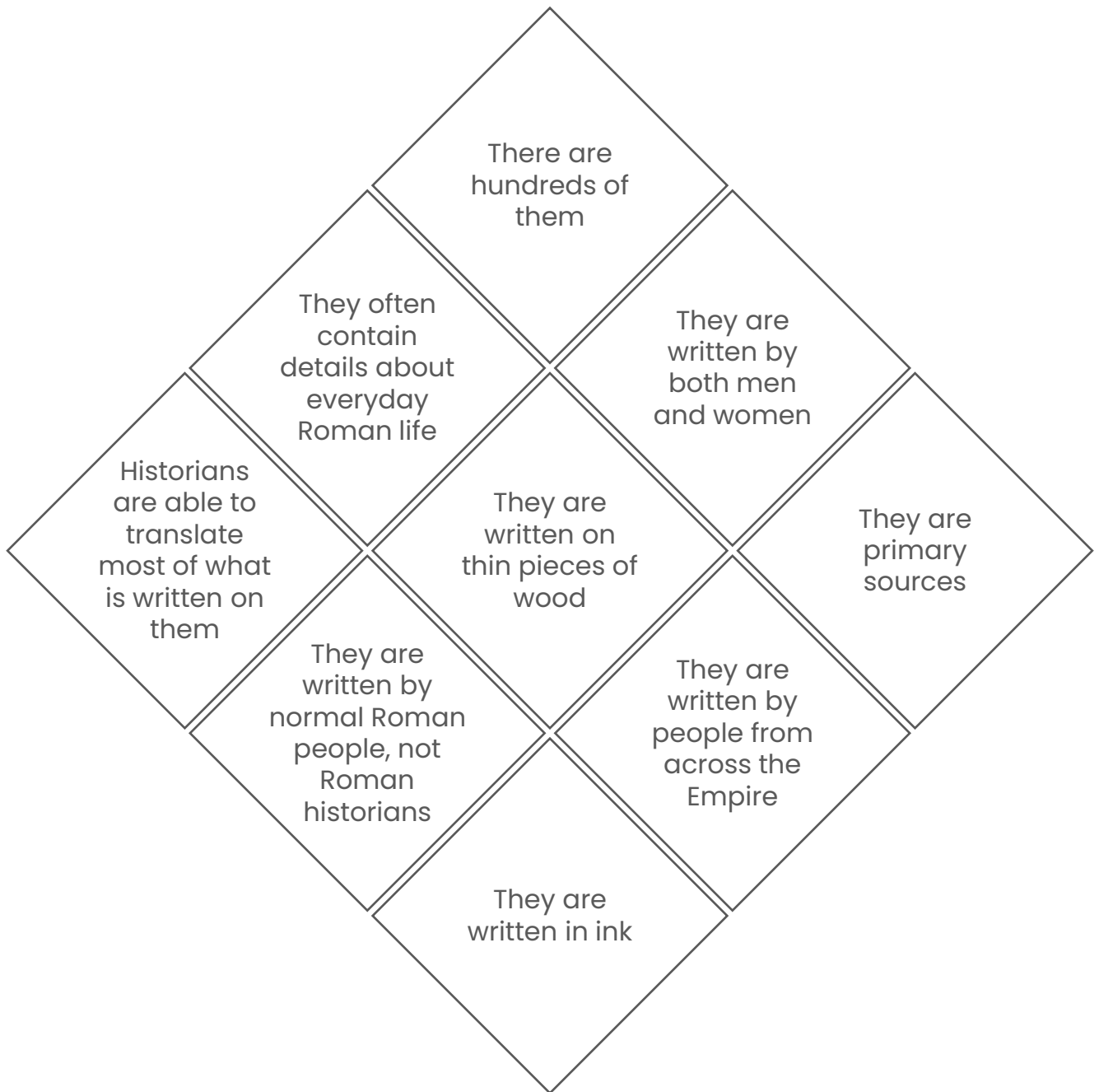
They are/were both celebrated at the end of December and involved putting up decorations, having parties and exchanging gifts.



What Makes a Useful Source?



"There are lots of reasons why the Vindolanda letters are a useful source for historians. Cut out and order the reasons below into a new diamond shape, from the most important at the top to least important at the bottom. After that, choose one from each row and explain why you have placed it where you have."



Profiles and Questions



"Barates and Adriana; two very different people who found themselves at Vindolanda fort. Who were they? What can their letters tell us about them and the lives of Romans like them? Fill in the profiles below and then complete the tasks on the following page."



Barates



Adriana

Where is he from?

What does he do?

How did he end up in Vindolanda?

How wealthy is he?

Is he married? Who to?

What does he not like about Britain?

What life experiences does he have?

Is there anything he wants or needs?

Where is she from?

What does she do?

How did she end up in Vindolanda?

How wealthy is she?

Is she married? Who to?

What does she not like about Britain?

What life experiences does she have?

Is there anything she wants or needs?

Whose letter would you use to answer a question about life in a Roman army camp: Barates’s, Adriana’s, or both? Give reasons for your answer.

Which letter(s) would you use to answer a question about marriage in Roman Vindolanda? Why?

How might Barates’s and Adriana’s letters be useful in answering questions about the variety of people in Vindolanda in Roman times? Explain your answer.

Create three historical questions which could be answered using the letters of Barates and Adriana.
