

## GAIUS' MAP OF THE ROMAN WORLD

### AIM

This is a class activity that aims to create a sculptural piece of work representing Roman influence and trade across the ancient world.

### MAKING COIN MOULDS TO PRESS COIN REPLICAS

#### Resources

Large photographs of Roman coins showing obverse and reverse\*

Paper and pencils for designing

2 empty, round, yoghurt pots for each student

1 large bag of Plaster of Paris

Several plastic bowls or jugs for mixing

Metal plaster carving tools (3 inch nails will work well)

Air drying clay



### ACTIVITY

- Mix sufficient plaster to half fill the yoghurt cartons and allow these to set.
- While they are setting look at the Roman coins, they have the head of the emperor on one side (obverse) and usually carry a political message on the other side (reverse). They would have been one of the most important ways in which people heard about a change in political power, military campaigns, great victories and even great defeats. Using paper and pencils the students should design their own coin obverse and reverse, they can put their portrait on one side and their own political message on the other.
- Once the plaster has set remove the blocks from the cartons by pressing on the bottom end. While the plaster is still damp (to avoid dust) smooth the top, widest end of each block. This can be done with fine sand paper although this will clog up fairly quickly. If the plaster has been left for some days after setting and has become dry, dip it in cold water before working on it. Using a pencil transfer the design for the obverse onto one smoothed block and the reverse onto the other. Remember; when your mould is pressed into clay to make your coin it will reverse your image and indeed any lettering. So you must write any lettering backwards this means the not only must CAESAR become RASEAC but the letters themselves must be reversed.
- When the designs have been drawn on the blocks it is time to carve them. Remember keep them damp! Using the point of a nail cut the design into the surface of the plaster, it doesn't need to be very deep, 1 or 2 millimetres will do the job. When both blocks have been fully carved clean off and crumbs of loose plaster with a soft brush. Allow the moulds to dry.
- Now comes the test: Place the obverse mould block, design side up, on the bench. Roll a smooth round ball of clay about the size of a ping pong ball in the centre of the mould; put the reverse mould, design side down, on top of the clay.

Now press the two moulds together, keeping them aligned, until the clay starts to emerge around the edge between the two moulds. Carefully take the two apart and peel off the 'coin', if any part of the design seems too shallow, carefully wet the part of the mould that needs attention and using the nail carve it a little deeper. Repeat the above processes. Allow the coins to dry. If your school has a kiln, potting clay can be used and the coins fired. If desired paint the coins silver and/or gold. Make as many coins as you can manage you will need about 200 of them.

### **MAKING THE AMPHORA**

#### **Resources:**

Photograph of Amphora\*

The largest elongated balloon you can get

Large yoghurt pot

Masking tape

Glue for papier mâché

Paper for papier mâché

Paint to finish

#### **ACTIVITY**

- Blow up the balloon to represent the body of the amphora, tape the base of the yoghurt carton to one end of the balloon so that the open end represents the neck of the amphora.
- Make two rolls of paper and tape them to the carton and balloon to represent the handles.
- Now build up layer after layer of paper and glue to completely cover the outside of the balloon, the handles and the outside and inside of the carton.
- Allow this to dry then paint it an appropriate colour to look like an amphora.

#### **MAKING THE MAP**

Print out a map as large as required, the original was two metres in diameter. This can be done by printing an image onto many sheets of paper and taping them together. This can be used as it is or the land can be built up using small pieces of clay to look like thousands of broken pots.

#### **ASSEMBLING THE PIECE**

- Hang the amphora from the ceiling at an angle of about 45° so that it looks as if it's pouring out its contents, with the mouth about 60cm from the ground.
- Lay out the map of the Roman World on the floor with Rome directly below the mouth of the amphora.
- Fasten lengths of fishing line, ranging in length from 10cm to 60cm, to about thirty of the coins. Fasten the other ends of the fishing line inside the neck of the amphora so that it looks as if the coins are pouring out of it.
- Lay out the remainder of the coins as 'trade routes' across the map.