

Object explore and discover

Learning from Museum Objects

Museum objects are irreplaceable evidence of our history and heritage and can really bring your lessons to life. Each of these downloadable resources explores one of the objects in our collection.

For even more ideas, discover our loan boxes at

<http://schoolloans.readingmuseum.org.uk/> and search our amazing online database at <http://collections.readingmuseum.org.uk/>

Roman toy doll



Follow this [link to online database](#) to see the object's full record

DESCRIPTION

Object: Roman toy doll

Museum object number: REDMG: 1997.15.1

Date: Roman (AD43-410)

Material: Bone

This Ancient Roman doll was carved from bone. It is **articulated**, meaning that it had moving arms. These were attached with pins or string (only the left arm survives but we can still see the little holes for the connecting string).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Toy dolls have been found across the Roman Empire, they were made from rags, wood, bone, ceramic and ivory. Some were simple, but others were incredibly detailed, with jointed arms and legs that were only owned by the wealthier members of society. This doll had clothes cut into the surface, but some dolls were dressed in clothes and jewellery that imitated the owner's outfit. Some dolls had tools or weapons. The Romans had also made toy animals to imitate their beloved pets. Dogs were very popular but we also find painted wooden horses with wheels for legs.

Not only the children enjoyed playing games in Roman times: games and gambling were favourite pastimes for adults too. **Knucklebones** and **dice** games were popular (some of the dice were even loaded to help cheaters), but so were board games. The Romans played games similar to draughts and backgammon. Watching plays at the **theatre**, **gladiatorial combat** or animal fights at the **amphitheatre (arena)** or **chariot races** at the **circus** were popular pastimes to the Romans too. The most famous amphitheatre is the Colosseum in Rome, but many great towns had them. Romans also enjoyed swimming, horse riding, hunting, fishing and athletics. At the Baths Romans could exercise, wrestle, box or play ball games in the Palaestra, similar to a modern gym.

Calleva Atrebartum (modern Silchester), where our toy doll was found, was the Capital of the Atrebartes tribe and largest Roman town near Reading. It thrived during the Roman era, and it boasted an impressive amphitheatre outside the walls.

LINKS TO OTHER OBJECTS

We have a collection of artefacts from [Roman Silchester](#) that you may find useful in your lessons. These are a few examples but search the [online database](#) for more

- [Silchester Eagle](#)
- [Silchester Horse](#)
- [Iron Age golden coin hoard](#)

See also our [Loan Boxes database](#) and [blogs](#) for related objects.

IDEAS FOR ACTIVITIES

- Take a look at the [Festival of archaeology resources](#)
- **Toys museum in the classroom**
Ask children to bring a small toy to school and write labels for their toy with measures, name where it comes from, etc. Select 10 toys to create a museum display: title, theme, etc.
- **Design and make your own toy**
What is it made from? Will you play with it alone or with others?
- **Create a story about the object**
Did the doll have a name? Who owned it? Where were they from? What was their life like?