

**'I WALK ON THE WALL'**

**ROMAN BRITAIN POETRY LESSON PLAN:**

**AUTHOR'S NOTE FOR TEACHERS:**

This poem is a fictional account of the thoughts of a Roman Auxilliary soldier who is patrolling on Hadrian's wall in AD 132, shortly after the wall was built. It is inspired by the Roman Britain topic box that you can hire from [www.mytopicbox.co.uk](http://www.mytopicbox.co.uk) which contains high quality replica artefacts based around the character of a Roman Auxilliary Soldier serving in Roman Britain.

I always write under the pseudonym John Birchall as it is my middle name and is also a tribute to my Father (of the same name) who is a published poet in his own right.

If you enjoyed using this lesson, please consider using it alongside or brilliant Roman Britain topic box, containing high quality replica artefacts and supported with 360 item views, video explanations and lots of lesson plans like this one, all at [www.mytopicbox.co.uk](http://www.mytopicbox.co.uk).



## **'I WALK ON THE WALL'**

### **LESSON PLAN**

#### **PUPIL SPEAK OBJECTIVES:**

To learn what it was like to be a soldier on Hadrian's Wall in AD 132

#### **GENERAL NOTES:**

This is a simple one-off lesson to produce a poem based around an easy to follow format with repeated lines that allows freedom for pupils to explore the feelings of their character. As well as enhancing your pupils' learning, the results will look great on displays, read out loud in assembly or for your school website.

#### **INTRO:**

##### **PART 1 (10-15 min): Guided reading, whole class or small group**

1. Read the poem using the 'PC1 pupil copy' as a class and discuss who the character is and what is happening, then the 'Background Facts: PC3' to find out more about Roman Britain and the character of an Auxiliary soldier
2. Pass around photos (or show on the IWB) from the 'Roman Britain Picture Pack' (available from the website at [www.mytopicbox.co.uk](http://www.mytopicbox.co.uk)) and discuss with the following key questions:
  - A. What would it have been like to walk on Hadrian's wall on a cold evening in winter?
  - B. What difficulties would the soldiers have faced?
  - C. Would their equipment have been enough to keep them safe and warm? For example, would their chainmail have been strong enough to withstand attack and would their sandals have kept their feet warm?
  - D. How would you feel if you only got a stone certificate after 25 years of service?
3. Ask pupils to come up with a list of keywords relating to the photographs and list these on the board

##### **PART 2 (20 min): Planning your poem**

1. Give the pupils a copy of the 'planning sheet: PC2' to complete, either individually or in pairs or a small group
2. Feedback some of the answers as a class

#### **THE WRITING (time dependant on pupils' ability)**

##### **Drafting your poem:**

1. Read the poem again and point out the structure of the repeated intro followed by the two lines about how he feels
2. In pairs or alone, use the 'writing frame: PC4' to draft the poem

#### **PLENARY:**

Pupils take turns to read back their work to the class

**'I WALK ON THE WALL'  
PUPIL COPY: PC1**

**I Walk on the Wall, 132 AD**

I walk on the wall  
With campfires below  
While my feet in these sandals are cold

I walk on the wall  
Should be young and brave  
But I just feel tired and old

I walk on the wall  
Would love to stop and eat  
But this bread is covered with mould

I walk on the wall  
And miss my wife and child  
Their hands I would love to hold

I walk on the wall  
And feel alone  
So I wrap in my cloak's deep fold

**John Birchall**

**'I WALK ON THE WALL'  
PLANNING SHEET: PC2**

**Here are some questions about your character for you to consider before you write your poem. You may not use all this information but it will help you to feel what it is like to be him as he walks on the wall.**

**How old is your character?**

**Which country does he come from?  
(A lot of auxiliary soldiers came from different countries that the Romans had conquered)**

**Do they have a family back home? If they do, write a sentence about them here:**

**What does your character worry about the most?**

**What does your character miss the most about home?**

**Write some words here to describe how your character feels about walking on the wall**

# **'I WALK ON THE WALL'**

## **Background Facts: PC3**

### **Hadrian's Wall**

- Built in AD 122 by Emperor Hadrian to stop the Picts (from where Scotland is now) from invading the bottom half of Britain
- It took 6 years to build
- It was 5 to 6m high and 3m wide
- It had a fort every Roman mile (called Milecastles)
- It was patrolled mostly by Auxiliary soldiers

### **Auxiliary Soldiers**

- They were mostly made up of captured villagers who were often forced into fighting for the Romans
- They were a lower class of soldiers than the Legionaries who normally came from Rome
- They normally wore cheaper chainmail called Lorica Hamata instead of the stronger plater armour worn by Legionaries called Lorica Segmentata
- They only got 1/3 of the Legionaries pay
- They got the worst jobs!
- They had to stay in the army for 25 years (if they lasted that long!)
- They got a certificate called a 'Diploma' at the end of 25 years which said they were a Roman citizen

### **The Celts**

- They came from all over Europe, not just Britain
- They existed long before the Romans invaded
- They didn't wear armour
- In AD 61, a leader called Boudica led a rebellion against the Romans, destroying three cities (including London) and killing many Romans before she was captured and took poison
- All through the Roman period of 366 years they attacked the Romans whenever they could

**'I WALK ON THE WALL'  
WRITING FRAME: PC4**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**I Walk on the Wall, 132 AD**

I walk on the wall
I walk on the wall
I walk on the wall
I walk on the wall
I walk on the wall