CURSE LIKE A ROMAN!

Has someone annoyed you recently? Or stolen something? Perhaps they have eaten the last biscuit or broken a favourite possession. Why not get revenge the Roman way and curse them!

What is a curse tablet?

In Roman Britain, writing a curse was a popular way of seeking divine punishment for a wrongdoer. The message was usually inscribed on a metal tablet which was then thrown into a sacred pool, interred with the dead or hidden in a building.

In Leicester, archaeologists have found two curse tablets, one called the Servandus Tablet (shown left) and another called the Sabinianus Tablet, named after their writers. Servandus calls on the god Maglus to destroy a thief who has stolen his favourite cloak, whilst Sabinianus has had money stolen and asks the gods to strike the culprit down.

Curse tablets followed common formulas:

- An appeal to a god or spirit.
- A description of the complaint and/or crime.
- The name of the victim and the wrongdoer/s (if known).
- A request to punish the wrongdoer.
- A description of the punishment.

Have a look at these examples from Leicester

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Servandus Tablet</th>
<th>Sabinianus Tablet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I give to the god Maglus him who did wrong from the</td>
<td>Those who have stolen the silver coins of Sabinianus, that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slave-quarters; I give him who did theft from the</td>
<td>is Similis, Cupitus, Lochita, a god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slave-quarters; who stole the cloak of Servandus:</td>
<td>will strike down in this septisonium, and I ask that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvester, Rigomandus, Senilis, Venustinus, Vorvena,</td>
<td>they lose their life before seven days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calaminus, Rufaedo, Vendicina, Ingenuinus, Iuventius,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alocus, Cennosus, Germanus, Senedo, Cunovendus, Regalis,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigella, Senicianus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I give, that the god Maglus before the ninth day take</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>away him who stole the cloak of Servandus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Leicester curse tablets provide a unique insight into the lives of people living in the Roman town. Both were written in Latin between AD 150 and AD 250.

- The Servandus Tablet refers to a celtic god called Maglus. This is the only know reference to this god.
- Twenty people are named on the Servandus Tablet. The list is probably a unique roll-call of household slaves and is the single largest group of names ever recorded from Roman Leicester. They are a mixture of latin, greek and celtic and three of them are women. **Can you work out who the women are?**
- The last name, Senicianus, is crossed out. Is this because he was guilty or innocent? **What do you think?**
- The Sabinianus Tablet mentions a Septisonium. This is thought to be a temple dedicated to the seven planetary deities that give their names to the days of the week. **Do you know what these might be?**
- Reference to this building in Leicester is very important because it is only the fourth known reference to such a building in the entire Roman Empire. In Leicester, the Septisonium may have been attached to a public fountain and the curse may have been written to be thrown in the water.

Turn over for the answers.
CURSE LIKE A ROMAN!

Creating your own curse

You will need to...

- Describe the crime which has been committed.
- Give a list of suspects or name the culprit.
- Ask a god or goddess to punish the wrongdoer.
- Decide on the appropriate action for the god or goddess to take.

Tips

- The Romans did not use punctuation for their curses and words often ran together without spaces. JOIN SOME OF THE WORDS TOGETHER to confuse anyone trying to read your curse.
- Letters, words and even entire lines of text were often written backwards for added magical effect and to prevent other people reading the curse. WRITE SOME OF THE WORDS BACKWARDS.

Once you have decided what you want to write, copy your curse out on the blank tablet in Old Roman Cursive using the guide below. If you want to make a real curse tablet, use blank ‘scratch art sheets’ available from your local art store or online.

---

A   B  C  D  E   F   G    H  I   J   K   L   M   N  O   P   Q   R   S    T   U   V  W    X    Y    Z

---

The seven planetary deities are: the Sun (Sunday), Moon (Monday), Mars (Tuesday), Mercury (Wednesday), Venus (Friday) and Saturn (Saturday).

---

The women on the Servandus Tablet are Vorvena, Vendicina and Nigella. A woman is also recorded on the Sabinianus Tablet, Lochita. This is a Greek name which means born of a slave and a freeman.

---

The seven planetary deities are: the Sun (Sunday), Moon (Monday), Mars (Tuesday), Mercury (Wednesday), Venus (Friday) and Saturn (Saturday).

---

The women on the Servandus Tablet are Vorvena, Vendicina and Nigella. A woman is also recorded on the Sabinianus Tablet, Lochita. This is a Greek name which means born of a slave and a freeman.

---

The seven planetary deities are: the Sun (Sunday), Moon (Monday), Mars (Tuesday), Mercury (Wednesday), Venus (Friday) and Saturn (Saturday).

---

The women on the Servandus Tablet are Vorvena, Vendicina and Nigella. A woman is also recorded on the Sabinianus Tablet, Lochita. This is a Greek name which means born of a slave and a freeman.

---

The seven planetary deities are: the Sun (Sunday), Moon (Monday), Mars (Tuesday), Mercury (Wednesday), Venus (Friday) and Saturn (Saturday).

---

The women on the Servandus Tablet are Vorvena, Vendicina and Nigella. A woman is also recorded on the Sabinianus Tablet, Lochita. This is a Greek name which means born of a slave and a freeman.

---

The seven planetary deities are: the Sun (Sunday), Moon (Monday), Mars (Tuesday), Mercury (Wednesday), Venus (Friday) and Saturn (Saturday).

---

The women on the Servandus Tablet are Vorvena, Vendicina and Nigella. A woman is also recorded on the Sabinianus Tablet, Lochita. This is a Greek name which means born of a slave and a freeman.

---

The seven planetary deities are: the Sun (Sunday), Moon (Monday), Mars (Tuesday), Mercury (Wednesday), Venus (Friday) and Saturn (Saturday).

---

The women on the Servandus Tablet are Vorvena, Vendicina and Nigella. A woman is also recorded on the Sabinianus Tablet, Lochita. This is a Greek name which means born of a slave and a freeman.

---

The seven planetary deities are: the Sun (Sunday), Moon (Monday), Mars (Tuesday), Mercury (Wednesday), Venus (Friday) and Saturn (Saturday).

---

The women on the Servandus Tablet are Vorvena, Vendicina and Nigella. A woman is also recorded on the Sabinianus Tablet, Lochita. This is a Greek name which means born of a slave and a freeman.

---

The seven planetary deities are: the Sun (Sunday), Moon (Monday), Mars (Tuesday), Mercury (Wednesday), Venus (Friday) and Saturn (Saturday).

---

The women on the Servandus Tablet are Vorvena, Vendicina and Nigella. A woman is also recorded on the Sabinianus Tablet, Lochita. This is a Greek name which means born of a slave and a freeman.

---

The seven planetary deities are: the Sun (Sunday), Moon (Monday), Mars (Tuesday), Mercury (Wednesday), Venus (Friday) and Saturn (Saturday).

---

The women on the Servandus Tablet are Vorvena, Vendicina and Nigella. A woman is also recorded on the Sabinianus Tablet, Lochita. This is a Greek name which means born of a slave and a freeman.

---

The seven planetary deities are: the Sun (Sunday), Moon (Monday), Mars (Tuesday), Mercury (Wednesday), Venus (Friday) and Saturn (Saturday).

---

The women on the Servandus Tablet are Vorvena, Vendicina and Nigella. A woman is also recorded on the Sabinianus Tablet, Lochita. This is a Greek name which means born of a slave and a freeman.

---

The seven planetary deities are: the Sun (Sunday), Moon (Monday), Mars (Tuesday), Mercury (Wednesday), Venus (Friday) and Saturn (Saturday).

---

The women on the Servandus Tablet are Vorvena, Vendicina and Nigella. A woman is also recorded on the Sabinianus Tablet, Lochita. This is a Greek name which means born of a slave and a freeman.

---

The seven planetary deities are: the Sun (Sunday), Moon (Monday), Mars (Tuesday), Mercury (Wednesday), Venus (Friday) and Saturn (Saturday).

---

The women on the Servandus Tablet are Vorvena, Vendicina and Nigella. A woman is also recorded on the Sabinianus Tablet, Lochita. This is a Greek name which means born of a slave and a freeman.

---

The seven planetary deities are: the Sun (Sunday), Moon (Monday), Mars (Tuesday), Mercury (Wednesday), Venus (Friday) and Saturn (Saturday).

---

The women on the Servandus Tablet are Vorvena, Vendicina and Nigella. A woman is also recorded on the Sabinianus Tablet, Lochita. This is a Greek name which means born of a slave and a freeman.