



# Dead Interesting!

**Roman Tombstones are formulaic so you can easily read them or make your own up. However, sometimes words are only represented by the first letter to save space on the tombstone. Often there may be an image with the tools that a person used in life — so an Ornatrix (or hairdresser) might have an image of a comb and a pair of scissors.**

## You have

- Air drying clay or card and pens
- Paintbrushes
- Paint
- Something with a sharp point like the end of a paintbrush or a pencil or scissors

## Activity

Use the information below to make up your own Roman tombstone. You don't have to use something from all the sections.

### Start

D M = Dis Manibus = to the spirit of

### Who (optional)

F = Filius son of or Filia = Daughter of

PATER = father (of) (Mater = mother of)

PATRONUS = patron

DOMINUS master (or Domina for women)

LIBERTUSII = freedman/men (LIBERTA = Freedwoman)

CONIUX PIENTISSIMA = and very loyal wife

CONIUNX = wife

### Age (optional)

VIX AN XIV = vixit annos XIV = he/she lived for 14 years.

### Numbers:

I=1 IX=9

II=2 X=10

III=3 XIV=14

IV=4 L=50

V=5 XL=40

VI=6 C=100

**Occupation** (optional)

EQVES (eques) = cavalryman

CENTURIO = centurion

MIL = MILES = soldier

OPT = OPTIO = lieutenant

SIGNIFER = standard-bearer

TRIB = Tribunus = tribune

VET = Veteranus veteran, retired soldier

P PILUS = Primus Pilus = First Spear — the head centurion in a legion

SACERDOS DEAE SULIS = priest of the goddess Sulis

V C = Vir Clarissimus = Senator

ORNATRIX = Hairdresser

VESTALI = Vestal (a type of priestess)

LEG (Legio) = Legion — usually followed by the number and sometimes a legions name  
e.g.

Legio VI

AGRICOLA = Farmer

MEDICUS / MEDICA = Doctor or Physician

TEXTRIX = Weaver

ALUMNO = Student

**Who had the stone made?**

H F C = heres faciendum curavit = The heir had [the tombstone] made.

F C = .... Faciendum curavit = [name] had this made.

F MON = .... Fecit Monumentum = [Name] erected/made this monument

You could add EXS TEST = ex testamento = in accordance with his Will.

**Extra Endings** (optional)

H S E = hic situs est = Here he lies.

T TIB TERRA LEVIS = Sit Tibi Terra Levis may the earth lie lightly upon you

HOC M VETO VENIRI VETO DONARI Hoc Monumentum Veto venire veto donari = I  
forbid that this monument be sold; I forbid it be given away.

Here's an example:

DMGIUS JULIUS

F MARCUS VIX AN

XXIV EQUES LEG V

GERMANIA MARCUS

ANTONIUS F C

This means:

"To the spirit of Gius Julius son of Marcus. He lived for 24 years, cavalryman in the 5th Legion 'Germania.' Marcus Antonius had this made."

Now use this box to work out what you are going to put on the grave marker you're making:



Once you are happy with your inscription, make your own gravemarker or tombstone with either clay or a piece of thick card. Draw onto the card or clay with a pencil the words you want to write, then carve the letters into the clay. You could draw a symbol on your gravemarker as well. You might want to paint it grey to make it look like stone.

### **Useful questions**

- What does a tombstone say about a person?
- Why do you think the Romans shortened the words in this way on their gravestones?
- Do we ever shorten words nowadays? The Romans were doing it way before us!

## Research opportunities

- Your local museum may have some grave artefacts – perhaps even some Roman ones, why don't you see if you can visit? Try [www.mylearning.org](http://www.mylearning.org)
- You might want to try a graveyard survey of the graves in your town or village. There is an activity in Investigate Archaeology that explains how to do this.

## Useful Websites

Here are some real Roman tombstones to decipher for yourself:

<http://www.pyrrha.demon.co.uk/ntombs3.html>

Roman tombstones at Hadrian's Wall:

<http://museums.ncl.ac.uk/wallnet/ant/tomb.htm>

Roman tombstones from Rotherham:

<http://www.rotherhamunofficial.co.uk/history/roman/romantombstones.htm>

This activity was supplied by Andy Holland at Bradford University.

	National Curriculum	List of topics
<b>KS 1</b>	Mathematics, Ma2	Interpreting data
	Literacy En2	Skills – increasing vocabulary
	History 1, 2, 3, 4, 6	N/A
<b>KS 2</b>	Mathematics, Ma2	Algebra symbols, Interpreting data
	Literacy En2	Skills – increasing vocabulary
	History 1, 2, 3, 4, 9	Unit 14, Unit 15

## creativeminds

The Creative Minds project works with museums libraries and archives across the Yorkshire region, to provide young people with learning opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths (S.T.E.M.). This ground-breaking project is the first of its kind in the country and is managed by MLA Yorkshire. This pack was developed by Creative Minds with funding from Yorkshire Forward.

