

GCSE Latin

Component 3B

Monday 9th January

Childbirth

Childbirth was very dangerous in Roman times. Medical science was primitive, and we know from tombstones that women often died giving birth. Children often died when they were still very small.

Women married early partly because they believed that childbirth was safer when they were young. Some richer women, after giving birth to an heir, avoided having more children by using sponges as contraceptives.

Childbirth

Starter: Have a guess! Match the number to the statistic

Statistics on Childbirth

Average number of women to die during childbirth

1 in 2

Average number of children elite women had

<2

Average number of children who died in their first year

3 in 10

Average number of children who died before age of 10

1 in 2

>3

1 in 2

1 in 2

<2

1 in 4

3 in 10

2 in 3

5 in 9

True or false?

| Statement | T/F |
|--|--|
| Adultery was legal for men, and the phallus was a symbol of good luck | True |
| Romans used forceps and caesarean sections to help women give birth | False |
| It was seen as the man's fault if a woman didn't conceive | False |
| Gladiator blood, rooster testicles, and pig faeces were aids to conceive | False – rooster testicles were to make a boy, pig faeces was to ease birthing pain |
| Washing with vinegar, eating certain plants, or smearing with white lead were contraceptive methods. | True |



Prenatal Care: First Stage of Pregnancy

- Avoid ‘coughing, sneezing, blows and falls...lifting heavy weights, leaping, sitting on hard sedan chairs, (and)..drunkenness’ – Soranus of Ephesus – *Gynaecology*
- ‘She’s a young girl and didn’t even realise she was pregnant, consequently she failed to take certain precautions necessary for pregnant women and she did things she should not have. She has paid for her ignorance and her lesson has been costly.’ – Pliny the Elder

Complete the following sheet with the Roman medical advice for pregnancy and childbirth

First Stage of Pregnancy:

| | |
|--|--|
| Roman medical advice as to what women should avoid | |
|--|--|

Prenatal Care: Second Stage of Pregnancy

- For nausea – a one day fast
- For nausea – eating the pips of a citron
- For cravings – pregnant women should not be allowed to eat unhealthy food



Complete the following sheet with the Roman medical advice for pregnancy and childbirth

Second Stage of Pregnancy:





Prenatal Care: Third Stage of Pregnancy

- To build strength: increased exercise, food, and sleep
- After Month 7:
 - Less physical activity
 - Support bandages used
 - Oil applied to reduce stretch marks

Complete the following sheet with the Roman medical advice for pregnancy and childbirth


Third Stage of Pregnancy:



Call the Midwife

- This relief is from the funeral monument of Scribonia Attica in Ostia.
- A naked woman sits on a birthing chair whilst her *obstetrix* (midwife) Scribonia sits in front of her ready to catch the child.





Soranus of Ephesus

- Soranus was a physician who wrote a treatise called Gynaecology.
- He said a midwife should be “literate, with her wits about her, possessed of a good memory, loving work, respectable and generally not unduly handicapped as regards her senses, sound of limb, robust and, according to some people, endowed with long, slim fingers and short nails at her fingertips”.

How often do you think Roman women used midwives?

If they didn't have a midwife, who helped the mother?

Birthing partners



- If a midwife isn't available, you can always sit in a family member's lap!
- But this woman has to be strong enough to bear the mother's weight and keep her still in the birthing chair.

Roman-British birthing amulet, 100-300CE

- Roman gold amulet comprising a rectangular sheet (lamella) cut from gold foil, with sixteen lines of incised text along the short axis. 12 magical characters on lines 1-3 are followed by the main text on lines 3 - 16 in Greek cursive writing. The text is apparently a charm to ensure safe childbirth for Fabia, daughter of Terentia. The lamella is complete, though with extensive rolling creasing and post-depositional crumpling.





Birthing goddesses

“Is it because Geneta is a spirit concerned with the generation and birth of beings that perish? Her name means some such thing as "flux and birth" or "flowing birth." Accordingly, just as the Greeks sacrifice a bitch to Hecate, even so do the Romans offer the same sacrifice to Geneta on behalf of the members of their household.” - Plutarch

“My mother, Juno, loves brides: crowds of mothers worship me, such a virtuous reason above all befits her and me.’ Bring the goddess flowers: the goddess loves flowering plants; garland your heads with fresh flowers, and say: ‘You, Lucina, have given us the light of life’: and say: ‘You hear the prayer of women in childbirth.’ But let her who is with child, free her hair in prayer, so the goddess may gently free her womb.” – Ovid, *Fasti*

Natural help for a birthing mother



Dittany



Catmint



Verbena

“Midwives should put warm oil on the woman’s abdomen and labia during labor to offer lubrication and pain relief” (Soranus Gyn. 2.4)



Discussion


- How would you feel as a Roman woman about to give birth?

A Child Is Born

Key Vocab:

exposure,
exposed

baby girls were at more risk of being exposed by their parents than baby boys. If a girl was accepted, then a different path lay ahead of her than that of a boy.



A new baby was bathed and picked up by its father. This showed that it had been accepted into the family.

Let's look at a famous example from a story in Roman legend

Babies and Childhood

Write these events of the story of Romulus & Remus in order into your storyboard.

- A she-wolf comes along. She nurses the boys in her cave, the 'Lupercal'.
- As men, the boys decide to found their own city.
- Each stands on their own hill and waits for an augury (bird sign). Remus sees 6 but Romulus sees 12.
- Rhea's uncle, the usurping king, makes her expose the babies, intending for them to die.
- Rhea Silvia, a priestess in Alba Longa, has twin babies with Mars, the god of war.
- Romulus is crowned king and names the great city after himself.
- As young men, the boys discover they're royal and their grandfather should be king of Alba Longa, so they restore him to the throne.
- The two fight. Romulus wins. Remus dies.
- The boys grow older and are adopted by a shepherd.



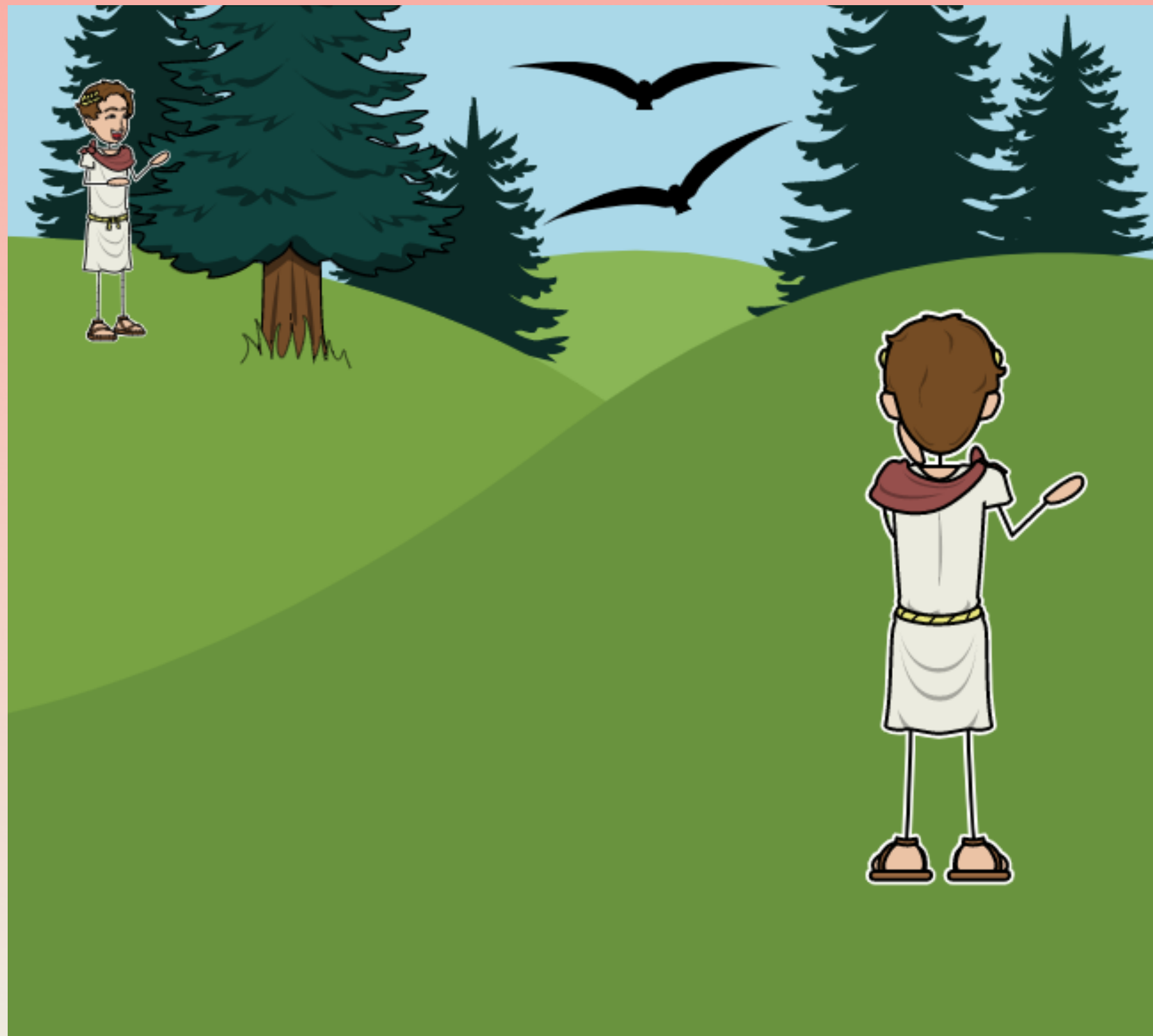
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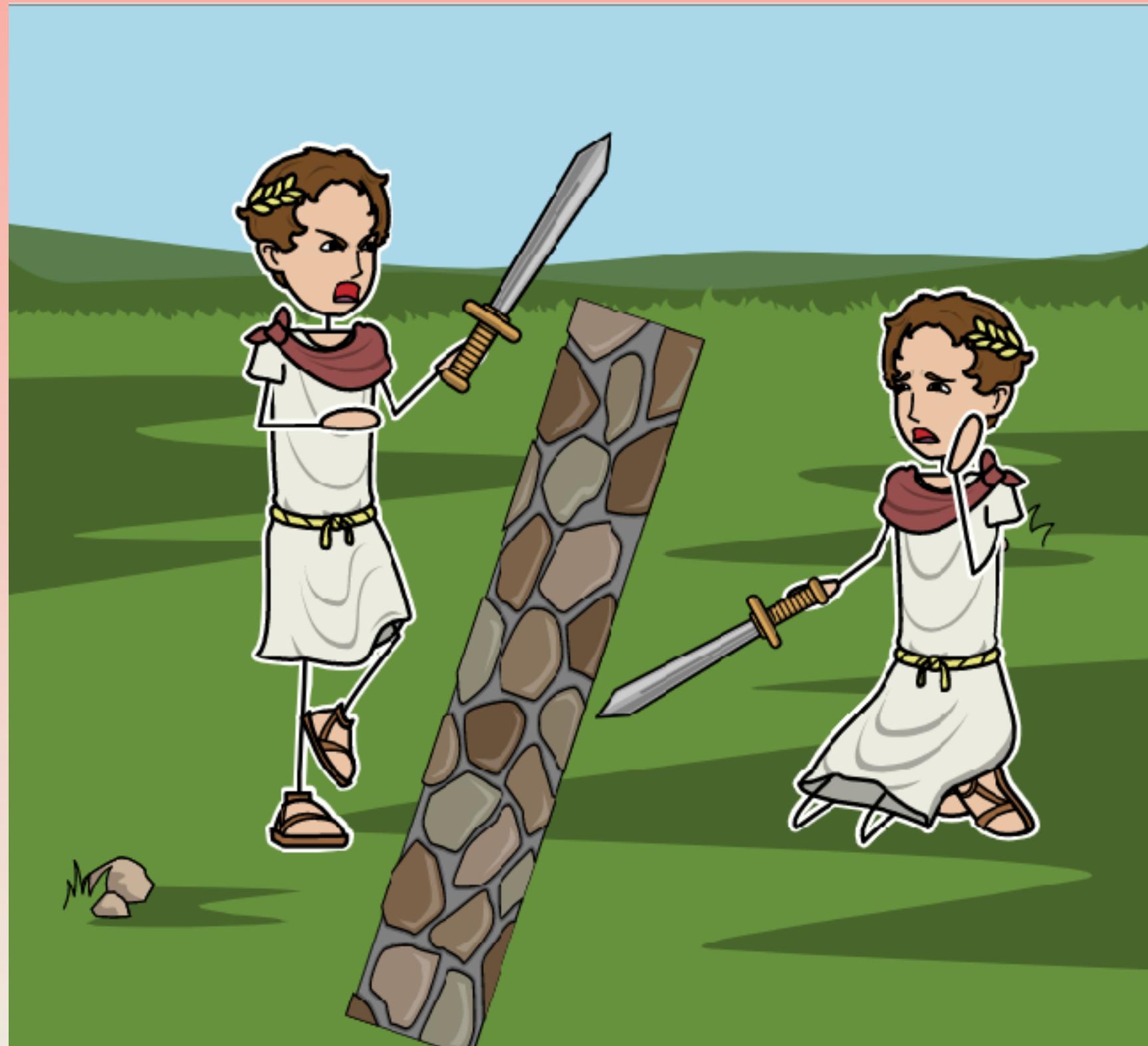
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King Amulius ordered Rhea Silvia
to expose her twin boys.

- **Why did Amulius do this?**
- *Amulius didn't want the boys to try to take his throne as it was theirs by right, so he exposed them.*
- **What gave him the right to decide to expose the boys?**
- *Any paterfamilias had the right to decide what happened in his household, including whether any infant in his household should be exposed.*

Why might any paterfamilias
decide to expose a child?



Gender



Money



Disability



Paternity

Where might you abandon your infant?

- Some parents abandoned their children with no hope of survival.
- But some left their children clothed, with *crepundia* (mementos e.g. a rattle, half a coin), at designated spots where they might be picked up by slave merchants or pimps.
- Juvenal called sites where babies were abandoned *columnae lactariae* (milk columns) after the original place where the poor could get hold of milk / a wet nurse.





What if the baby was wanted?

- ‘Iuvenilla is born on Saturday the 2nd of August in the second hour of the evening.’
- ‘Cornelius Sabinus has been born’

Grafitti!



Discussion

- Would you rather be born a boy or girl in Rome? Why?



Read through the information
on Roman babies.

- Answer the comprehension questions on *dies lustricius* and then on feeding.
- Finish for homework for next Monday (16th January)