

DECODE A ROMAN MILITARY MESSAGE!



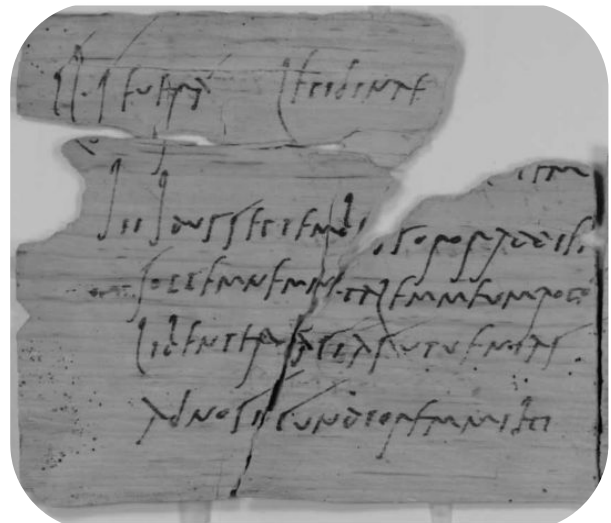
Men from the provinces could join the Roman auxiliary troops to earn a living, make friends, wear shiny uniform and travel the world. But it wasn't all fun and games - life could be hard for soldiers and sometimes the missions involved fighting people who were just like family and friends back home.

Troops from all over the Empire spoke a range of languages, but in the West the army was run in Latin. Latin was the language that allowed people from different backgrounds to communicate. If you hadn't yet been able to learn it, the army was a good place to start!

We have examples of military messages in Latin from the Empire, for example Vindolanda (UK) and Vindonissa (Switzerland).

As well as soldiers' requests for more beer and woollen underwear, we also have a birthday invitation sent by a Roman officer's wife called Claudia Severa to a friend who was married to the camp commander.

Look at the writing in this image of the invitation – do you find it easy to read?



Claudia Severa's birthday invitation, found at Vindolanda.

When Romans wrote letters and other documents, they often used a style of handwriting called *Old Roman Cursive*. **Let's try it!**

λ α ς d // f g h i l m n o r q p r s t u x
 a b c d e f g h i l m n o p q r s t u x

THE KEY

This is how the letters of *Old Roman Cursive* look:



Give yourself a Roman name and try writing it using the letters above:

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THE ROMAN ARMY NEEDS YOUR HELP! CAN YOU READ THIS MESSAGE?

The words are in English, but the letters are Roman Cursive. Which English letters are missing from the Roman alphabet?

