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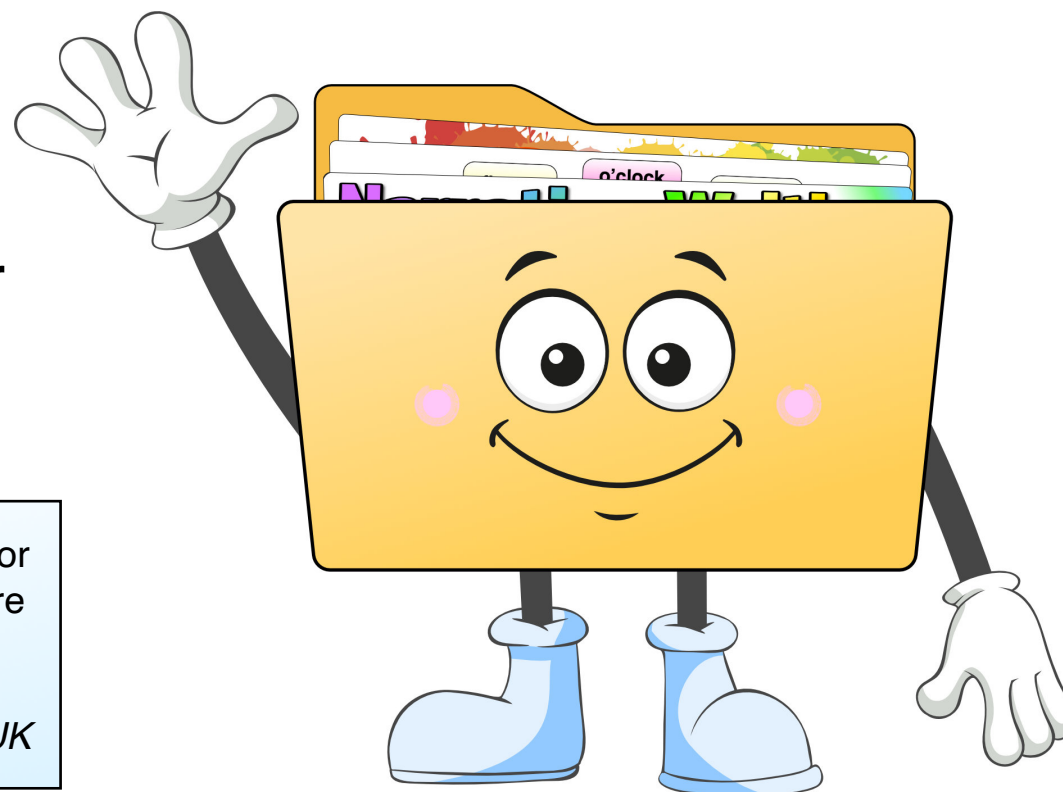
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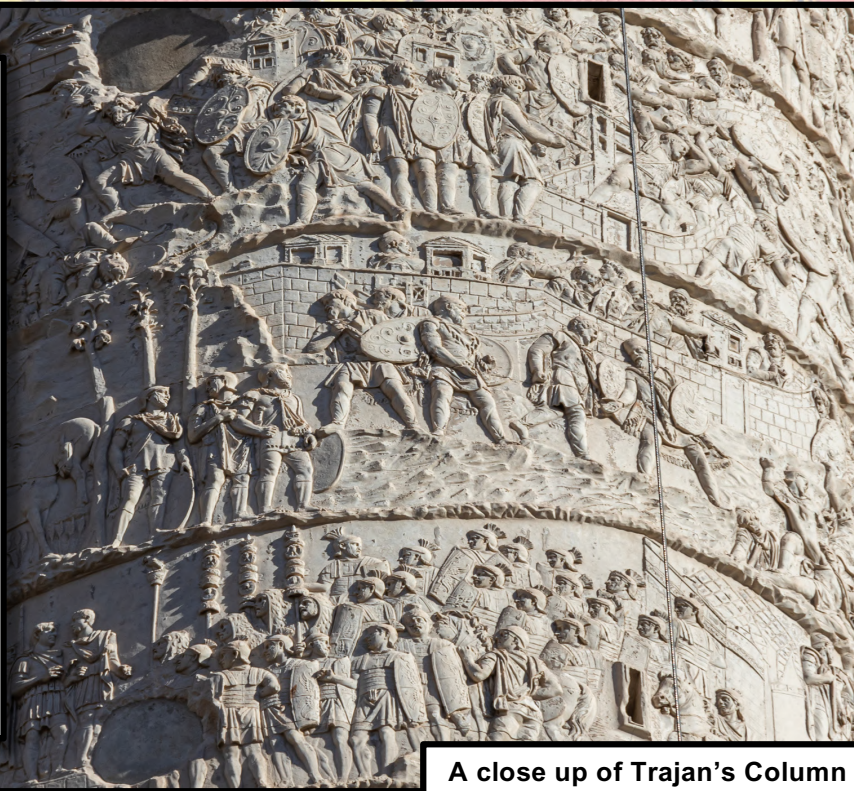
Dawn, Primary Teacher, UK



Roman Shields

Roman legionnaires carried a large semi-circular shield. The Latin word for this type of shield is *scutum*. Unlike a flat shield, the shape of the *scutum* deflected attacks. The *scutum* was held to the soldier's left-hand side. For close combat, in his right hand he carried a sword (*gladius*).

Only one intact shield of this type has ever been found in modern-day Syria. However, there is lots of evidence about them; they are shown on monuments such as Trajan's Column in Rome and Roman writers wrote accounts of them being used in battle.



A close up of Trajan's Column depicting Roman soldiers.



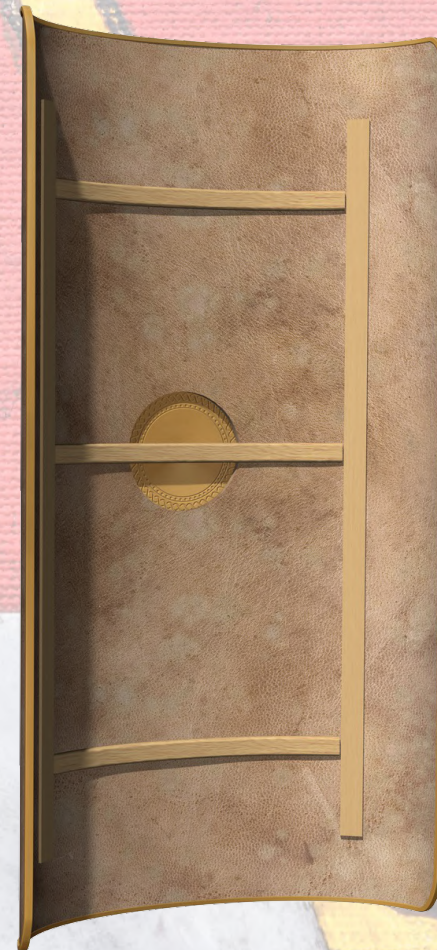
Roman Shield Construction

It is not surprising that shields have not survived from Roman times. This is because they were made from wood, linen and leather, all materials that decompose over time.



A metal shield boss found in Vermand, France.

In the centre, a metal boss (*umbo*) was attached. This could be used as a weapon, to force the enemy out of the way, and also protected the soldier's hand.



The main part of the shield was constructed from thin strips of wood glued together in layers to give the shield strength. Wood was light enough for the soldiers to carry their shields on long marches but strong enough to protect them in battle. To form the distinctive shape, the wood was heated and bent using a press. Then leather and linen were attached to the front and decorated.