

Roman Baths of Bath

On land | England | about 60-70 CE onward | Grades 3-5

Name _____

Date _____

Romans tossed curses written on metal into the sacred spring here, asking the goddess to punish thieves.

Read the story

Bath has the only natural hot springs in Britain. Long before the Romans, the Celtic people worshiped a goddess named Sulis here. After the Romans arrived in 43 CE, they built a temple and grand bathhouse around the spring. They named the town Aquae Sulis, the waters of Sulis.

The Romans connected Sulis with their own goddess Minerva. Her temple had a gilded bronze statue, and a carved stone face, possibly a sea god or a gorgon, glared down from the temple's front.

Visitors bathed in warm pools, steam rooms and cold plunges. Many threw offerings into the spring, including coins and more than 100 curse tablets. These thin sheets of lead asked the goddess to punish people who stole clothes, rings or money.

How it ended

After Rome left Britain around 410 CE, the baths were not looked after. Silt from flooding and collapsing roofs covered them. They lay hidden for centuries until builders and archaeologists uncovered them.

Key words

- hot spring: a place where warm water flows naturally out of the ground
- curse tablet: a sheet of metal with a written wish for something bad to happen to someone
- offering: a gift given to a god

Wow facts

- About 1 million liters of hot water rise from the spring every day.
- More than 100 curse tablets were found, one asking for punishment for whoever stole a cloak.
- The word plumbing comes from the Latin word for lead, plumbum.

Talk about it

1. If you could write a message to throw into a wishing well, what would it say?

2. How is a Roman bath like a modern swimming pool or gym?

Try this

Draw a map of Roman Baths of Bath as it looked at its busiest. Label three things people did there.

Quick quiz

Circle the best answer.

1. Which goddess was linked to Bath's spring?

- A. Sulis Minerva
- B. Isis
- C. Freya
- D. Hera

2. What were curse tablets made of?

- A. Lead
- B. Paper
- C. Wood
- D. Glass

3. What is special about Bath's water?

- A. It is naturally hot
- B. It is salty
- C. It is frozen
- D. It is purple

Go further

Open ruinscape.live/roman-baths-of-bath/ for photos, the Then and Now picture where there is one, and links to museum collections and research. On the globe, Lyra Kael can fly the class there and answer questions.

Answer key (for teachers)

1. A. Romans combined Celtic Sulis with their goddess Minerva.
2. A. They were thin sheets of lead.
3. A. Bath has Britain's only natural hot springs.