

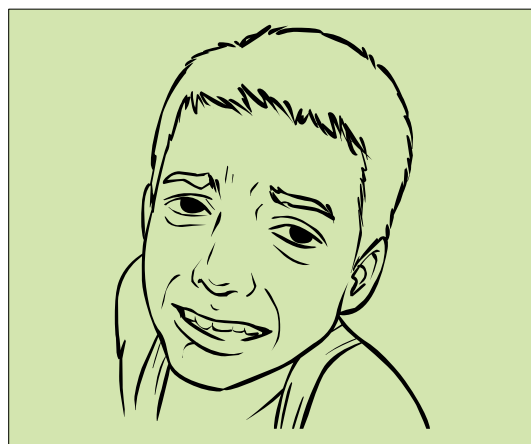


Slave child

2nd December is the United Nations International Day for the Abolition of Slavery. One way to help young children explore the issues around this difficult and emotive subject is to ask them to imagine what life must have been like for a child living under these conditions.

The Literacy Club has produced a helpful resource offering four 1st person fictional recounts, written by four children from four different places and four different periods of history. But they all have one thing in common... they are all forced to work for a living.

Here is one of those recounts: an entry from the diary of a young slave girl from Roman times. Accompanying the text is a set of comprehension questions.



To read three more **Slave child** diaries, and for an interactive version of the comprehension activities with virtual clues, model answers and online marking (for use by children, teachers or parents) go to **The Literacy Club** website at www.theliteracyclub.com



A Roman slave girl from the time of Emperor Claudius (41 BCE to 54 AD)

Eda's diary

Rome, Italy

11 December, during the reign of Emperor Claudius

My name is Eda and I am nine-years-old. I am a slave in Rome, working for a rich family. The father of the family is part of the government of the Roman Empire, under the Emperor, Claudius.

I was not born a slave. I was born in Albion, far away, across the sea. The Romans invaded my country, with

many legions of centurions and, although the people of my town fought bravely against them, we were defeated. My family – me and my father, mother and brother – were taken across the sea in a big ship, then, with about 50 other slaves, we were forced to march many miles across the country. After what seemed like a lifetime of marching, tired and hungry, we arrived in the capital of the vast Roman Empire, Rome.

We were taken to a large open square, and told we were to be sold as slaves to the highest bidder. I felt so ashamed to be standing in front of all those people – they looked at us as though we were animals. Each of us had a plaque around our neck, saying what we could do and any faults we had – mine said 'stubborn'! My mother, Blanda, was sold first, to a rich merchant, to work in his kitchens as she is a wonderful cook. Then my brother and father were sold. Two men were bidding against each other to buy them: one stocky, scarred man from the coliseum; the other, a kind-looking Roman who wanted them as workers on his farm. I was so glad that the farmer won – the other slaves had told us that the gladiators at the coliseum have to fight for their lives, against other men and even wild beasts, and that many of them are killed.

I was sold to a family whose father works in the Senate, as a member of the Roman government. I help with the daughter of the family, who is the same age as I am. I mend her clothes and help to dress her. I fetch and carry food and drink for her from very early in the morning until she goes to bed.

Although she is not cruel to me, I miss my family. I miss the rains of Albion and the green hills and trees – Rome is hot and sandy and dusty. At one point, I felt so sad that I even thought about running away, to try to find my mother, but one of the other slaves told me that if I was caught, I would be beaten or maybe even killed. My only hope is that my owner frees me after many years of loyal service, or that I will somehow earn enough to buy my freedom. I will never stop hoping that one day I will find my family and return home.

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Eda's diary

Read Eda's diary then answer the following questions in as much detail as you can, giving evidence for your answers.

1. Has Eda always been a slave?

(2 marks)

2. How do we know that the journey to Rome was difficult for Eda?

(3 marks)

3. Why didn't Eda want her brother to be sold to the man from the coliseum?

(3 marks)

4. What jobs does Eda have to do as a slave girl?

(4 marks)

5. Is Eda happy with her life as a slave girl? How do you know?

(4 marks)

6. Why doesn't Eda run away?

(2 marks)

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