

How the Romans conquered Britain

Around 2,000 years ago, Britain was ruled by tribes of people called the **Celts**. But this was about to change. For around a century, the Roman army had been building an Empire across Europe. Now it was coming for Britain! In **AD43**, the full might of the Roman army landed on the beaches in Kent. Over the next year it battled inland, storming through hillforts and chopping down anyone who stood in their way. The Romans wanted Britain's precious metals. However, they weren't just a destructive force - they built new forts, new settlements and roads. They spread their culture, language and laws.

Video Transcript from BBC Bitesize web page: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zqtf34j/articles/z9j4kqt>

Why did the Romans invade Britain?

Over 2,000 years ago, the Romans first arrived in Britain. Although that was way back in the past, many clues still survive which tell us what life was like during Roman times. From the remains of ancient forts to the jewellery, letters and household items still being dug up by archaeologists today. We can find out brilliant details of what they ate, what their homes looked like and even what they did for fun.

And thanks to a book written all those years ago by the famous Roman commander, Julius Caesar, we also know one reason why the Romans wanted to come to Britain in the first place - they wanted to make use of the amazing natural resources to be found here.

Caesar wrote, "*The Britons have a huge number of cattle, they use gold coins or iron bars as their money, and produce tin and iron.*" That description helps to explain why Caesar and his army decided to pile over here to Britain to try to invade. Rome wanted to get its hand on all those British resources to make itself even richer.

Back then, before the Romans invaded, we didn't have one king or queen ruling over the nation. Britain was made up of different groups, or tribes, known as the Celts or native Britons.

We get an idea of what the native Britons looked like thanks to a description of them in here. But do remember, of course, they were Caesar's enemy, so his opinion might be a little bit one-sided. "*All Britons used woad to dye their bodies a blue colour, which makes them terrifying when they are fighting in battle.*"

The Celts also put lime in their hair to make it stiff and thick, which made them look even more ferocious. "*They used their chariots in battle, steering them in all directions while hurling their weapons, generally causing the enemy to separate apart. Then one of the warriors leaps from the chariot and fights on foot.*"

It was all just too much for Caesar. He invaded the country twice, but he never actually managed to take over. That would have to wait until 100 years later when the Emperor Claudius tried again and this time, he succeeded. And that is how we became part of the Roman Empire.



Questions:

- a. When did the Roman Army arrive on the beaches of Kent?
- b. Describe reasons for the Roman invasion of Britain.
- c. How did the Romans improve the lives of people living in Britain?

d. True or false?

Celts/ Britons dyed themselves blue to scare the enemy.

Complete: The blue dye was called _____.

- e. Name another way the Britons made themselves look frightening.
- f. Use the website to find out the names of the Emperors in the pictures.
- g. Which Emperor failed to successfully invade Britain?

h. Discuss in class. Which would you rather be? A Celtic warrior or a Roman Soldier? Why?

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**Blue dye extracted
from the leaves of a
plant.**

