

Romans

Key Stage 2



MITHRAEUM LONDON

Welcome to the London Mithraeum

During your visit, pupils will get to discover what life in Londinium was like almost 2,000 years ago and experience the mysterious Temple of Mithras.

Pupils should be encouraged to make connections between the past and present by discussing Roman objects that are still used today as well as to explore contemporary artwork inspired by the site.

The pupils will explore Roman religion and learn about the mysterious Temple of Mithras before descending seven metres below ground level to experience the original temple through an innovative light and sound experience.

The session aims to extend pupils' knowledge about Roman London and encourage development of observation, questioning and prediction skills; the experience allows for use of most of the senses.

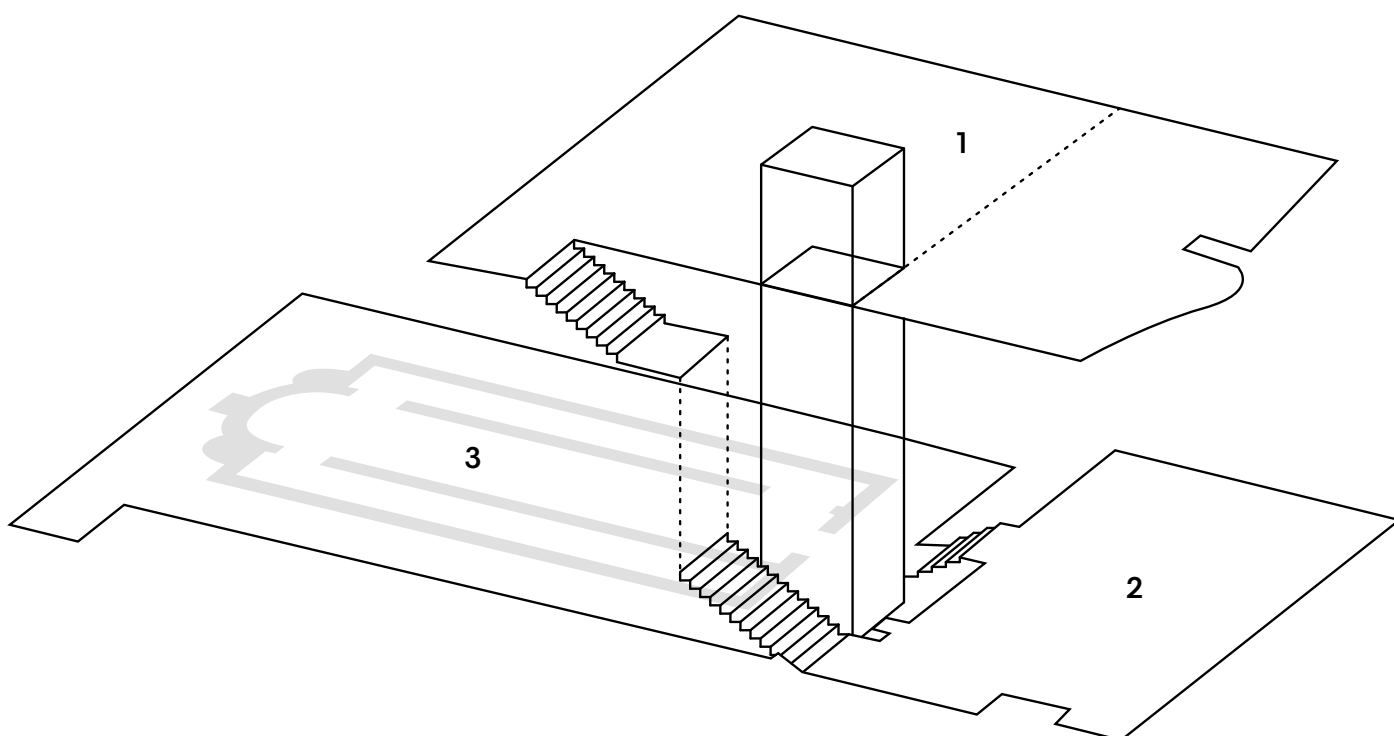
Please note that the temple viewing experience has general low lighting levels and also includes lighting effects, mist and sound.

Contents

Map	4
National Curriculum links	5
Practical information	6
Preparing for your visit	7
	8
Background Information	
London / Londinium	10
Roman religion and belief in Londinium	13
The Temple of Mithras	14
Mithraism	19
Bloomberg SPACE	20
Bloomberg	21
Bloomberg Philanthropies	22
Suggested pre-visit activities	23
Back-at-school activities	25

Map

1. **Ground floor:** Explore contemporary artwork inspired by the history of the site and a display showcasing artefacts found during the Bloomberg excavations.
2. **Mezzanine:** Find out about the mystery cult of Mithras and the discovery of the Temple of Mithras.
3. **The Temple of Mithras:** Explore the reconstructed temple, with a multisensory sound and light experience.



National Curriculum links

Art

Focus on pupils' recording and observation skill development

History

Focus on the Roman Empire and its impact on Britain

English

Focus on retrieving and recording information from nonfiction sources; learning and appropriately using specific terminology; identifying themes and making inferences

Religious Education

Focus on places of worship and polytheism (belief in many gods)

Science

Focus on materials and their properties and changes to materials over time, e.g., what survives.

Practical information

Getting here

London Mithraeum Bloomberg SPACE is located in the heart of the City of London between St. Paul's Cathedral and the Bank of England.

Public transport

The space is located next door to the new Walbrook entrance to Bank station on the Waterloo and City line. The station has step-free access.

Tube

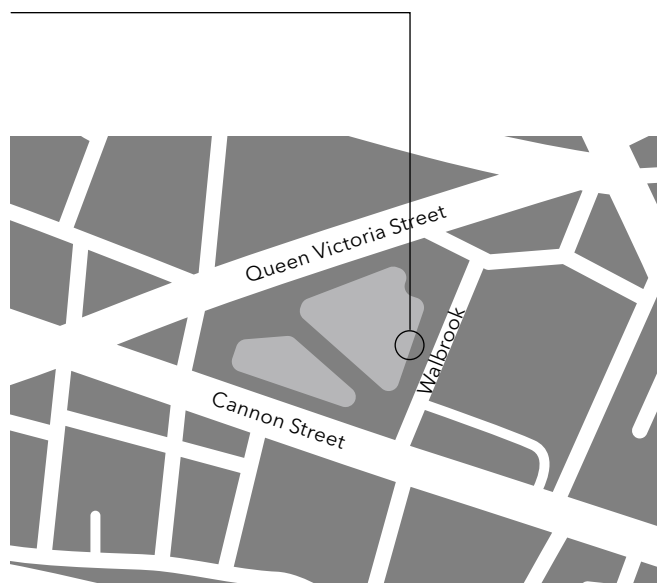
Bank	1-minute walk
St Paul's	6-minute walk
Mansion House	6-minute walk

Train

Cannon Street	1-minute walk
Liverpool Street	14-minute walk
Blackfriars	12-minute walk
London Bridge	18-minute walk

Address:

12 Walbrook
London EC4N 8AA



Parking

We are in the congestion charge zone with limited car parking options. We encourage visitors to travel by public transport.

Free travel

All schools within Greater London can take advantage of Transport for London's School Party Travel Scheme.

See www.tfl.gov.uk/schoolparty or call London Underground Customer Services on 0845 330 9881 for details.

Preparing for your visit

Teacher planning visits

We recommend that teachers make a planning visit to the London Mithraeum to become familiar with the location, layout and available facilities, to help with completing a risk assessment. To arrange a planning visit, please contact us at info@londonmithraeum.com

Risk assessments

The group leader or teacher is responsible for doing a risk assessment. London Mithraeum regularly reviews its public spaces and resources for its own use and this document is available on request, it is only for teachers' information and does not constitute an official risk assessment.

Access for schools

Accessibility	Wheelchair-accessible throughout, offering a range of services for visitors with disabilities.
General access	Step-free access is available to all floors of the building via lifts. Assistance animals are welcome. Folding seats are available to borrow.
Visual access	Large print materials. Magnifying glasses and digital guides with 'Vision Accessibility' settings. Torches for low-light areas.
Hearing access	Transcripts of exhibition audio.

For further information or to discuss how we might best cater to your specific needs, please contact us on info@londonmithraeum.com

Please note that the temple viewing experience has general low lighting levels and also includes lighting effects, mist and sound. Please get in touch if you require more information.

Preparing for your visit

Organising your group

Teachers and accompanying adults are responsible for the behaviour and welfare of their pupils at all times during the visit. Please ensure that you have at least one adult for every six pupils and that adults accompany children at all times.

Your visit

When you arrive at London Mithraeum Bloomberg SPACE, you will be met by one of our team and shown to the toilets before the session begins. Your class will then be provided a short introduction to the space, as well as an activity pack and pencil for each child. Visits take about 45 minutes to 1 hour complete.

Following this there are four areas for you to lead your class to explore:

Ground floor: explore the art work and complete the related exercises in the activity pack.

Artefact case: students can use the interactive tablets to explore different artefacts in the case. Please put students into groups, with one tablet per group for this section.

Mezzanine: students can explore the interactive podiums to learn more about the temple and listen to the audio pieces.

Temple of Mithras: The temple experience runs every 20 minutes, on the hour, at twenty past, and twenty to. (e.g. 12pm, 12:20pm, 12:40pm). It includes low lighting, haze and chanting in Latin. After the experience the lights come up and you are free to explore the temple for 5 - 10 minutes.

Staff will be available throughout your visit to support with any questions.

Preparing for your visit

Lunch

We do not have anywhere on site to eat, but there are open-air spaces nearby, such as benches around the artwork [*Forgotten Streams*, by Cristina Iglesias](#).

Photography

Photography during school workshops is welcomed. You are also welcome to take photographs — but no flash or tripods — within the Temple of Mithras.

Resources

We provide all the resources needed for your visit. You can also explore **Bloomberg Connects**, and prepare for your visit with our [digital guide](#).



Bloomberg
Connects

London / Londinium

When was London founded?

London was founded sometime around AD 48, a few years after the Roman Conquest in AD 43. It was built quickly as a frontier trading town, with both Romans and Britons swiftly taking advantage of new trade opportunities that came with the Roman Army. This town was called Londinium.

What was the Thames valley like before Londinium was founded?

Before the Roman Conquest, the Thames valley area had Iron Age farmsteads, but no Iron Age town. The area that would become London was centred around the Walbrook stream, which flowed south into the Thames, creating a valley between two hills to the west and east. The Thames itself was much wider, with more islands and marsh ground created by the tides.

What did early Londinium look like?

The first buildings in Londinium were built of wood. A bridge connected the north and south sides of the river; this bridge would come to be known as London Bridge. The town grew out from the area around London Bridge to the Walbrook stream. The first defences around the city were ditches.



© Peter Froste / Museum of London

London / Londinium

Who would the first Londoners have been?

The first residents of the town were a mixture of soldiers, travelling merchants and craftspeople, Britons from surrounding tribes and people looking for new opportunities.

What has been found from the early Roman period?

The recent excavations revealed part of the Walbrook stream and the area to the immediate east. The waterlogged conditions left by the Walbrook created the perfect conditions for the survival of archaeological material. These include Roman timber buildings, fences and yards, tools, money, clothes and even documents — all of which are helping transform our understanding of early Roman Londinium. The astonishing quantity, range and preservation of the objects recovered from the site make this the most significant archaeological project undertaken in London in recent decades.



© MOLA

London / Londinium

What were the 'star' artefacts?

The most exciting artefacts were made of organic materials, like wood and leather (which rarely stand the test of time). These include 405 wooden writing tablets, 87 of which had writing that could be transcribed and translated. They introduce us to some of the first inhabitants of this new city, a Roman provincial capital and, therefore, a "European" city — a diverse mix of businessmen, slaves and freedman. They reveal the names of more than 100 early Londoners, including Taurus the hauler and Tertius the brewer. One tablet was dated to 8 January of AD 57, the earliest known handwritten document recorded from Britain. Another carries the earliest known reference by name to Londinium. The tablets not only reflect life in Roman Britain and beyond, but carry the voices of Roman Londoners in its first half century.

What does the Bloomberg site reveal about early Londinium?

The artefacts reveal a wide range of daily activities, industries and occupations, giving an extraordinary glimpse into life in bustling Roman Londinium. Through the writing tablets in particular, we get a snapshot of the workings of Roman Londinium as it grew as an administrative and financial centre, just as it is today.



© MOLA

LONDON
MITHRAEUM

Bloomberg
SPACE

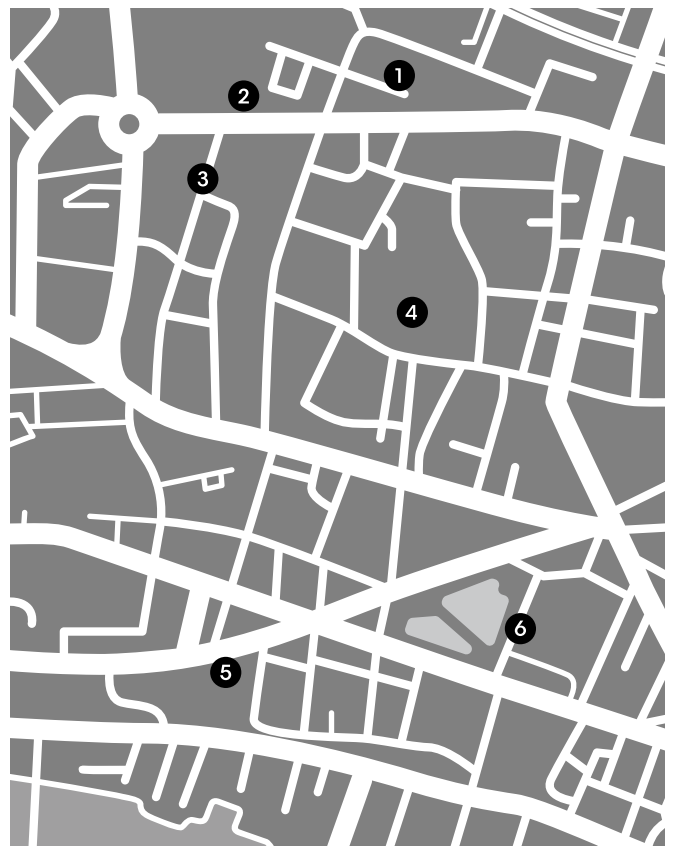
Roman religion and belief in Londinium

Did Roman Londoners believe in Roman gods?

The population of Roman London held an enormous number of different religious beliefs, including in the classical Roman gods like Jupiter and Mars. However, immigrants and soldiers from different parts of the Empire brought with them their own deities and beliefs, adding to those of the native Britons.

What evidence is there for religion and belief from Londinium?

We have many fragments of evidence for public and private religious beliefs and practices — from figurines of gods and goddesses that may have stood in people's homes to remnants of public temples. Worshippers had different ways of honouring their deities and the shrines, amulets and miniatures unearthed on this site are important clues to understanding religious rituals.



1 St. Alphage Garden

2 West Gate and City Wall

3 Noble Street

4 The Roman Amphitheatre

5 Cleary Garden

6 The London Mithraeum

The Temple of Mithras

What is a Mithraeum?

A Mithraeum is a Roman temple or sacred space and the meeting place of the worshippers of the god Mithras. The Temple of Mithras in the City of London is one of only a handful of such buildings from Roman Britain that have been discovered.

What did the Temple of Mithras look like?

The Temple of Mithras was built of clay bricks and stone on the banks of the Walbrook. Like other mithraea, it was made to resemble the mythic cave where Mithras killed the bull and so was windowless, dark and probably damp and smelly. The Temple of Mithras was a sunken rectangular temple with one rounded "apse" end. It was shaped like an aisled church is today, with two aisles and an altar. The main doorway would have been on the wall opposite the apse, creating a central path through the temple.

When was it built?

It was originally built in c. AD 240-250, but was modified several times — raising the floor levels, possibly because of the damp. In about AD 310-320, it may have been taken over by the followers of Bacchus and was abandoned in the 5th century as Londinium itself began to be abandoned.



Reconstruction of the Temple's interior.
© MOLA

The Temple of Mithras

When was the Temple of Mithras discovered?

The Temple of Mithras was discovered in 1954 during excavations by Professor W. F. Grimes and Audrey Williams. Professor Grimes and his team undertook “rescue” excavations on areas of the City that had been destroyed in the Blitz. No one was aware of a temple on the site before the excavation — it was found by accident.

How did archaeologists connect the Temple to Mithras?

They almost didn't — rescue excavations were very hastily completed before the sites were redeveloped. The original excavation of the Temple of Mithras lasted a few weeks, but it was only on the last day that the famous head of Mithras was discovered, revealing who the temple was dedicated to.

What was the general public's reaction to the discovery?

The archaeologists at first didn't anticipate much of a public response. However, the discovery of the Mithras sculpture was published in the Sunday Times, and the following day lots of people came to see the excavated temple. This public interest led to an extension to the excavation and, over the following three weeks, thousands of people queued every day to see it.



Site in 1950s.
© Museum of London

The Temple of Mithras

Was the Temple of Mithras the only temple in Londinium?

No, a few more have been identified through archaeological findings: one near where the Old Bailey stands today, and the Tabard temple near Borough station in Southwark. A Roman temple may have been located on the site of St Paul's Cathedral. But we don't know which gods or goddesses these temples were dedicated to. The Temple of Mithras is the only temple where the building and the iconography of the god it was dedicated to have been found together.

Did people believe in Mithraism and other Roman gods at the same time?

Yes. In Roman culture, it was common for people to practice and follow the public religion but also have personal, private beliefs. Mithraism was a private belief and it emerged at a similar time with two others: Isis (an Egyptian goddess) and the earliest Roman Christianity. All three of these religions or cults had links to religious beliefs originating in the eastern Roman Empire; from there, they gradually travelled to Britain.



© Bloomberg

The Temple of Mithras

Was the Mithraeum preserved?

The original excavation's purpose was to record the site before it was demolished to make way for the foundations for a new office building. The potential destruction of the temple caused public outrage and led to a national debate about what should happen to the ruin. Questions about preserving the temple were asked in government, including in cabinet meetings with Prime Minister Winston Churchill. The site owners offered to dismantle the temple and reconstruct it at the end of the building programme, thus preserving it in some form. However, it was not preserved in its original location. Instead, it was reconstructed in 1962 at ground level in a different location and orientation so that it was outside the new building.

What happened to the 1960s reconstruction?

The first reconstruction did not engage the public with its important discovery and lacked archaeological accuracy and authenticity. Although it remained until early 2011, it was by then in poor condition; the new Bloomberg building provided an opportunity to reconsider how the reconstruction should be presented.



© Museum of London

The Temple of Mithras

How did Bloomberg become the steward of the Temple of Mithras?

Bloomberg bought the land on which the reconstruction stood, and on which the original discovery had been made, to construct its new European headquarters. The building was designed from the start to include a complete reinterpretation of the Temple of Mithras. Its construction also led to the huge archaeological project that uncovered thousands of early London artefacts, including fragments of rare Roman waxed writing tablets.

From the project's conception, the priority was to make a reconstruction of the temple that better reflected its original location, appearance and importance. As parts of the temple still survived in the original location, it was not possible to reconstruct it exactly where it had been found. However, Bloomberg worked closely with the Museum of London Archaeology to create the new London Mithraeum, set at the original depth of the 1954 discovery and only metres away from the original location.



The excavation at the site of Bloomberg's new building.
© MOLA

Mithraism

Who was Mithras?

Mithras was a deity whose origins are unclear, but it's possible the Romans used the earlier Persian god Mitra as their inspiration. Mithras is usually depicted as a young man in a "Phrygian cap" (a conical hat with folds so the top tips forward). The most commonly found scene from Mithraism is Mithras sacrificing a bull. This scene is called the "tauroctony." It was believed that from the death of the bull, an animal often seen as a symbol of strength and fertility, sprung new life.

Who worshipped Mithras?

Mithraism was a religious belief practiced by a small, closed group rather than being a mainstream part of Roman religion. It is thought that it was open only to men, including soldiers, traders, merchants and freedmen.

What were Mithraic rituals?

Mithraism is usually called a "mystery cult" as the rituals and activities of the religion were kept secret. From archaeological evidence, we learn of initiation ceremonies involving light, sound, incense and smoke. Taking part in these rituals would mean that you could feel part of a special community.



Representation of the
god Mithras on a bull.
© Museum of London

On your entrance into
London Mithraeum Bloomberg SPACE,
you will experience the current site-specific
contemporary art installation:
0.1% by Jonathan Baldock.

Bloomberg SPACE:

0.1%

Jonathan Baldock
30 January – 5 July 2025

Inspired by the Roman temple of Mithras discovered on the Bloomberg site, *0.1%* by Jonathan Baldock, explores myths, gods and rituals, and their influence on our lives.

0.1% features a forest of hop poles reflecting Baldock's Kentish family history as hop-gatherers and gardeners. The poles form a maze-like space as they support textile panels, reminiscent of the laundry lines of previous generations. Baldock's handmade panels feature his mother's favourite flowers along with networks of trees, plants and insects, symbolising the complex interconnection of family, friendship and relationships. These themes are further echoed in the immersive soundscape by Luke Barton.

Central to the installation and inspired by the Roman artefacts discovered on the site, is a personal relic of Baldock's, the remnants of a small clay sculpture he made for his mother at the age of five. Now enlarged and cast in bronze, her monumental form commands the space. Baldock's Mother-Goddess rises above an ancient Roman temple dedicated to the cult of Mithras, which was reserved only for men.



Photography by Marcus Leith

Please note:

this artwork is delicate, please be vigilant during your visit and remind students not to touch. Thank you.

About Bloomberg

Bloomberg connects influential decision makers to a dynamic network of information, people and ideas. Our strength — quickly and accurately delivering data, news and analytics through innovative technology — is at the core of everything we do. With nearly 19,000 employees in 192 locations, we deliver business and financial information, news and insight around the world.

For more information, visit [**bloomberg.com/company**](https://www.bloomberg.com/company).

About Bloomberg Philanthropies

Bloomberg Philanthropies works in over 120 countries around the world to ensure better, longer lives for the greatest number of people. The organization focuses on five key areas for creating lasting change: Arts, Education, Environment, Government Innovation, and Public Health.

Bloomberg Philanthropies encompasses all of Michael R. Bloomberg's charitable activities, including his foundation and his personal giving.

For more information, please visit **bloomberg.org** or follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter.

Pre-visit activities

Activity 1: Where am I?

(Activity: 30 minutes)

Archaeologists use objects to try to find out about people and places in the past. In this game, get pupils to connect familiar objects to rooms or spaces at school. Ask each table team to make object clues to enable their classmates to guess their room.

You'll need

- 30 x blank pieces of paper or cards
- Coloured pencils
- 6 x schoolroom names on folded paper (e.g., library, classroom)

Instructions

1. Split your class into 5 teams.
2. Give each team 1 room-name slip and 5 blank pieces of paper.
3. Ask pupils to draw an object they would find in that room on each sheet of paper. Each sheet should only have one object, and each should be different. Give pupils 5-10 minutes to draw their "clues".
4. In carousel, get each team to guess the teams' rooms. When they have made each guess, ask them to remove the least useful object clue.
5. When they have guessed all the rooms, feedback as a whole class on which room was which and reflect on the assumptions made.
6. Discuss with the class that sometimes clues can be misleading and that we have less evidence as time goes on.

Pre-visit activities

Activity 2: Roman deities and their symbols

(30 minutes)

Make symbol-based flash cards with your class to play a "name that deity" game. Roman Londoners would have known which god/goddess was which based on the symbols that represented them. For example, a conical hat for Mithras or a bow and arrow for Diana. This will help them connect the gods/goddesses to their symbols and to recognize Mithras when they visit.

You'll need

- 30 x blank pieces of paper
- Coloured pencils
- 6 x Roman gods and goddesses symbols

Instructions

1. Give each table in your class one symbols chart and enough cards for one per person.
2. Ask pupils to select a god/goddess and to draw one of the symbols that represents them.
3. Mix up the 30 cards and give each table a random selection so that each pupil has a different card. Ask them to work out which god or goddess is represented on the cards.
4. Repeat if you wish to help develop pupils' understanding of the connections between the deities and the symbols.

Alternatives

Make 15 symbol cards and 15 god/goddess name cards.

Ask you pupils to find their partner cards.

Back-at-school activities

During your visit, your pupils will collect ideas and information on what the Temple of Mithras, and Londinium itself, were like almost 2,000 years ago. The discovery of the Temple of Mithras has caught the imagination of thousands of people over the last 60 years. As part of your visit, pupils will view and reflect on contemporary artwork inspired by those amazing archaeological discoveries.

Activity 1

Using the contemporary artwork and objects at the London Mithraeum as inspiration, ask your pupils to choose their favourite object or design to create their own 2D or 3D artworks back in class.

Activity 2

Ask your pupils to imagine that they are going to make an offering to the gods to ask them for help. Then ask them to draw their object and write down words to describe it and what they will say to the gods.