

# Lucius and the Roman Tablet

"Lucius, sit down. I have something for you," Lucius's mother said.

Lucius did as he was told and pulled out a small chair.

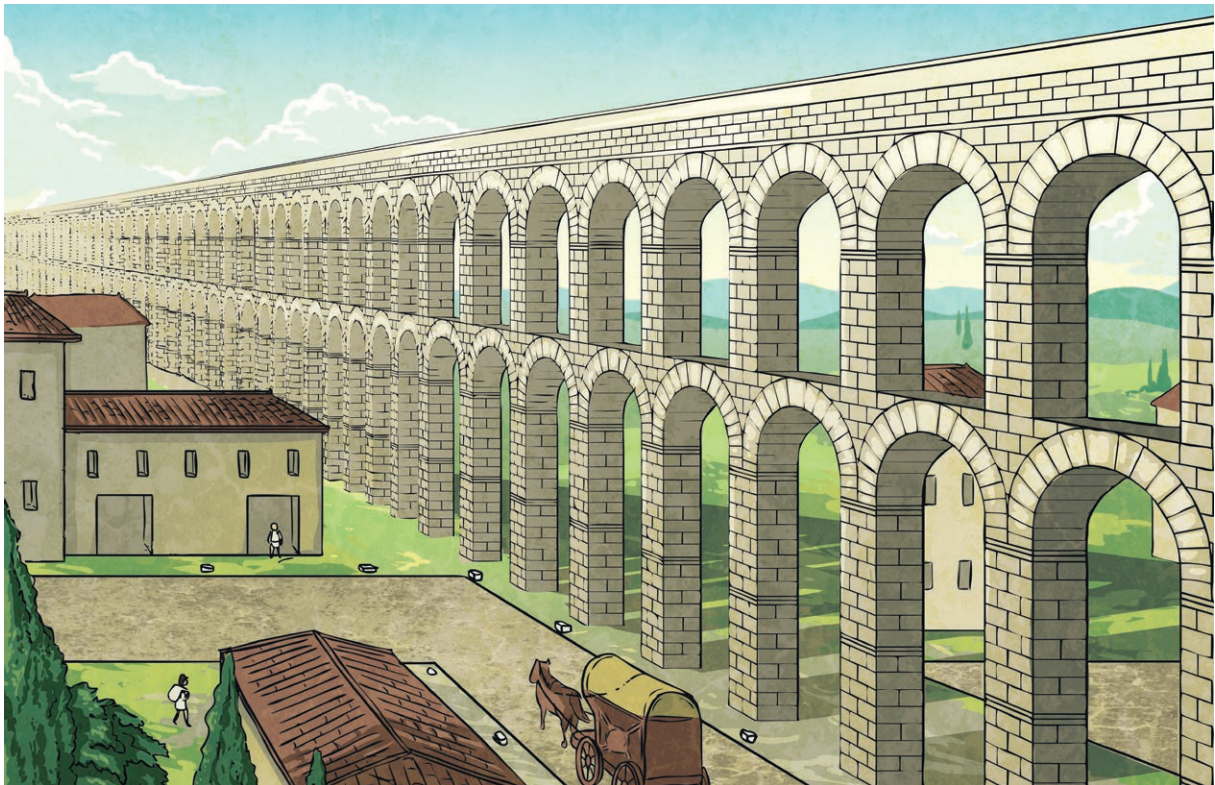
"This came today," his mother said. She picked up what looked like a small wooden rectangle and sat down next to him.

"What is it?" Lucius asked.

"Don't you know?" his mother replied.

Lucius stared at the rectangle. It looked like the wax tablet he was learning to read on but this one was broken around the edges. Written into the wood were words in blue ink. He saw his name at the top. "Is it a letter from Father?" he asked.

"Yes," his mother replied. "It has come all the way across the Roman Empire, just for you."



Lucius's mind was racing. It had been years since he'd heard from his father. Every night, Mother would tell stories of Father's bravery as he was fighting against bad people in far-off lands. She would say how strong and fit he was and how proud he was to have Lucius as his son. She explained how important

it was for his father to live away from home. The Roman Empire had to fight other nations to keep itself powerful and rich. One day, his father would come back and be given his own land. They would all be together again... but Lucius would be a grown man when that happened.

"Shall I read the letter to you?" Lucius's mother said.

Lucius nodded.

"Lucius," his mother read, "my dear son, I'm sorry for not writing sooner. I hope you are reading this in good health and that Rome is as glorious as ever.

"Right now, I am in Britannia. It is across the seas in the northern parts of the Roman Empire. We fight the enemy every day but they are no match for the Roman army. They may be strong but we are organised and we fight with our minds as much as our swords.

"Many years have passed since I left Rome. In that time, we have fought many battles and we have won every one. In time, we will beat all of Britannia too.

"I pray that one day we will be together again. Until then, take care, Lucius. Hail Hadrian. Hail Rome. From your father, Marcus Maximus."

Lucius's mother reached over to hug her son and he tried to picture his father in his mind. But he couldn't. He had forgotten what his father looked like.

"Hail Hadrian," Lucius said, as he hugged his mother. "Hail Rome."

# Questions

1. What did Lucius's mother ask Lucius to do at the start of the story? Tick **one**.

- ☐ read a letter
- ☐ sit down
- ☐ be a Roman soldier
- ☐ pick up a wooden rectangle

2. What did the rectangle look like? Find and copy the answer.

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3. Who wrote the letter? Tick **one**.

- ☐ Lucius
- ☐ Lucius's mother
- ☐ Lucius's father
- ☐ the Roman people

4. What does Lucius's mother think of Lucius's father? Give two reasons in your answer.

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5. Draw a line to match the sentence opener to the correct ending.

I hope	for not writing sooner.
I pray	you are reading this in good health.
I'm sorry	that one day we will be together again.

6. Number these to show the order that they appear in the text. The first one has been done for you.

- ☒ 1 Lucius did as he was told.
- ☐ He tried to picture his father in his mind.
- ☐ Written into the wood were words in blue ink.
- ☐ Father wrote, "Right now, I am in Britannia."
- ☐ The Roman Empire had to fight other nations.

7. **He had forgotten what his father looked like.**

Why do you think Lucius had forgotten what his father looked like?

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# Answers

1. What did Lucius's mother ask Lucius to do at the start of the story? Tick **one**.

- ☐ read a letter
- ☒ **sit down**
- ☐ be a Roman soldier
- ☐ pick up a wooden rectangle

2. What did the rectangle look like? Find and copy the answer.

**It looked like the wax tablet he was learning to read on.**

3. Who wrote the letter? Tick **one**.

- ☐ Lucius
- ☐ Lucius's mother
- ☒ **Lucius's father**
- ☐ the Roman people

4. What does Lucius's mother think of Lucius's father? Give two reasons in your answer.

**Pupil's own responses, such as: I think Lucius's mother is really proud of Lucius's father as she talks about him in positive ways, like when she says he is fighting for Rome against other nations. I think she admires him because she says he is strong and fit and she probably misses him being away for so long.**

5. Draw a line to match the sentence opener to the correct ending.

I hope	for not writing sooner.
I pray	you are reading this in good health.
I'm sorry	that one day we will be together again.

6. Number these to show the order that they appear in the text. The first one has been done for you.

- 1** Lucius did as he was told.
- 5** He tried to picture his father in his mind.
- 2** Written into the wood were words in blue ink.
- 4** Father wrote, "Right now, I am in Britannia."
- 3** The Roman Empire had to fight other nations.

7. **He had forgotten what his father looked like.**

Why do you think Lucius had forgotten what his father looked like?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Lucius had forgotten what his father looked like because he had been away for so long.**



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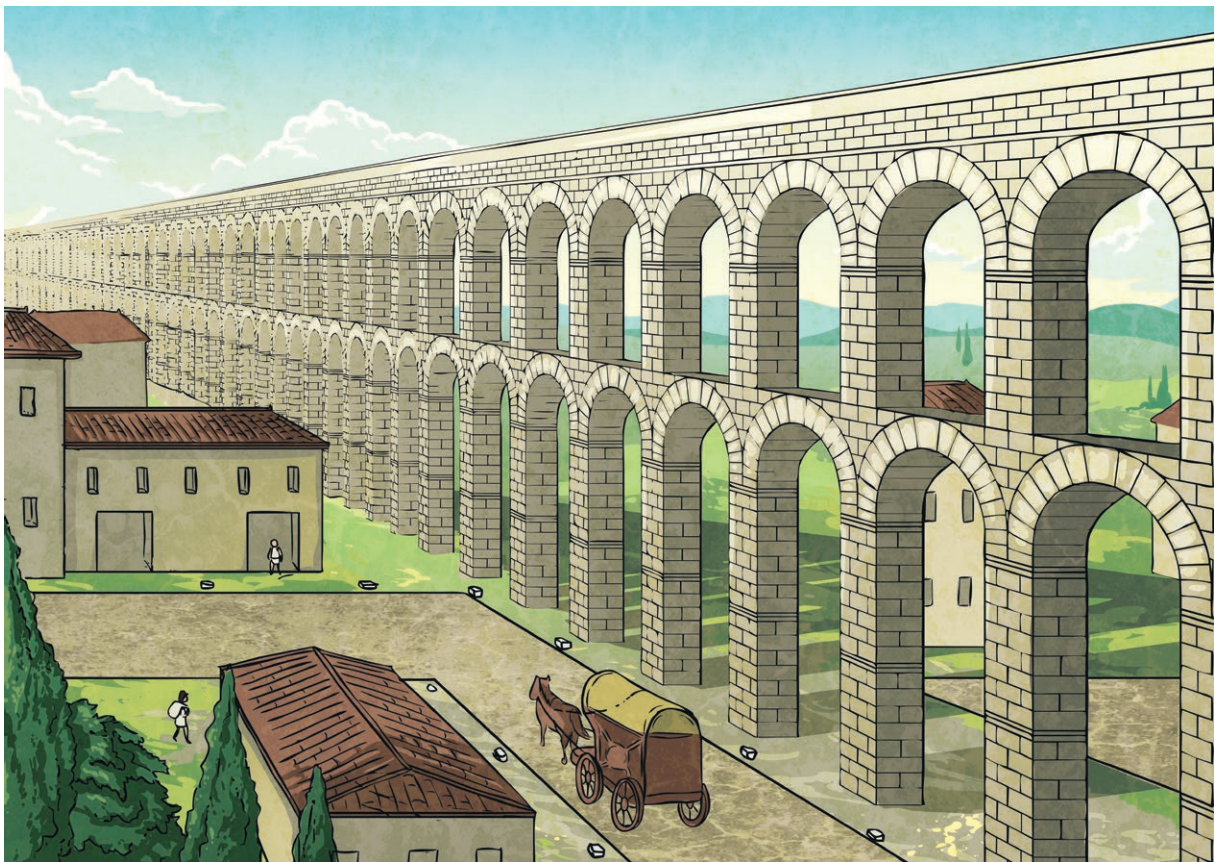
"Lucius, sit down. I have something for you."

Lucius did as he was told and pulled out a small chair. He looked up at his mother and waited.

"This came today," his mother said. She picked up what looked like a small wooden rectangle and sat down next to him.

"What is it?" Lucius asked.

There were tears in his mother's eyes. "Lucius, has it been so long that you have forgotten?"



The small boy stared at the rectangle. It looked like the wax tablet he was learning to read and write on, only this one was wooden and broken around the edges. He gently peered over to get a better view. Written into the wood were words in scratchy blue ink. He recognised his name at the top. "Is it a letter?" he asked. "From Father?"

"Yes," his mother replied. "It has travelled all the way across the Roman Empire,

just for you.”

Lucius stared at the wooden tablet. His mind was racing. It had been years since he'd heard from his father. Every night, Mother would tell stories of Father's bravery fighting against barbarians in far-off lands. She would say how he was the strongest and fittest of his legion. She told Lucius how proud he was to have him as his son and how important it was for him to live away from his family. The Roman Empire was growing. It had to conquer other nations to increase its wealth. One day, he would be rewarded with his own land and they would all be together again... but Lucius would be a grown man by then.

“Shall I read it to you?” Lucius's mother said.

Lucius nodded gently.

“Lucius,” his mother read, “my dear son, forgive me for not writing sooner. I hope you are reading this in good health and that Rome is as glorious as ever.

“Right now, I am in the fort of Vindolanda. It is across the seas in the northern parts of Britannia, where we face barbarians every day. They fight with passion and fury but they are no match for the Roman army. They rely on anger and strength but we are organised and fight with our minds as much as our swords.

“Many years have passed since I left Rome. In that time, we have fought many battles and every one of them has ended in Roman triumph. In time, we will conquer all of Britannia too.

“I pray that one day we will be together again. Until then, take care, Lucius. Hail Hadrian. Hail Rome. Your father, Marcus Maximus.”

As Lucius's mother reached over to hold her son, he tried to picture his father in his mind but he couldn't. He had forgotten what he looked like.

“Hail Hadrian,” Lucius said, as he buried his head into his mother's arms. “Hail Rome.”

# Questions

1. Find and copy what Lucius did after he **pulled out a small chair**.

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2. Why do you think there were tears in his mother's eyes? Tick **one**.

- ☐ She had a bit of dirt in them.
- ☐ She had hay fever.
- ☐ She was feeling emotional about Lucius's father writing to him.
- ☐ Because Lucius was always so forgetful.

3. **His mind was racing.**

What do you think might have been going through Lucius's mind at this point in the story?  
Give reasons for your ideas.

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4. **"Lucius," his mother read, "my dear son, forgive me for not writing sooner."**

What word or phrase could the writer have used instead of 'forgive me' that would have a similar meaning?

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5. Number these to show the order that they appear in the text. The first one has been done for you.

- ☐ Lucius buries his head into his mother's arms.
- ☐ Lucius's mother picked up a small wooden rectangle.
- ☐ It looked like a wax tablet.
- ☐ Lucius's mother told him stories of his father.
- ☐ Lucius's father is in Vindolanda.

6. Join the boxes to correctly complete the facts.

The Roman Empire	•	•	were no match for the Roman army.
Marcus Maximus	•	•	was growing.
The barbarians	•	•	prays that he will be with his family again.



7. **He had forgotten what his father looked like.**

Why do you think Lucius had forgotten what his father looked like and how do you think that made him feel?

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8. Which of these words do you think best describe Lucius's father? Tick **two**.

- ☐ depressed
- ☐ proud
- ☐ respected
- ☐ angry

# Answers

1. Find and copy what Lucius did after he **pulled out a small chair**.  
**He looked up at his mother and waited.**

2. Why do you think there were tears in his mother's eyes? Tick **one**.

- ☐ She had a bit of dirt in them.
- ☐ She had hay fever.
- ☒ **She was feeling emotional about Lucius's father writing to him.**
- ☐ Because Lucius was always so forgetful.

3. **His mind was racing.**

What do you think might have been going through Lucius's mind at this point in the story?  
Give reasons for your ideas.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Lucius was probably really excited about getting a letter from his father. His mind would have been going really fast wondering if he was OK, what he had been up to and whether he was coming home soon.**

4. **"Lucius," his mother read, "my dear son, forgive me for not writing sooner."**

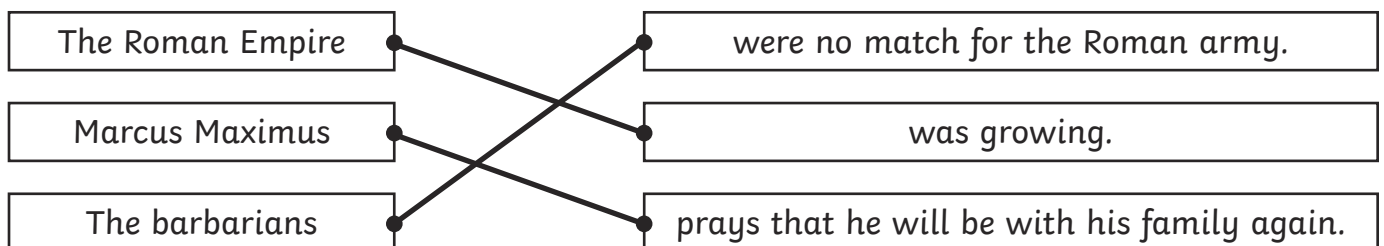
What word or phrase could the writer have used instead of 'forgive me' that would have a similar meaning?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: He could have used I'm sorry/excuse me/pardon me.**

5. Number these to show the order that they appear in the text. The first one has been done for you.

- Lucius buries his head into his mother's arms.
- Lucius's mother picked up a small wooden rectangle.
- It looked like a wax tablet.
- Lucius's mother told him stories of his father.
- Lucius's father is in Vindolanda.

6. Join the boxes to correctly complete the facts.



7. **He had forgotten what his father looked like.**

Why do you think Lucius had forgotten what his father looked like and how do you think that made him feel?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Lucius had forgotten what his father looked like because he had been away for so long. This probably made him feel quite sad as he missed his father and wouldn't see him again until he was much older.**

8. Which of these words do you think best describe Lucius's father? Tick **two**.

- ☐ depressed
- ☒ **proud**
- ☒ **respected**
- ☐ angry

# Lucius and the Roman Tablet

"Lucius, sit down. I have something for you."

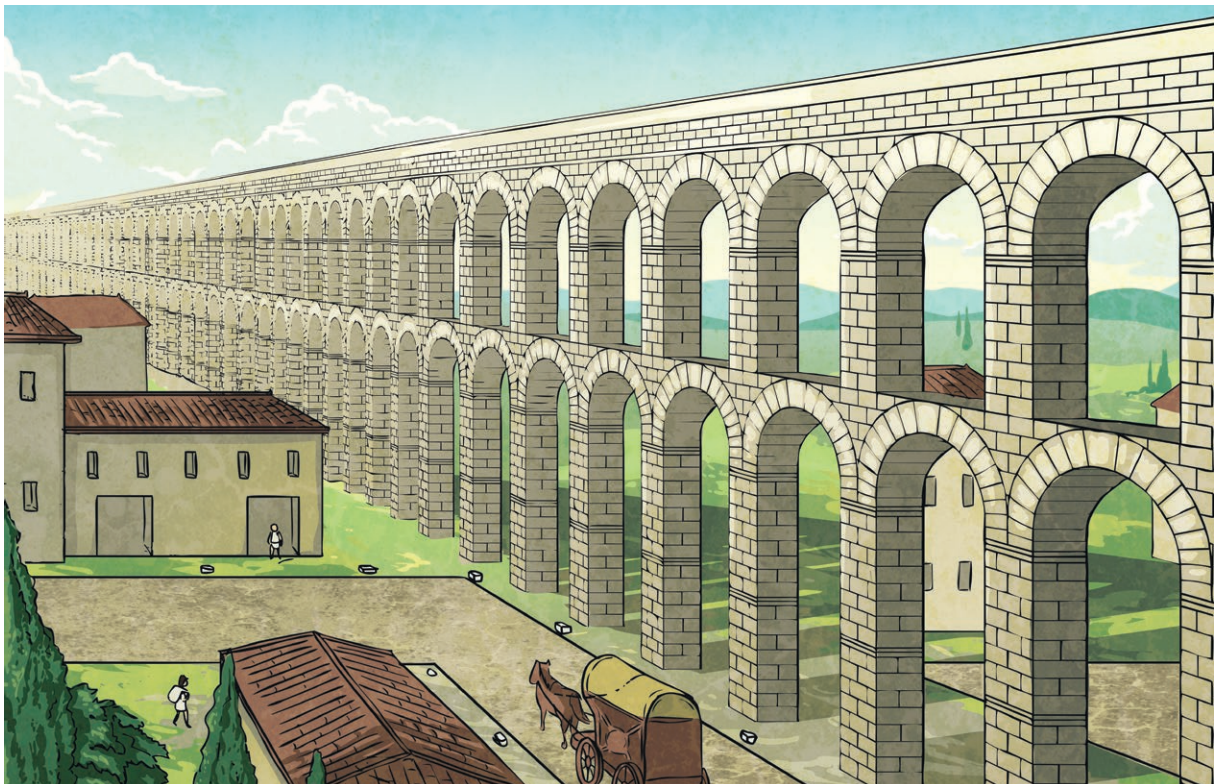
Lucius did as he was told and pulled out a small chair. He looked up at his mother and waited for her to speak.

"This came today," his mother said. She picked up what looked like a small wooden rectangle and sat down next to him.

"What is it?" Lucius asked.

There were tears in his mother's eyes. "Lucius, has it been so long that you have forgotten?"

The small boy stared at the rectangle. It looked like the wax tablet he was learning to read and write on, only this one was wooden and broken around the edges. He gently peered over, pulling his mother's hand down to get a better view. Engraved into the wood were words written in scratchy blue ink. He recognised his name at the top. "Is it a letter?" he said. "From Father?"



"Yes," his mother replied, breathing deeply. "It has travelled from the farthest reaches of the Roman Empire, just for you."

Lucius stared at the wooden tablet. His mind was racing. It had been years since



he'd heard from his father. Every night, Mother would tell stories of Father's bravery fighting against barbarians in far-off lands; how he was the strongest and fittest of his legion. She told Lucius how proud he was to have him as a son and how important it was for him to live away from his family. The Empire was growing. It had to support its citizens by conquering other nations and Lucius's father was doing his part. It was all for the good of Rome. One day, after 25 years in the army, he would be rewarded with his own land and they would all be together again. Yet Lucius was already nine... he would be a grown man when that happened.

"Shall I read it to you?" Lucius's mother said.

Lucius nodded gently.

"Lucius," his mother read, "my dear son, forgive me for not writing sooner. I trust you receive this in good health and that Rome is as glorious as ever.

"Right now, I am stationed in the fort of Vindolanda. It is across the seas in the northern reaches of Britannia, where we face barbarians every day. They fight with passion and fury but they are no match for the Roman army. Where they rely on anger and brute strength, we are organised and disciplined and fight with our minds as much as our swords.

"Many seasons have passed since I marched from Rome into the northern territories. In that time, we have fought many battles and every battle has ended in Roman triumph. It is only a matter of time before we conquer all of Britannia too.

"I pray to Jupiter that one day we will be together again. Until that time, be proud to be Roman. Hail Hadrian. Hail Rome. Your father, Marcus Antonius Maximus."

As Lucius's mother reached over, he tried to picture his father in his mind but there was nothing there.

"Hail Hadrian," Lucius whispered as he buried his head into his mother's arms.  
"Hail Rome."

# Questions

1. Which two of these describes what came today?

- ☐ a tablet with writing on
- ☐ a small chair
- ☐ bad news
- ☐ a wooden rectangle

2. **“Lucius, has it been so long that you have forgotten?”**

What did Lucius’s mother think Lucius had forgotten?

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3. Why were there tears in Lucius’s mother’s eyes?

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4. **Engraved into the wood were words written in scratchy blue ink.**

From this evidence, explain how you think Lucius’s father wrote the letter.

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5. What was going to happen once Lucius was a grown man?

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6. Why weren’t the barbarians a match for the Roman army?

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7. Join the boxes to correctly describe the people:

organised and disciplined ●

strong and angry ●

brave and fit ●

● barbarians

● Marcus Antonius Maximus

● Roman army

8. **He had forgotten what his father looked like.**

Why do you think Lucius had forgotten what his father looked like and how do you think that made him feel?

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# Answers

1. Which two of these describes what came today?

- ☒ a tablet with writing on
- ☐ a small chair
- ☐ bad news
- ☐ a wooden rectangle

2. **“Lucius, has it been so long that you have forgotten?”**

What did Lucius’s mother think Lucius had forgotten?

**Lucius’s mother thought Lucius had forgotten that his father sometimes sent him letters because it had been so long since the last one.**

3. Why were there tears in Lucius’s mother’s eyes?

**Pupils’ own responses, such as: There were tears in Lucius’s mother’s eyes because she was feeling emotional about Lucius’s father sending him a letter as they hadn’t seen or heard from him in a long time.**

4. **Engraved into the wood were words written in scratchy blue ink.**

From this evidence, explain how you think Lucius’s father wrote the letter.

**Pupils’ own responses, such as: ‘Engraved’ is when you carve letters into something so Lucius’s father might have written on the tablet using something sharp, like a knife or a sharp, metal pen. The words are in blue ink so he probably dipped whatever he was writing with in something blue first.**

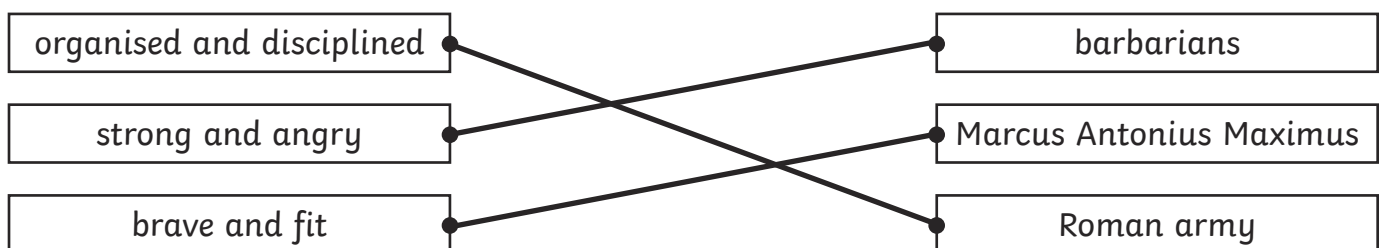
5. What was going to happen once Lucius was a grown man?

**Lucius’s father would come home and be given land.**

6. Why weren’t the barbarians a match for the Roman army?

**Pupils’ own responses, such as: The barbarians were no match for the Roman army as although they fought with anger and strength, the Romans were organised and disciplined and were clever when they went into battle.**

7. Join the boxes to correctly describe the people:





8. **He had forgotten what his father looked like.**

Why do you think Lucius had forgotten what his father looked like and how do you think that made him feel?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Lucius had forgotten what his father looked like because he had been away for so long. This probably made him feel quite sad as he missed his father and wouldn't see him again until he was much older.**