

KS2 Creative Writing Activity – A New Life in the Eden Valley

Scene-Setter: Market Day in the Eden Valley

The rain has just stopped, and the smell of wet earth rises from the fields. You stand at the edge of the market near the fort at Brocavum, where the River Eamont runs fast and cold under a grey sky. A cart rattles past, pulled by two tired oxen, their breath steaming in the chilly air. Soldiers in red cloaks stride across the square, their boots clinking on the stone road, while local farmers in thick woollen cloaks call out their prices for sacks of grain. From a nearby stall, the warm scent of fresh bread drifts over, mixing with the sharper smell of sheep's wool and roasting meat. You clutch a crate of amphorae filled with olive oil, a taste of the warm south, ready to trade for the sturdy wool and leather of this northern land. Somewhere beyond the hills, Hadrian's Wall marks the edge of the Empire, and you wonder what life will bring you here, in this green and windswept valley.

Your Writing Challenge

It is the 3rd century CE. You are a Roman civilian who has travelled a long way, perhaps from busy Londinium, the bustling markets of Gaul, or even the warm hills of Italy. After weeks of journeying by ship and road, you have arrived in the Eden Valley, a green and fertile land just south of Hadrian's Wall.

Your new home is near Brocavum (modern-day Brougham), where a Roman fort guards the crossing of the River Eamont. The road outside your door is busy with soldiers marching to and from the frontier, local Britons driving carts of wool and grain, and traders selling goods from far-off lands.

You've come to trade olive oil, wine, fine pottery, and colourful cloth with the people here, in exchange for wool, leather, salted meat, and honey from local farms. Soldiers stop to swap coins for food or wine, and local farmers bring you news of the harvest. The River Eden flows nearby, and the green hills roll into the distance. But the weather is colder than you are used to, and the rain sometimes falls for days.

Write a diary entry or letter to a friend back home describing your first week in the Eden Valley. Include:

- What goods you are selling or trading, and what you receive in return
- Who you have met: Roman soldiers, local Britons, other traders
- The sights, sounds, and smells of the market and the surrounding countryside

- Any surprises or challenges you've faced since arriving
- How you feel about living so close to the Wall at the very edge of the Roman Empire

Tips:

Use descriptive words to paint a picture.

Imagine the sounds, smells, and colours around you.

Think about how different this place might be compared to where you came from.

Roman Eden Valley Word Bank

Places & Landmarks

Eden Valley, River Eden, River Eamont, Brocavum (Roman fort near modern Brougham), Hadrian's Wall, Roman road, market square, fort gate, granary, bath house, frontier.

People

Trader / merchant, legionary, centurion, local Briton, farmer, potter, weaver, blacksmith, caravan (group of traders).

Goods & Trade Items

From the south/other provinces: olive oil, wine, garum (fish sauce), Samian ware, glass beads, coloured cloth, spices.

From local farms & workshops: wool, leather, grain, salted meat, honey, iron tools, wooden barrels.

Sights & Colours

Red soldier's cloak, polished bronze helmet, woollen cloak, stone road, clay oven, wooden stall, green hills, grey clouds, amphora (tall clay jar), coins (denarii).

Sounds

Clink of armour, stamp of boots on stone, rattle of cart wheels, crackle of fires, murmur of traders, call of market sellers, splash of oars in the river, bleating sheep, oxen snorting.

Smells

Fresh bread, roasting meat, damp wool, wood smoke, wet earth, olive oil, spices.

Weather Words

Drizzle, misty, chilly, gusty wind, overcast, rain-lashed, frosty morning.

Teacher's Example – Diary Entry of a Roman Trader in the Eden Valley

3rd Day of the Month of September

Dear Marcus,

At last, I have reached my new home at the fort of *Brocavum*, beside the fast-flowing River Eamont. The journey north was long and tiring... the road from Londinium seemed to go on forever, but here I am, at the very edge of the Empire. Beyond the green hills to the north lies Hadrian's Wall, and beyond that... I do not know.

The market is busier than I expected. Legionaries tramp past in their red cloaks, their boots clinking on the stone road, while local Briton farmers bring carts piled with wool and grain. I have set out my amphorae of olive oil and a small stock of fine Samian pottery on my stall. In return, I have already traded for a warm woollen cloak, a sack of barley, and a fine wooden barrel of honey.

The air here is different. I can smell wood smoke from the soldiers' campfires, the sharp tang of damp wool, and the warm scent of bread baking in a clay oven. The River Eden runs cold and clear, and the hills are a deep green, even under the grey clouds.

Life here will not be easy. Yesterday the rain fell all day, drenching the market until even the oxen looked miserable. Still, I feel hopeful. The people are curious about my goods, and the soldiers say there will always be a need for traders here. If the weather does not drive me back south, perhaps I will make a good living in this wild and beautiful place.

Until I write again,

Your friend,

Lucius Aelius Varus

Scaffolded Diary Entry – Roman Trader in the Eden Valley

Date: (You can make up a Roman-style date, e.g. “3rd Day of September, in the Year of the Emperor...”)

Dear _____,

I have finally arrived in the **Eden Valley**, near the fort of **Brocavum**. The journey from _____ took many days/weeks, and I travelled by _____ and _____. The land here is _____ and _____, and the weather feels _____ compared to my home.

The market is busy with _____ (people you see there). I can hear _____ and smell _____. On my stall, I have brought goods from my old home, such as _____, _____, and _____. In return, I have traded for _____ and _____ from the local people.

The **River Eden** runs _____ and I can see _____ from where I stand. Soldiers march past in their _____ and armour, while local farmers wear _____. I have spoken to _____, who told me _____.

One surprise this week was _____. I felt _____ when it happened. Another challenge has been _____, because _____.

Even though life here is _____, I think I will/will not enjoy living here because _____. I hope that in the future I will _____.

Until next time,

(Your Roman name here)

Roman Name Generator – Roman Britain Edition

How to Use

1. Pick a first name you like from the list – or make one up!
2. Pick a family name (gens) from the list – or make one up!
3. (Optional) Add a nickname or extra name (cognomen) for personality or appearance if you want to 😊

Put it together: **First name + Family name (+ Nickname).**

First Names (*Praenomina*)

Here are some historical examples from inscriptions, tombstones, and dedications in Roman Britain – or you can make one up!

- | | | | |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Aelius | 5. Claudia | 10. Livia | 15. Quintus |
| 2. Antonia | 6. Cornelia | 11. Lucius | 16. Sextus |
| 3. Aulus | 7. Decimus | 12. Marcia | 17. Tullia |
| 4. Caius
(Gaius) | 8. Flavia | 13. Marcus | 18. Titus |
| | 9. Julia | 14. Publius | 19. Valeria |

Family Names (*Nomina*)

Choose one for the middle part of the name, these often came from family or clan identity – but you can make one up if you prefer!

- | | | |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1. Aelius | 5. Domitius | 9. Tullius |
| 2. Antonius | 6. Flavius | 10. Valerius |
| 3. Claudius | 7. Julius | |
| 4. Cornelius | 8. Marcius | |

Optional Nicknames (*Cognomina*)

These describe something about the person, appearance, personality, or reputation:

1. Crispus (“curly-haired”)
2. Felix (“lucky”)
3. Fortunata (“fortunate”)
4. Maximus (“greatest”)
5. Primus (“first-born”)
6. Pulchra (“beautiful”)

7. Rufus (“red-haired”)
8. Sabina (“from the Sabine region”)
9. Severus (“serious/strict”)
10. Varus (“bow-legged”)

Quick “Roll-a-Name” Method

1. Roll a dice (or pick a random number) to choose a first name.
2. Roll again for a family name.
3. Roll a final time for an optional nickname.

Example:

Roll 5 → Claudia

Roll 8 → Marcius

Roll 2 → Felix

= *Claudia Marcius Felix*