Rotten Romans

LO: To draw and label a diagram of a Roman Legionary
The Roman Army

• The brilliance of the Roman army was the key to Rome's success in building its Empire.

• The core of the army was made up by the Roman legionaries.
How did you become a legionary?

- The **legions** were made up of **male Roman citizens**.
- To join the army you had to be **recommended** by someone in the army, **physically fit** and of **good character**.
- Recruits had to be **at least 20 years old**.
- They **joined for 25 years**.
- They were **not allowed to marry** whilst in the army.
- When they retired they were **given money (three gold coins)** and **land to farm**.

- The legion also contained specialists such as engineers, surveyors, doctors, vets, stonemasons, craftsmen, and even torturers and executioners!
What if you weren’t a Roman citizen?

• If you were not a citizen of the Roman Empire, but wanted to join the army, you could do so as an auxilliary. They were made citizens when they retired.

• This picture shows a citizenship document giving Roman citizenship to a soldier named Gemellus.
This diagram shows the equipment, weapons and uniform of a Roman Legionary.
But was that all the equipment they needed? Study the following sources...

An extract from a letter found at the Roman fort at Vindolanda on Hadrian’s Wall
I have sent you .. pairs of woollen socks, two pairs of sandals and two pairs of underpants..

Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, written in the 1st century AD
Foot soldiers are armed with a cuirass (body armour) and a helmet. They carry two swords .. a spear and round shield. In addition .. a saw, a basket, a mattock (pick) and an axe, as well as a leather strap, a sickle, a chain and enough rations to last him for three days. In fact he carries so much equipment he is not very different from a mule.

Vegetius, A Military Digest, 4th century AD
For building the trenches they find it useful to have pick-axes, shovels, baskets and other equipment always on hand...
The young soldier must be given frequent practice in carrying loads up to 60lbs while marching at the normal speed because on difficult campaigns they will have to carry their rations as well as their weapons.

From a modern textbook
A Roman soldier would march 20 miles a day carrying his armour and weapons AND 2 posts about 2.4 metres long to make a fence at night, a thick cloak to keep him warm and to sleep in, his cooking pot, bowl and spoon, a spade to dig holes for the posts, corn, dried beans and salt for 3-4 days, a bag with spare boots, money, dice etc.
Not only did he have to carry a lot of equipment, but training was hard for a legionnaire. He had to...

- March 30km 3 times a month wearing his armour which weighed 20 kg.
- Do a drill once a day, twice if he was a recruit.
- Learn to build camps, swim, sling stones, ride, mount and dismount from a horse fully armed with his shield and no stirrups!
- Learn how to use a sword, spear and fight mock battles with weapons which had covered tips for safety.
Punishments and Rewards

- Discipline was very harsh. Centurions carried a vine stick which they used to beat soldiers who had disobeyed an order. Fines were also common, but there were much worse punishments...
  - Deserters and soldiers who left their posts or fell asleep whilst on look-out were beaten to death by their fellow soldiers.
  - A particularly horrible punishment was 'decimation' where every tenth man in a cohort (chosen randomly) was executed by his comrades.
- However, on a more cheerful note, for bravery there were awards for different ranks, such as medals, arm and neck bands or torques. Gold crowns and silver spears were given to officers.
But surely they didn’t spend all their time fighting?

No – as well as fighting major battles, the legions built forts, bridges and roads. When they were on a campaign, they built a camp fortified with banks and ditches at the end of each day’s march.

But they did have time for relaxation as well – what kind of activities do you think they did when they were off duty?

This picture shows part of what is left of Hadrian’s Wall, a defensive wall the Romans built between England and Scotland.
Off-duty pastimes