

Let's imagine: Roman mosaic (postcard)

Each week the Museum is going to publish a 'Let's Imagine' activity sheet. This activity sheet will include a picture of an object in the Museum. It will tell you about the object and then it will be up to you to imagine a story, poem and/or picture inspired by this object. The sheet will include at least three questions or statements to help get you started and inspired.

This week's object is a postcard showing a **Roman mosaic**, which is part of the museum collection. Read the information in blue below to find out more about mosaics.



Imagine you have to describe this mosaic to a friend. What would you say?

Design and draw your own design for a mosaic.

Write a story or poem about being transported back in time to Roman Britain. You witness someone making a mosaic. Describe what you see.

This is a postcard of a Roman mosaic, which is in the grounds of Littlecote House, Hungerford. It was first discovered in the early 18th century. The mosaic, which dates from 4th century, is based on a Greek and Roman myth, and is part of a large villa. The villa itself is thought to be older, dating to 1st century, although large parts were remodelled around the time the mosaic was built.

Orpheus, the poet and musician known for playing the lyre, is the central figure of the mosaic.

Orpheus is heart-broken at the death of his wife so goes to the underworld to retrieve her. He meets the god of the underworld, Pluto (Hades), and his wife, Prosephina (Persephone), who are impressed by his singing and playing so agree to him being reunited with his wife on the condition that he does not look back until he reaches to the surface. He agrees, but just as he reaches the surface he looks back and loses his wife forever.

Around him on the mosaic are four female deities who represent the seasons. They are: Prosephina (Persephone) with a goat; Venus (Aphrodite) with a hind (deer); Leda with a panther; and Ceres (Demeter) with a bull. Which deity is pictured above?

Mosaics are pictures, on walls but more often floors, made up of small coloured cubes called tesserae (plural). The tesserae would be put on a layer of mortar. The mosaic design would often be of Roman gods and goddesses (as with this one), gladiators and everyday life.