

CRAFTY ROMANS CAMEO ACTIVITY



Image: Cameo

A cameo is an oval shaped piece of jewellery with a portrait in profile carved in relief on a background of a different colour. This cameo is thought to show Emperor Caracalla dressed as Hercules. Although it looks like he is wearing a cloak it is fastened by a knot at the front instead of by a brooch on the shoulder, and is in fact a lion skin – the carver has even tried to depict the paw. Hercules is often shown wearing or holding this skin as he killed the lion as the first of his 12 tasks. The supernatural lion's skin was so tough nothing could cut it, so Hercules used his superhuman strength to strangle it instead. Caracalla liked to compare himself to Hercules, especially as he had also killed a lion.

ACTIVITIES

TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT THIS CAMEO

What do you see, notice and wonder about this object?

NOW IT IS YOUR TURN

Draw your face in profile (draw a picture of your face from the side like the cameo does). Do this by looking in the mirror or looking at pictures of yourself. Why not try to make a cameo using your profile from materials you have around the house.

LEARNING EXTENSION

The Romans had thousands of Gods to represent all things and honouring these gods was part of their daily life. The cameo above shows the Emperor Caracalla, the son of Emperor Septimus Severus who resided at Arbeia dressed as the God Hercules because he wanted his strength to be compared to that of Hercules. Find out about the many Gods the Romans worshiped. Do you think there were gods to protect the fort, and soldiers before going into battle? Which one would you like to be and why? Do you think superheroes are like Roman Gods? Can you invent a new superhero for today's world? Draw a picture of them and describe their powers.