

Roman Tales: The Goose Guards

When Fabia embarrasses Brutus in a lesson, he's determined to have revenge on her. He's distracted from his plans when the Gauls attack Rome. Many Romans are killed but others are safe in the temples, with a sheer cliff on one side and Roman soldiers defending them on the other. Brennus, the king of the Gauls, plans to attack the remaining Romans, while Brutus comes up with a plan to upset Fabia.

Author

Terry Deary was born in Sunderland, England in 1946. When he was younger, he worked in his father's butcher's shop. He became a professional actor in 1972 and has since worked as a theatre director, museum manager, drama teacher and television presenter. He is the author of the popular *Horrible Histories* books, which have been made into a television programme and film.

Historical context

The book is set in Rome during 387 BC. It is based on real events when Brennus led the Gauls in the sacking of Rome. The Gauls came from western Europe, which at this time was not part of the Roman Empire. The sacking of Rome was when the Gauls captured most of the city and kept control of Rome for several months.



Soldiers of Gaul

Characters

Brutus

Brutus is a young priest at the temple of Juno. He is the main character in the book but is not always likeable. He lets his desire for revenge get the better of him and it is only towards the end of the book that he starts to reflect on his actions.

Fabia

Fabia is a young priestess who feeds and cares for the geese. She tries to get Brutus in trouble near the start of the book and he describes her as a *'cruel, sly girl'*. She has positive characteristics too as she really cares about the geese.

Brennus

Brennus is the ruthless king of the Gauls who leads the attack on Rome. He comes up with a cunning plot near the end of the book to catch the Romans off guard. When he makes this plan, he doesn't realise that the geese could ruin everything.

Marcus

Marcus Manlius is the captain of the guard, who is described as *'a powerful man with the eyes of a hawk'*. He bravely defends the temple and stands his ground when other characters fear that they will all be defeated.

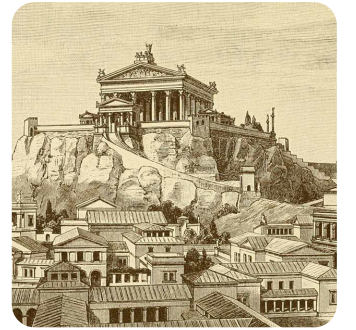
Themes

- courage and heroism
- good vs evil
- revenge
- survival
- violence of battle

Settings

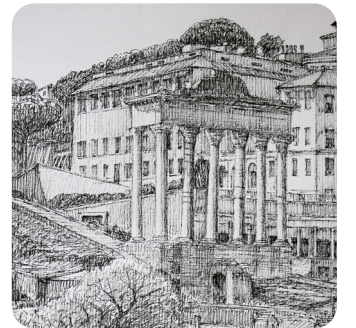
Capitol Hill

Capitol Hill is one of Rome's seven hills. Three temples for worshipping the Roman gods stand on top. There is only one path to the hill so it is easy to guard when the Gauls attack Rome.



Temple of Juno

The temple is where Brutus is a priest and Fabia is a priestess. It is a temple for worshipping Juno, queen of the gods. Brutus and Fabia take lessons at the temple with the head priest, Marius.



Clifftop

Several important scenes take place on top of the cliff. Cominius delivers his message there, explaining that an army is coming to rescue the trapped Romans. The Gauls also climb the cliff, attempting to surprise the Roman soldiers.



Story timeline

These are some of the key chapters in the novel. When you read the chapters, use the questions as starting points for discussion.

Chapter 1

Brutus is embarrassed by Fabia during a lesson. What are your first impressions of Brutus as a character?

Chapter 2

Brutus is planning his revenge when Romans come running and screaming from their homes. What has happened?

Chapter 4

Brutus notices that someone is climbing the cliff and rushes to the captain of the guard, Marcus Manlius. How is Marcus presented in this scene?

Chapter 5

Cominius brings the message that an army is coming to fight the Gauls. Brutus also decides on a plan to get revenge on Fabia. What do you think of Brutus by this point in the story?

Chapter 7

The Romans defeat the Gauls with help from an unexpected source. Do you think the characters all get what they deserve by the end?

First person

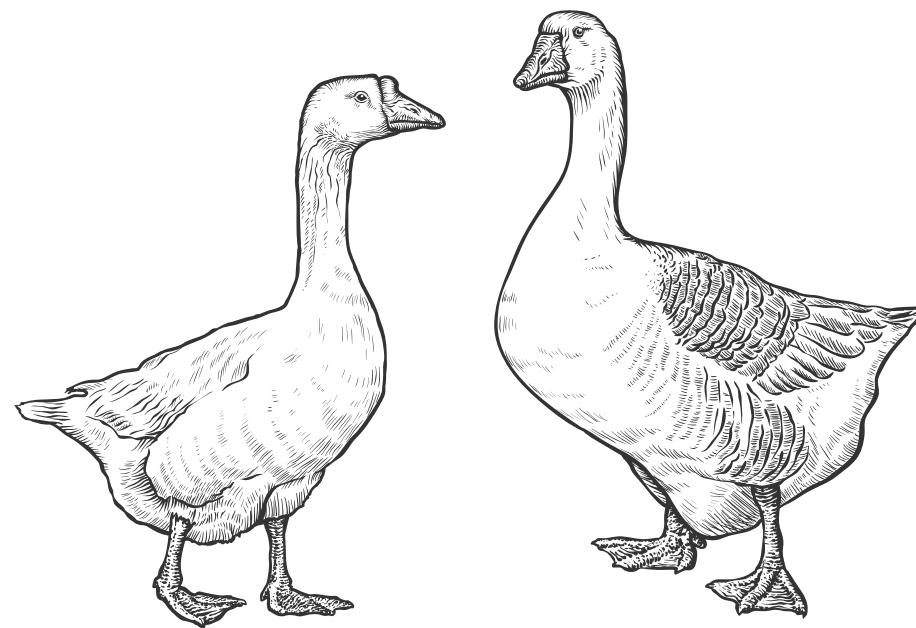
Roman Tales: The Goose Guards is written in the first person, from Brutus' point of view. Writing in the first person helps readers understand a character's thoughts and feelings. In this book, it allows readers to see why Brutus wants to get revenge on Fabia, even though they may not always agree with his thoughts and actions.

Dialogue

Dialogue is used in this book to move the plot forward and give readers information about the characters. Brutus tries to carry out his plan to upset Fabia by talking to other characters. Important messages about the Gauls are also passed on using dialogue. For example, a Roman soldier tells Brutus that the Gaul armies are coming.

Historical fiction

The novel is historical fiction because it describes real events from the time of the Roman Empire and the story is based on facts, such as the Gauls attacking Rome. However, Terry Deary explains in the Afterword that the tale of the geese was a story told by Marcus Manlius. Historians do not know whether it is true.



Literary terms

dialogue

Dialogue is a conversation between two or more characters.

fiction

Stories that describe imaginary events and people are fiction. Some parts of this story are fictitious. For example, the characters of Brutus and Fabia are not real.

first person

A first-person text is written from the point of view of the main character. The novel is written from Brutus' point of view.

historical fiction

Historical fiction stories take place at a real time in the past but the events might not have really happened. Brutus' story takes place during the sacking of Rome by the Gauls but the story about the geese may not have really happened.

legend

A legend is a story that has been passed down from a long time ago. Many people know the story but are usually unsure if it is true or not.

plot

The plot is the order of events or storyline in a book, film, play or computer game.

