

1A      **Object name:**  
**‘The Bathers: Boys Teasing a Slave’**

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**Record number: H12839**

**Maker: J.W. Brown (1842 - 1928)**

**Date made: late 1800s**

**Medium: Pencil and watercolour on paper**

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This watercolour shows a classical bath-house scene. There is evidence to suggest that black Africans were a minority among the slave population in Rome. However, it was possibly the intention of the artist, J.W. Brown to show the indignity and inhumanity of slavery rather than to be historically accurate.

Slavery was an important part of the ancient world. It was practiced all over the Mediterranean, especially in the Roman Empire.

In Rome, the law recognised slaves as a social class. Slaves lived within this class with very little hope of a better life. Free men owned and exchanged these slaves just like goods.

Slaves were bought and sold in forum markets. Slave merchants had to declare that the slaves being sold were free from disease and from a tendency to steal, run away or commit suicide. The relevant information was written on a label hung from the slave's neck. Prospective buyers inspected the slaves, who stood chained on a raised platform.

The working life of a slave depended greatly on the economic status of the owner. If a citizen could only afford one or two slaves, they would undertake a range of tasks. A wealthy Roman, meanwhile, could afford many slaves each trained for specific tasks.