

Stage 22 (Year 9)

Magic and Curses

1. What is the Latin word for a curse?

defixio

2. On what two materials were they normally written?

Lead or pewter (=tin+lead)

3. In what three places were they often put?

Wells, springs, tombs

What do these three places have to do with curses?(2)

Tombs have the spirits of the dead; wells and springs are often sacred and go down to the Underworld

4. What had someone stolen from Basilia?

A silver ring

Which god did she pray to?

Mars

What punishments does she want for anyone involved in the theft?

Damage to eyes, limbs, blood and intestines

What did she offer to the god (apart from the *defixio*)?

The ring itself

5. Why do you think there are so many directed at thieves?

There were many thefts. Also you might want to gods to help you to recover what had been stolen, and to identify the thief.

6. Who (or what) is depicted on the curse shown on page 35?

A demon standing in a boat, perhaps Charon taking a soul across the River Styx.

How can you tell that he is connected with death?

He has an urn with the ashes of dead, and a torch to light his way through the Underworld.