# Little Bear and the Treasure Box Story Text

Hello! My name is Leslie, and I'm going to take you on a journey back in time, to 2000 years ago, a time when there were Roman soldiers living and working here in Britain, at Arbeia, South Shields Roman Fort.

2000 years ago, everything looked and sounded and smelled different to how it does today. There were no cars on the streets, no aeroplanes in the sky, no electric lights shining, washing machines tumbling, microwaves pinging, TVs playing, nor phones ringing. If you had to live in Roman times for a day, which device would you miss the most?

To make your journey more fun, I would like you to help me tell this story by joining in, by creating sounds, noises, actions, and even tasting and smelling things. Don't worry: you can do as little or as much as you like; and if you prefer, you can just sit comfortably and listen.

You will need to gather the following items to take with you on your journey. Don't worry if you don’t have everything; you can still use your hands, voices, and feet to make lots of noise, and there is plenty for you to join in with.

Right. Are you ready for your list?

You can write them down, and then stop this recording while you and your grown-ups go and find them.

It is a good idea to keep all your props close by.

Right! Are you ready? Here we go.

You will need:

* a handful of salt or sand or sugar, in a bowl;
* a handkerchief or tissue;
* a piece of wool;
* a blanket;
* a box of cereal;
* a bowl of water, and a flannel or tea towel;
* a glass or jug of water, and an empty container to pour it into;
* some spices and herbs in a bowl;
* and something that smells nice, like soap or some Cologne;
* a piece of fruit that you'd like to eat; and
* a sandbag: you can find instructions on our web page on how to make this.

**[Pause here while you collect your props.]**

I love to tell stories with lots of sensory activities, so let's get started.

First, let's practise making some of the sounds.

Every time I say ‘beach’ or ‘desert’ or ‘sand’ in the story, run your hands through the salt or sand or sugar in the bowl.

When I say the word ‘cloak’ or ‘cold’, you can wrap the blanket around you.

The wool is to touch or wrap around your finger when I mention the word ‘wool’.

Do you know what the sound of a horse makes? That's good. Every time I say ‘horse’, I want you to go ‘neigh’.

We are going to have camels in the story too, and that's quite a tricky one to do, so we'll practise that when we get to it.

When I say ‘crying’ or ‘tears’, then perhaps you can take your tissue or handkerchief and pretend to wipe your tears away.

And when I say ‘smelly’ or ‘stinky’, you might want to put the tissue or handkerchief over your nose.

When I say ‘boots’, you can stomp your feet.

And when I say ‘wet’, you can dip your fingers in the water.

And when I say ‘salt’, you can let the salt or sand or sugar run through your fingers. And if your adult says it’s OK, you can even taste the salt.

Now that's a lot to remember, but don't worry: we'll go through and make all the sounds together.

Now let's get on with the story, and it's called ‘Little Bear and the Treasure Box’.

**[Story begins.]**

Shhhhh. Close your eyes and listen out for the sounds of 2000 years ago, as we travel back in time to the Roman world. We're walking along a street in Arbeia. Shopkeepers and snack bar owners are calling out to us, tempting us to buy all sorts of interesting-looking things; or to have a drink and a tasty bite to eat.

No one speaks to us in English, because that's a language that doesn't yet exist. Instead, they're calling to us in Latin or British, which sounds a bit like Welsh. I think they're being a bit rude. They're saying we're dressed very oddly, and they are wondering where we have come from. But we cannot stop; we are hurrying to meet the people in our story.

Watch out! Here comes a horse and cart rattling over the cobblestones. The driver cracks his whip and makes the poor horse go too fast.

**Can you make the sound of the horse now?**

He needs to be careful not to run us over.

Oh no! Here comes more trouble: Roman soldiers from the Fort. You can always tell when soldiers are coming because the nails in the bottom of their heavy boots strike the street.

**You can stomp your feet now to make the sound of soldiers stomping in the street.**

But best to keep out of the way! We don't want them to kick us with those big boots.

You can fetch your cereal box, make sure the lid is closed, and shake it up and down.

**[Marching sound.]**

Does it sound like an army of soldiers marching?

Enough! Yuck! Where is that really bad smell coming from?

**Grab your handkerchief or tissue and cover your nose.**

A stinking open drain runs through the street. It's full of rotting rubbish. And do you see that man outside the butcher’s shop over there, emptying a bucket of filthy slop into it. It's very wet and muddy underfoot, so watch out: don't slip; don't step in anything nasty.

Your bowl of water and flannel will help you make the sounds of muddy feet. Use your hands to move the flannel up and down in the water.

**[Muddy feet sound.]**

Now, quick, get ready! The people we have stepped back in time to meet have just left their house. It's a nice-looking one, with a workshop attached and a courtyard behind.

Here comes Barates, a man of about 40-years old, warmly dressed in a thick, woollen cloak. Behind him walks a small boy: one of his slaves wearing a short tunic and a much thinner cloak.

**Take your blanket and wrap it around you now.**

His name is Ursulus and he is carrying a wooden box. He is small and thin. He could be 9-years old, but maybe he is older. They both look serious and sad.

I hope you are wrapped up warm. A cold, wet wind is blowing in from the sea. The sea salt in it stings our faces, chilling our hands and feet.

**Make sure you're wrapped up still in that blanket, and you can put your hands in the bowl of water to feel the cold, wet wind.**

Oh dear. What sort of gloomy place have we come to? It's a cemetery, south-west of the Fort; tall tombs line the road. The salty wet cold of the wind mixes with the salty wet tears of the boy who stands behind his master in front of a handsome gravestone.

**If you're allowed, you can taste the salt and put your hands in the water to see what salty wet tears are like.**

He tries to lick his salt tears away as they fall down his cheek.

Barates burns strong smelling incense and hangs a garland of flowers over the tomb. Ursulus stares at the picture carved on it; he has never seen anything so beautiful; it is as though Regina were still alive. She looks like a fine lady sitting there in her high-back chair, wearing all her best clothes. The painter has chosen just the right colour for her hair, and her gold necklace shines. It is a thick gold twisted band, a treasured piece of British jewellery.

Fancy tombstones like that are expensive, and Regina saved up hard to pay for it before she died; she was always working. Look: you can see her holding a distaff in her hand, which she used to spin wool, and balls of wool lie in the basket beside her, ready to be woven into warm British cloth.

**Grab your wool and wrap it around your finger or rub it between your fingers to feel what it would feel like.**

Barates shivers in the wind and wraps his cloak more closely around him, which Regina made for him to keep out the cold and wet.

**Grab your blanket and wrap it around you tightly and you can put your fingers in your bowl of water again.**

“He feels the cold more than we do”, she would say. “You and I, Ursulus, were born on this damp, misty British island and are used to it. Barates was born in Syria, over 3000 miles away, in Palmyra, a beautiful city in the desert.”

“What is a desert?” asks Ursulus.

“You know when you walk on the beach when the tide is out and all you can see is sand. The desert is so vast that it makes you feel as tiny as a little bird walking on the shore. Imagine that instead of the sand being cold, wet, and sticky, it is warm and dry. And when you pick it up, it runs through your hands like salt.”

**Did you make a sandbag? If you did, you can squeeze this in time with the footsteps to make the sound of walking in the desert.**

**You can run your hands through the bowl of salt, sugar, or sand, and let it run through your fingers to feel what desert sand is like.**

Barates comes into the room and hears them talk about his home country. He thinks of the scents of herbs and flowers, thyme and jasmine, hanging in the warm air; of olive oil, silk, spices; fresh, juicy, sweet, sticky dates. How Barates misses all those things so far away from home.

**Take your bowl of spices and herbs and give them a nice smell now.**

“People travel to Palmyra from Arbeia, Persia, India, and China, riding on camels through the desert sand”, says Barates.

“What are camels?” asks Ursulus.

“Camels! How to explain what they look like to someone who has never seen them? A horse with a hump on its back and an extra-long neck.”

Barates suddenly makes the noise of a camel. It is the strangest, funniest noise Ursulus has ever heard.

**Can you try and make the noise of a camel now?**

That's great! Well done.

“The noise that comes out of a camel’s bottom is even louder!” Barates says. “You have to treat camels well, otherwise they get cross and spit at you, and it's not nice to be spat at by a camel.”

**Go on: make the noise of a camel again.**

Camels have long eyelashes to keep the sand out of their eyes, and can shut their nostrils to keep out the sand. Their feet are padded to stop them sinking into the desert sands, and they can gallop fast like a horse, but are also able to walk for many days carrying heavy loads, without needing water to drink.

**Why don't you try to be a camel now? Bat your eyelashes, flare your nostrils, stomp your feet on the floor, and make that camel sound.**

Oh, how Ursulus longed to travel, to visit a place where the sun shone warm, and to see camels and eat sweet fresh dates.

**What is your favourite fruit? Why don’t you have a piece of fruit now?**

Ursulus wasn't his real name, the name his mother, who died when he was a baby, had given to him. His uncle sold him to a slave trader, who brought him up north. Barates saw Ursulus at the slave market one day, looking small and frightened, with big brown eyes and lots of brown curly hair. He reminded Barates of a bear cub Regina once saw and felt sorry for, chained up to be taken to the circus.

So Barates gave him the nickname ‘Ursulus’, which means ‘little bear’ in Latin, the language of the Romans, and bought him for Regina, who didn't have any children, and could always do with more help around the house.

Although he was lucky and Regina was kind to him, Ursulus was a slave, and had to work hard.

Every morning he got up early, to sweep the floors and empty all the pots that people used to wee in at night, which he emptied into a big barrel in the yard. It was a smelly job, but an easy one, as the pots weren't heavy, though he had to be careful not to spill the smelly wee.

**It's time to put that handkerchief or tissue over your nose again, and pour some water from the jug into a container, but be careful not to splash.**

**[Pouring sound.]**

The urine, or wee, was used to whiten and strengthen the cloth which Regina made. The longer it stood, the stronger and smellier it got, but the better quality it was to finish cloth. Ursulus learned how to prepare the raw wool which Regina and her slave girl spent so much time spinning.

**Grab your piece of wool again and wrap it around your finger or rub it between your fingers to feel what it was like to spin some wool.**

Regina too was once a slave, but made enough money to buy her freedom. She kept her money and her treasures in a box that Barates brought with him to Britain, and which he had given to her as a present.

Look! It is the same treasure box Ursulus has been carrying. It is the same box shown on the tomb. Regina’s hand is pointing down to it, holding its lid wide open. Barates now orders Ursulus to hold up the box, the one he has been carrying, while Barates unlocks it with the key, taken from his belt.

As the lid opens, they both close their eyes and breathe deeply; for out of the box comes the smell of Regina's perfume, and with it, the memory of her voice and her smile.

**If you want to smell some Cologne or some soap now, go ahead.**

Barates takes out a small bag from the box and gives it to Ursulus. It is a small bag, but the bag is full of heavy coins.

“Here. Take this. Regina left it for you, to help you buy your freedom.”

His freedom. With such freedom, Ursulus could travel as far as Syria, where he would ride a smelly, spitting, speedy camel.

**Go on, make the camel noise again.**

He looked back at the tomb for one last time before he turned away. Regina was showing him his way to freedom, to a new life of adventures, far away.