Helping your children choose books they will love

I reading

Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

Opening extract from

Tony Robinson's Weird World of Wonders! Romans

Written by

Tony Robinson

Published by

Macmillan Children's Books an imprint of Pan Macmillan

All Text is Copyright © of the Author and/or Illustrator

Please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

HOW ROME BEGAN

Long, long ago in the faraway country of Italy there lived a beautiful young priestess called Rhea Silvia who began to grow fat. After six months she had a belly the size of a watermelon, and her uncle Amulius grabbed her by the sleeve, dragged her into the temple garden and whispered, 'You're pregnant!'

'That would seem to be the case,' replied Rhea Silvia.

'But you're a priestess. You're not allowed to mess around with young men,' insisted Amulius.

'I didn't,' said Rhea Silvia. 'I messed around with one of the gods – Mars. We went into those mulberry bushes, and one thing led to another, and now . . .'

'You're going to have a baby.'

'No,' said Rhea Silvia. 'I'm going to have two babies.'

And she did. Three months later Rhea Silvia gave birth to twins.

Her father King Numitor was naturally very upset, but he grew fond of the two little boys, and soon everyone was happy again . . .

Except Uncle Amulius.

One night he crept into the little boys' room, bundled them into a wicker basket and carried them off to the deep, dark forest.

'You have brought shame on our family,' he hissed. 'So now you must die.' And he tipped them out on to the musty, dusty leaves, leaving them to their fate.

All night they lay there. They didn't cry – they were brave little boys. But they were very hungry.

Then towards morning there was a snuffling sound, and the pad of soft paws, and a great, grey wolf loped out of the surrounding trees.



The wolf picked up one twin in her sharp, white teeth and carried him back to her den. Then she returned, picked up the other one, and brought him back to her den too.

But she didn't harm them. Her cubs had recently died in a tragic chariot accident, and she was full of milk and without any babies to love.

So she looked after the little boys and raised them as her own. She chased away the hungry badgers when they came too close to the den, and she covered them with the musty, dusty leaves when they were cold in winter. And they became strong and clever, and as wily as . . . err . . . wolves.

Stop! Stop this story right now!



Until one day, when they were eight years old, and their Wolf Mother had died and gone to Wolf Heaven, they were discovered by shepherds and taken back to the shepherds' village. There they were given a hut to live in, clothes to wear and names too. One was named Romulus and the other Remus.

This isn't true, you know.

By the time the boys had grown to manhood, Rhea Silvia's father was no longer king. Wicked Uncle Amulius had seized the crown, and had thrown Numitor into a damp and unhygienic dungeon. In fact Amulius threw almost anyone he could into that deep and unhygienic dungeon, and one day when Remus had strayed too near the palace while looking for a lost lamb, Amulius grabbed him and threw him in for trespassing.

The young man soon befriended Numitor, who told him his two grandsons had once been stolen from him. Fortunately Remus had an unusual birthmark behind his knee, and one afternoon Numitor saw it. He suddenly realised who Remus was – his long-lost grandson!

Unusual birthmark? This is getting more stupid by the minute!



Meanwhile Romulus had raised an army of brave shepherds who marched to the palace, broke down the door, seized Amulius, chopped him into bite-sized nuggets and threw him in the moat.

When the shepherds released Remus, he told them that he and his brother were heirs to the throne. The whole city cheered, held a three-day party and offered Romulus and Remus the crown. But they refused.

'Our grandfather Numitor is the rightful king,' they said. 'He shall rule here. We will set off and found a new city.'

So their mother Rhea Silvia brushed a tear from her eye, packed their lunch boxes and kissed them goodbye, and off they went, accompanied by the shepherds and a few scruffy, runaway slaves.

Ignore this, young reader! It's a pack of lies.

After several days they came to two hills. One was called the Palatine Hill. 'We'll build our city here!' said Romulus.

The other was called the Aventine Hill. 'No, we'll build our city here,' said Remus.

And they began to argue. Romulus dug a trench and Remus filled it in again.



Remus lay some foundations, and Romulus walked all over the wet concrete in his big boots.

Romulus built a brick wall, and Remus kicked it over.

This was too much for Romulus. He picked up a rusty shovel, hit Remus on the head, and Remus fell down dead.

'We shall build my city here on the Palatine Hill,' announced Romulus. 'And what is more we will name it after me.

'It will be called Rome,
and we shall be known as the Romans!'



But there was a small problem . . .

'We're all men,' said the shepherds and the scruffy, runaway slaves. 'You can't start a city with ALL men.'

'Then I'll fetch some women,' Romulus replied, and straight away, he marched down into the valley and captured all the women who lived there. He brought them back to Rome and made them become Roman wives, even though some of them were extremely annoyed.

From above, Mars looked down on his son's city and he loved it. He would make it the most powerful place in the land . . . and that's how Rome began.



