



Sex & History

Key Stages 4 & 5





Key Questions

When might it
have been
made?

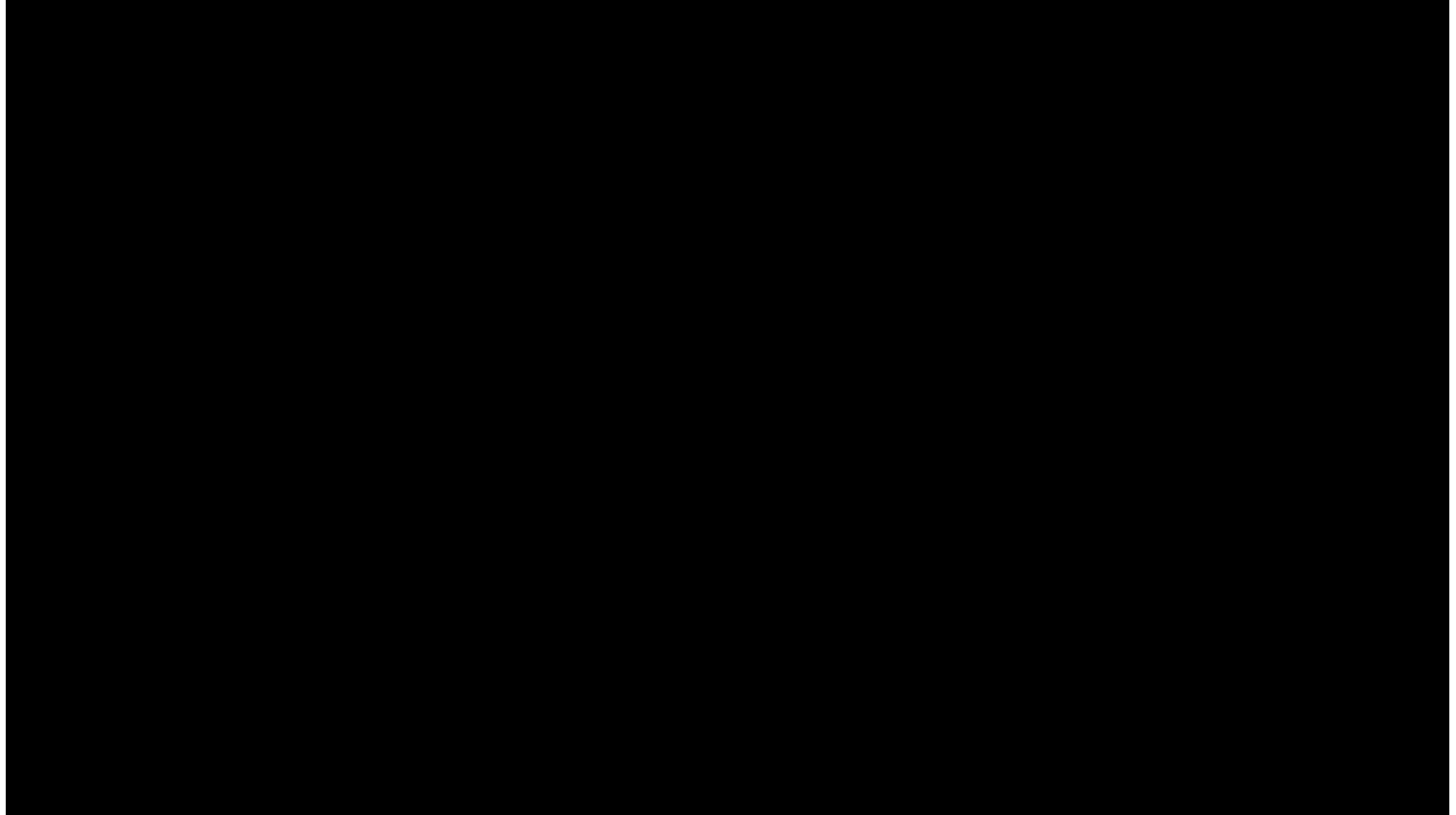


What is
this?
What was
it used for?

How would it work?
Who would wear it and why?

Video: Historical Information 1

Move the mouse and click the video . Or go to <https://youtu.be/i6GSyg3BYqE>



Historical Information 1

- This is a metal gusset made of two panels hinged together, designed to be fitted to a waist strap to prevent sexual access to the genitals.
- The two openings allow the woman wearing it to urinate and defecate.
- It has been dated to the 15th or 16th centuries.
- Today we associate chastity belts with Medieval knights and the quest to ensure that their wives remained faithful while they were away at the crusades...

Key Questions

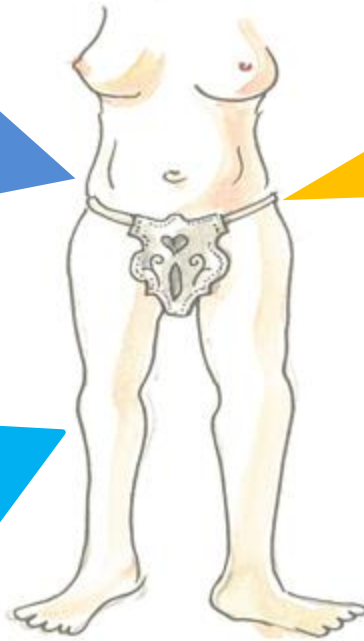
Do you think people ever really wore these?

Would a woman be happy to wear this? If so, why?

Why might someone want to control sexual access to a woman?

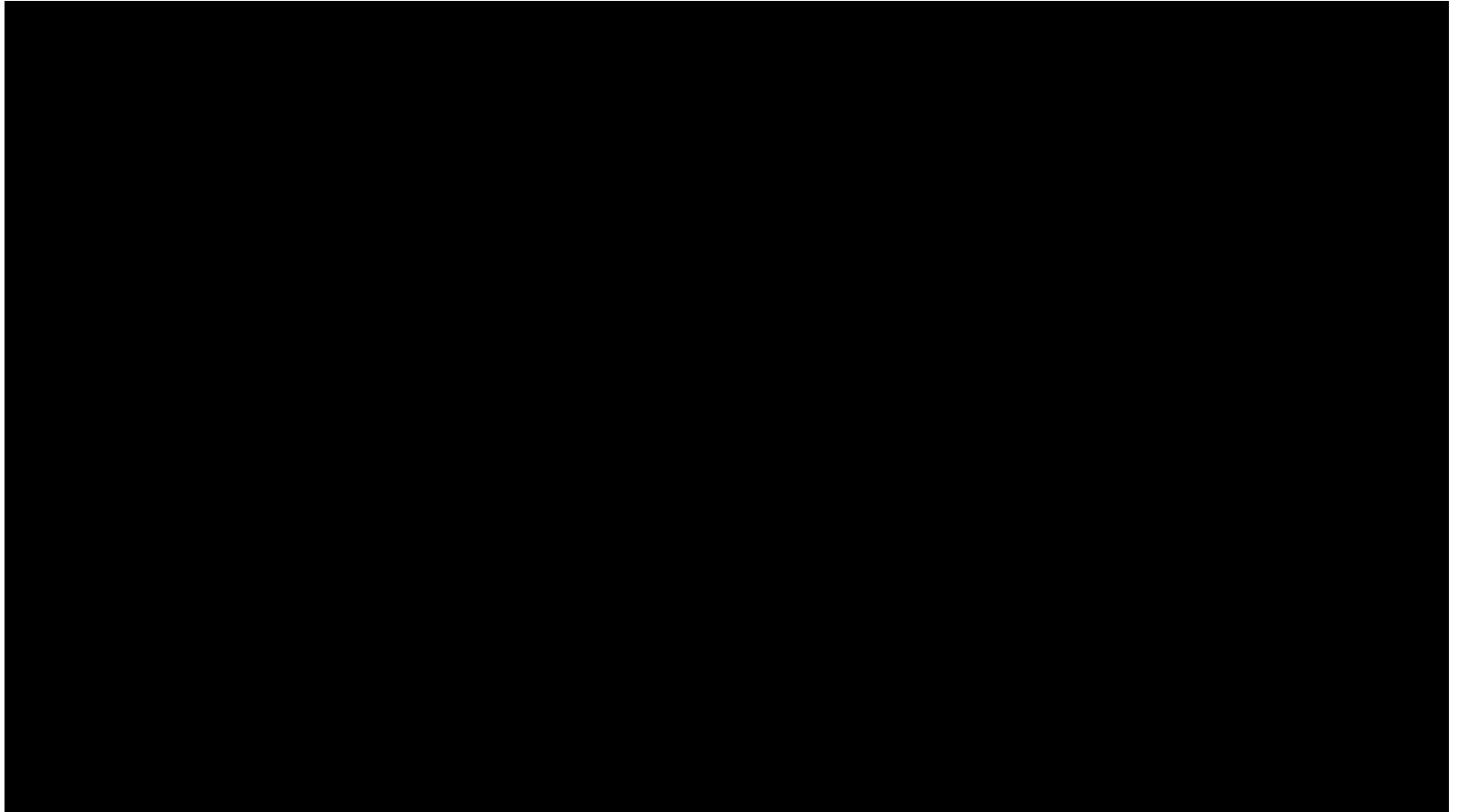
Who would have held the key? What difference does it make?

Why does society place value on fidelity and virginity? Are these values different for men and women?



Video: Historical Information 2

Move the mouse and click the video . Or go to <https://youtu.be/Pwez41LAIzg>



Historical Information 2

- The belt is almost certainly a fake that was never worn. It is certainly too impractical to have been worn for any length of time. And there are no signs of wear on the object which is in pristine condition.
- Historians argue that almost all examples we have of chastity belts were NOT designed to be actually worn.
- Historians suggest that the object has symbolic value. It is an instance of unrealistic images of women being used to reinforce moral codes and sexual values.
- It was used as a symbol to demonstrate the importance of chastity in the medieval world.

Key Questions



What sorts of 'myths' about sex and relationships exist today?

How 'fake' are our images about sex?

Does the idea of the chastity belt seem very alien today? Or are there modern day parallels we can think of?

Why might someone craft a chastity belt, like this one, which could never actually be worn?



Key Questions

When might it have been made?



What is this?
What was it used for?

How would it work?
Who would wear it and why?

Video: Historical Information 1

Move the mouse and click the video. Or go to <https://youtu.be/2piguPif8cc>



Historical Info 1

- This is a metal device designed to prevent erections in men.
- It was made in the early 20th century in the UK.
- Since the late 18th century, some special garments made out of cloth or metal were created to prevent masturbation.
- This particular device was designed to fit over a boy's penis at night to stop him getting an erection.
- The metal teeth would have made any swelling very painful.

Key Questions

How would a boy feel wearing this?



Why might someone want to control sexual urges in boys?

Who might have encouraged the use of these devices?

Video: Historical Information 2

Move the mouse and click the video. Or go to <https://youtu.be/zlszxkxQ2Oo>



Historical Info 2

- From the 18th to the early 20th century there was much discussion of the possible medical and moral dangers of masturbation.
- Masturbation was linked with a range of problems including impotence, depression and muscle-wasting.
- This kind of device was designed to stop involuntary “nocturnal emissions”, what we now call “wet dreams”.

Key Questions



Do you think people ever really wore these?



Is there still stigma relating to masturbation?

Is there a difference in how masturbation is thought of for men and women?

Video: Historical Information 3

Move the mouse and click the video. Or go to <https://youtu.be/aqv5ePD9f-I>



Historical Info 3

- This kind of device was sold by specialised surgical suppliers and was expensive.
- It is not clear how widely they were actually used.
- They may have been used in hospitals and mental wards, or simply displayed in popular museums.
- Other preventions for masturbation discussed at the time were mountain walks, cold baths and medicines.

Key Questions

Does the idea of the anti-masturbation device seem very alien today? Or are there modern day parallels we can think of?



Even if they weren't widely used, do you think the fact that they existed nevertheless made an impact on ideas about masturbation?



Key Questions

What is this?
What was it
used for?



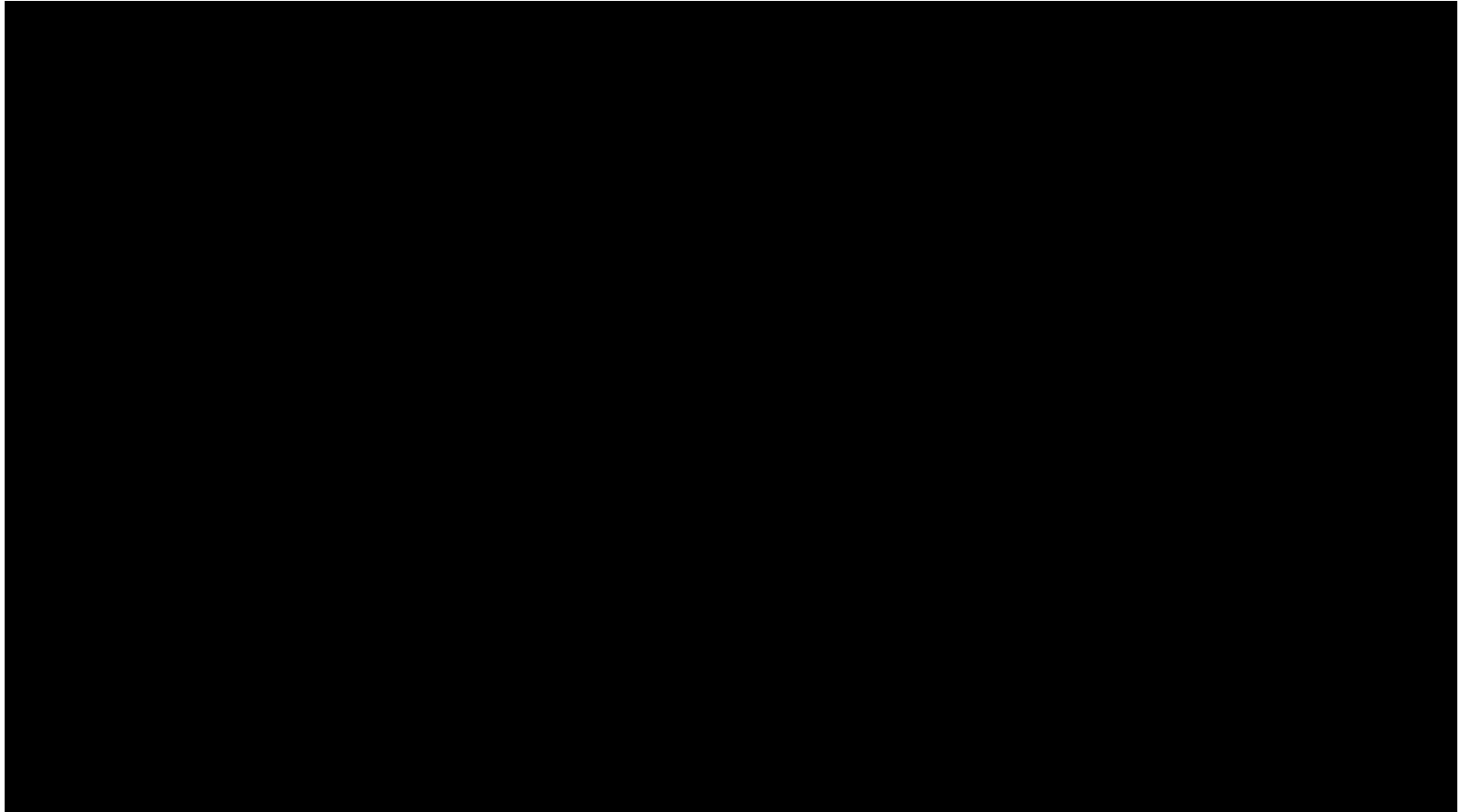
Can you
think of
words to
describe this
image of a
naked
couple?

How does this compare with modern
day depictions of sexual activity in the
media?

When might it have been
made?

Video: Historical Information 1

Move the mouse and click the video . Or go to <https://youtu.be/t5x4rBdDOEs>



Historical Info 1

- This is a small ivory model of a couple embracing.
- It dates from 19th century China.
- Historians don't know exactly who made this and what it was for.

Key Questions

Who are they? How do they feel about each other?

Where is this taking place?
Does it matter?

Does it matter?

Would you describe it as pornographic?
Why or why not?

Why or why not?

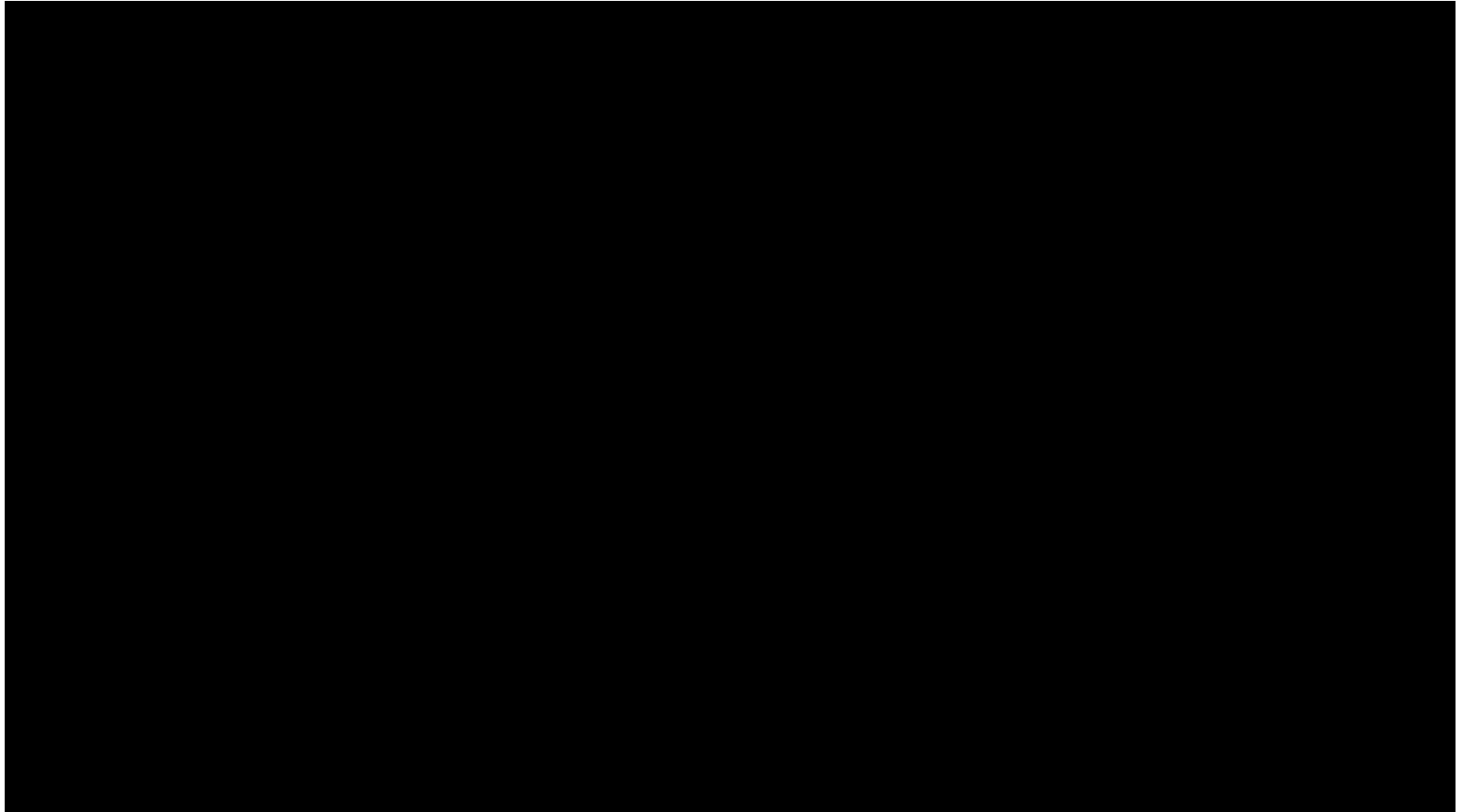


Is it a man and a woman? Two men? Two women? What difference does it make?

What if the figures were orientated another way?

Video: Historical Information 2

Move the mouse and click the video . Or go to <https://youtu.be/by7hvLs6A3Y>



Historical Info 2

- It might have also been used as something known as a “trunk-bottom”.
- These are small objects showing sexual activity between men and women that Chinese parents would keep hidden from their children, and reveal to their daughter as she was about to embark on her marriage.
- They are thought to have been a method of sex education.

Key Questions

Why would a parent want to give such an object to a daughter on this occasion?

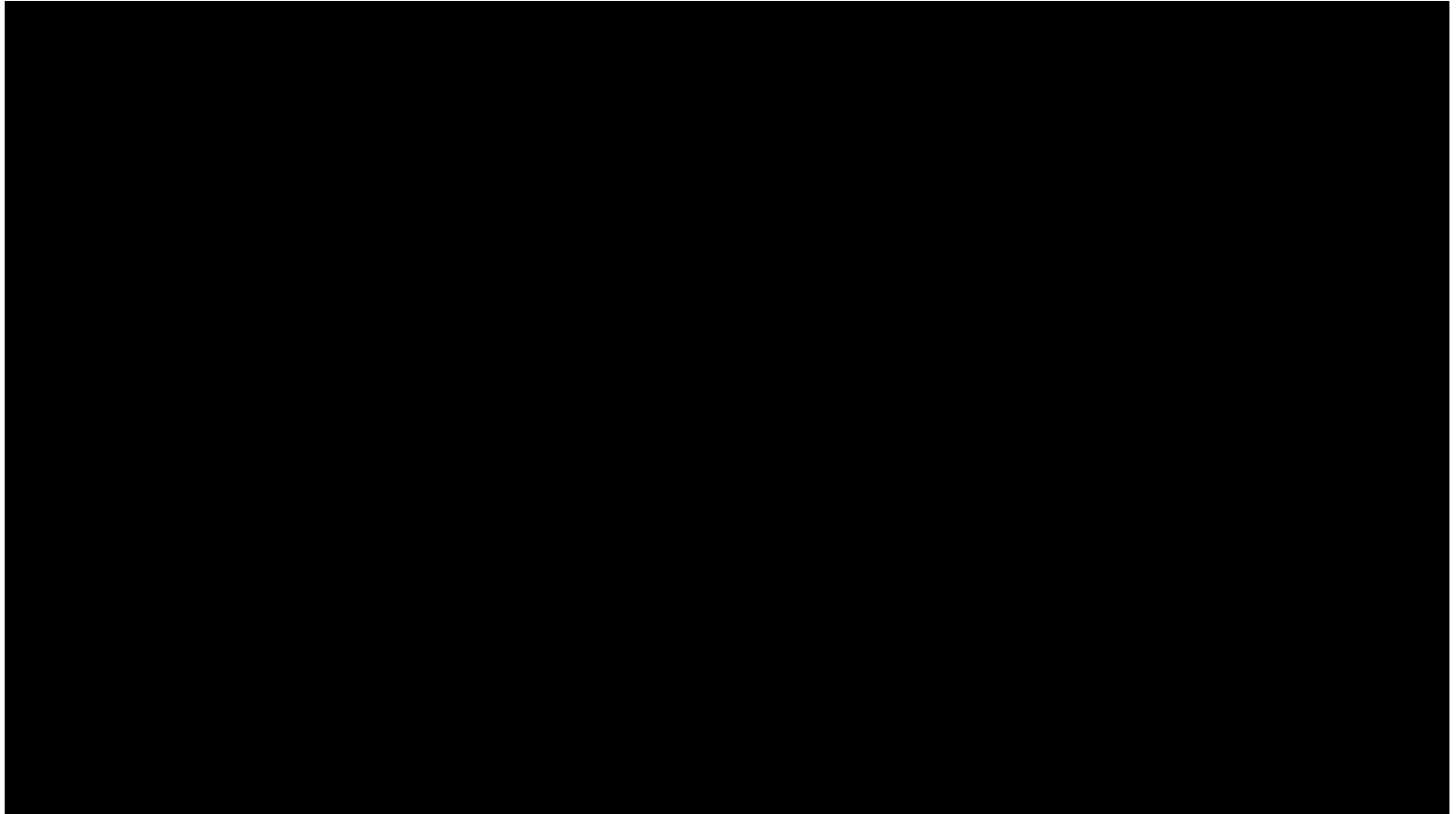
Why would they hide it at the bottom of the trunk?



Do you think they would have given such an object to a son as well? Why or why not?

Video: Historical Information 3

Move the mouse and click the video . Or go to <https://youtu.be/tcTZk3GNk38>



Historical Info 3

- If you look closely you can see that one figure is female and that she has had her feet bound.
- Until the early 20th century in China high class women's feet were bound in order to stunt their growth.
- Small feet were regarded as a mark of great beauty.
- It was also a very painful process that resulted in the deforming of feet and meant that women couldn't walk comfortably.
- In China today footbinding is thought of as a barbaric practice and symbolic of attempts to control of women, including their sexual freedom.

Key Questions

Is this something we would do today?

Can you think of any cultural practices that might be seen as similar?

Do you think this historical image can really tell us about people's relationships in the past?

What if a person in future saw our representations of sex and relationships today?

What might they assume about our lives?

What do you think footbinding was for?

Does this affect the way you might think about the relationship between the two people?







Key Questions

When might it
have been
made?



What is this?
What was it
used for?

Who would have one
and why?

Video: Historical Information 1

Move the mouse and click the video . Or go to <https://youtu.be/FxLpXret3TM>



Historical Info 1

- This is a small, ivory model of an erect penis, or “phallus”.
- It was made around the 1st century AD in Roman Italy.
- It has a hole at one end so that it could be threaded onto a necklace.
- The image of the erect penis or “phallus” was thought to bring good luck.
- This type of necklace was worn by soldiers as they moved around the Roman Empire, meaning we find lots in Britain.
- They were also given to young boys by their parent to keep them safe.

Key Questions

Would you wear an amulet like this?



What do you think about young children wearing something like this?



Key Questions

When might it
have been
made?



What is this?
What was it used
for?

What is the
rectangular block for?

Video: Historical Information 2

Move the mouse and click the video. Or go to <https://youtu.be/gtq9jWAK8xU>



Historical Info 2

- This is a large stone phallus made in the 1st century AD, and found in the ancient Roman city of Pompeii, Italy.
- It was probably mounted on the outside wall of a house, shop or bar to protect the occupants from harm.
- Carvings and sculptures of the phallus like this, as well as other sexual images, were a common sight in the streets of Roman cities.

Key Questions

Imagine you have gone back in time to roman times.

How do you think you would react seeing phallic objects like this on the streets?



What do you think about the way the penis is depicted in this image?

How might it have affected the way Roman men felt about themselves?

Imagine a Roman has time travelled to the present day.
What things on our streets might shock or surprise them?



Key Questions

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What is this?
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Video: Historical Information 3

Move the mouse and click the video. Or go to <https://youtu.be/l8G4a3P5uas>



Historical info 3

- This is a 19th century bronze copy of an ancient Roman “windchime”.
- It depicts a gladiator fighting his own penis which has transformed into a panther. Other Roman objects feature penises with hoofs, tails and wings.
- The original might have hung in the doorway of an ancient home, shop or bar in the Roman city of Pompeii.
- As with other phallic symbols, it was probably meant to protect the household (and the ringing bells might also have been thought to ward off evil).

Key Questions

How do you think Romans felt about this object? Is it meant to be arousing, weird, funny?

Do we find images of the penis funny today?



In modern times showing an erect penis could be classified as pornography. What do you think about this?

Is the panther meant to say something about human sexuality?



These slides should be used in conjunction with the **University of Exeter's Sex & History Key Stages 4 & 5** resource pack.

For more information please see: www.sexandhistory.exeter.ac.uk

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