Engineering the Empire: A Roman Fort Drawing Challenge

Learning objective: To understand the layout and defensive features of a Roman fort (castrum) through labelled illustration.

Use your knowledge of Roman military history to complete the drawing of a Roman fort. Follow the drawing steps and use the word bank to label the key features of the site.

Draw: Draw a bird's-eye view of a Roman fort. Start by sketching a rectangular outline to represent the fortified walls. Include a double-ditch system outside the walls. Inside, use a ruler to draw a precise grid system, including a central cross-shaped path. Sketch small, uniform rectangular blocks for the barracks, a central square building for the Principia, and a larger, more detailed house for the commander. Add a gatehouse at each of the four sides. Keep the style clean, architectural, and neatly labelled.

Label words: Principia · Vallum · Contubernium · Praetorium · Porta · Fossa

Steps:

1. Step 1: Draw a large rectangle with a ditch (fossa) and an earth rampart (vallum) surrounding the entire perimeter. Label the ditch.
2. Step 2: Draw the headquarters building (Principia) in the very centre of the fort. Describe why this location

was chosen for military command.

3. Step 3: Draw the rows of barracks (contubernium) where the soldiers slept. Why did the Romans use a grid system for their forts?

4. Step 4: Label the gate (porta) on the side of the fort that would face towards the main Roman road.

5. Step 5: Ellie the elephant remembers that the commander needed a house. Draw the commander's house (Praetorium) near the headquarters and label it.