

The Anthropology Museum at the University of Winnipeg has a collection of hundreds of artefacts from ancient Egypt, Israel, and Palestine (you can learn more about them here: <https://news-centre.uwinnipeg.ca/all-posts/the-adventures-of-the-hetherington-collection/>). Many of them come from the period when the Romans ruled these areas. Many of these objects are oil lamps, which are decorated with symbols that were meaningful to their ancient users. You can find pictures of more of our objects at @uwluxproject on Instagram. If you'd like, you can share your finished product with Dr. Melissa Funke, the director of the Lux Project at the University of Winnipeg, through email (m.funke@uwinnipeg.ca), Instagram (the handle above), or Twitter (@TheLuxProject1). You can also email Dr. Funke with any questions you have, or for further information about the lamps and the ancient Romans.

How to Make Your Own Roman Lamp

**The following can be done with either Play-Doh or modelling clay. Typical Roman lamps are quite small, and even fit into the palm of an adult's hand, and are made with molds so they can easily be made/handled by little hands.*



A typical Roman lamp



Ancient lampmaker's thumbprints

- 1) You will need a few small (ca. ½ cup) lumps of Play-Doh/clay, a disposable cup cut down to 2.5-3 inches in height or a ½ cup measuring cup (your “mold”), some utensils to decorate the surface of your lamp (we found that chopsticks and straws worked best), and scrap paper. It is also helpful to have some wax paper or smooth plastic placemats/tablecloths to roll out your material onto.
- 2) Take one lump of Play-Doh/clay and roll it out flat, but around 1 centimetre thick. Then take this and press it into your “mold”. Use your thumb to press it down. When it is evenly pressed into the mold, gently pull it out so it retains a basic cup shape.
- 3) Do the same with a second lump of Play-Doh/clay, then cut out a small hole in the center (like the image on the upper left). Extend one end of each lump to form the nozzle.
- 4) Take one of your formed halves and add some decoration to it (this will form the top of your lamp). Some lamps had writing on them (usually they said something like “cute little lamp” or “light” in ancient Greek, like the ones below), so you could write your

name or a word you especially like. Other lamps had images of local plants like grapevines. The one above has a stylized menorah at the nozzle, to reflect the Jewish faith of the maker or owner, and palm fronds around the top. (You can look at some of our images on @uwluxproject on Instagram for inspiration).



- 5) Join your 2 halves carefully, forming a seal between them. Use a pencil to support your nozzle and to form its hole. You may need to remove some excess material at the seam. If your material isn't strong enough to stand up (especially on top), crumple up some scrap paper to go into middle for support (place it before you join your halves).
- 6) If your lamp isn't too delicate, you can add some more decoration, especially at the nozzle.
- 7) Remove the pencil from the nozzle VERY CAREFULLY. Ta-da! You've made a Roman lamp!
- 8) When you're done, share a picture of your project with Dr. Funke! Even if your lamp isn't beautiful, don't worry! A lot of them were made at home or very cheaply, so the quality varied a lot! Here's a piece of an ancient lamp from our collection that didn't come out perfectly:

