

## Source 1.2: Venus' beauty

This fresco was found on the wall of a home in the city of Pompeii. Pompeii was a Roman city on the Bay of Naples, near to the volcano Vesuvius. When Mount Vesuvius erupted in AD 79, the entire city was buried under ash and pulverised rock.

Archaeologists started to excavate the area in the 18th century. They found that many parts of Pompeii were amazingly well-preserved by the volcanic ash, including this wall painting of Venus. In this painting, Venus is shown lying on a shell, floating on the sea with two little winged cupids.



FIGURE 1.7 Detail from a fresco from the House of Venus

This large fresco is from a grand and wealthy house. It is on the wall of the covered colonnade which runs around the house's inner courtyard garden. Many different frescos are displayed, but this is the most famous of them, and the house takes its modern name from it.

## Source 1.2: Questions

- 1 Who is the most important figure in this painting? How can you tell?
- 2 What has the painter done to Venus' appearance to show us that she is the goddess of love?
- 3 What characteristics does this image suggest belong to Venus?
- **4** Some people think Venus has been painted on a sea-shell here to remind its viewers of the myth that she was born from the foam of the sea. What can you find out about this myth? What does this story tell us about the Romans' understanding of the world around them?
- **5** Why do you think the Romans might have wanted paintings of the gods on display in their houses?

