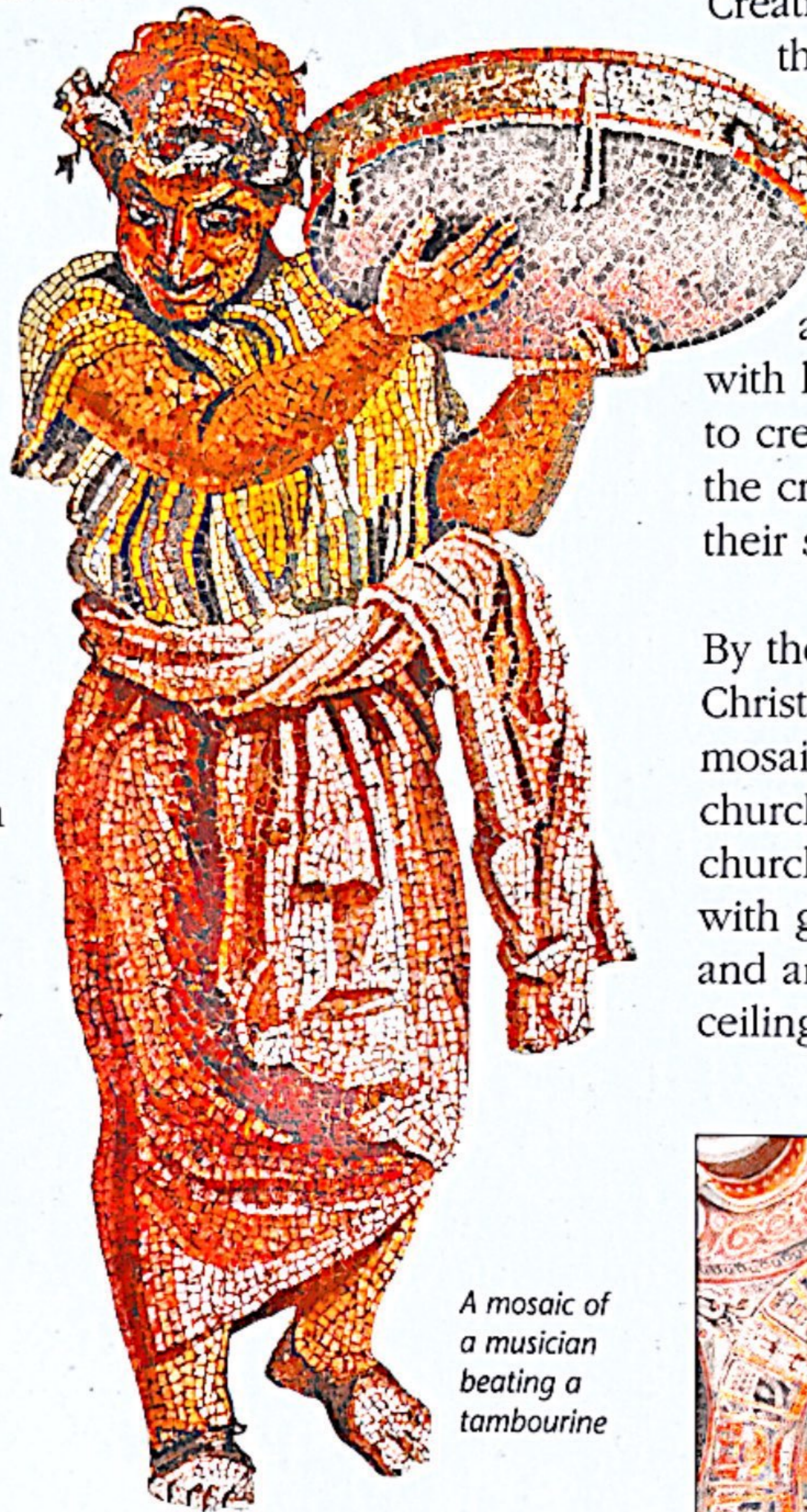


MAGNIFICENT MOSAICS

Roman mosaics were made from thousands of cubes of stone, marble, pottery or glass. These tiny cubes, or *tesserae*, were pressed into wet cement to make a flat, patterned surface which was very hardwearing. Many Roman mosaics still look magnificent today.

PATTERNS AND SCENES

Mosaic floors were laid in temples, palaces and villas, and their subjects ranged from simple, geometric patterns to elaborate scenes. Many mosaics depicted myths and legends, but scenes from daily life were also a popular subject. Sometimes, a mosaic was designed to suit the particular room it was in - some Roman dining rooms had a floor that looked just like a pond of tasty fish.



A mosaic of a musician beating a tambourine

SPECIAL EFFECTS

Creating a picture from thousands of tiny cubes is a difficult and awkward job, but Roman mosaics were often very realistic. By using a range of subtle shades, with highlights and shadows to create a feeling of shape, the craftsmen really made their subjects come to life.

By the 4th century AD, Christian artists were using mosaics to decorate their churches. Some of these churches look very dramatic, with glittering figures of saints and angels covering their ceilings and walls.

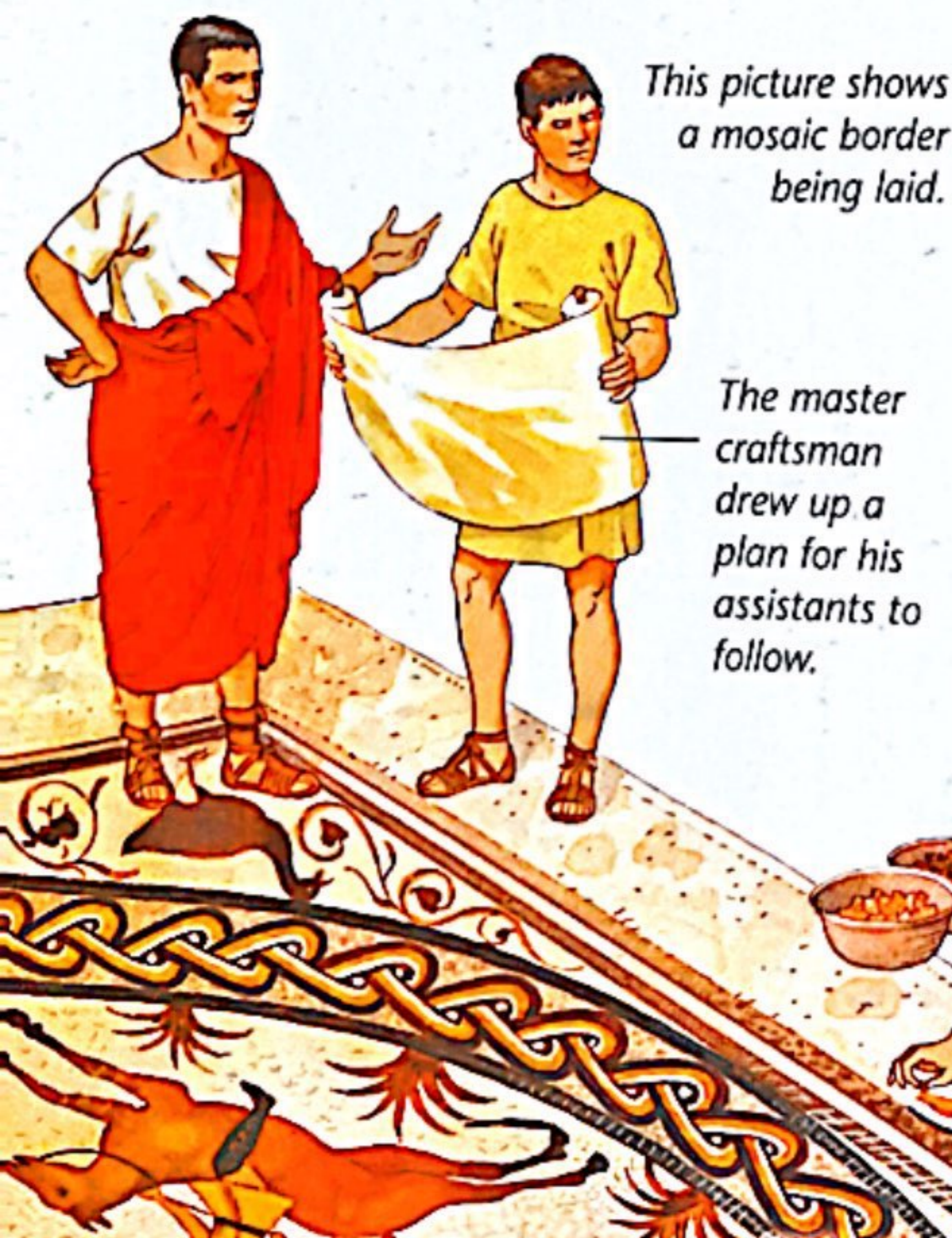


This stunning mosaic ceiling was created for a church in Ravenna, Italy.

MAKING MOSAICS

Simple mosaics were laid on site, but the more elaborate pictures were assembled in a workshop inside a wooden frame. When a picture was completed, the frame was taken to the site and set in position.

Then a decorative border was laid around it.



This picture shows a mosaic border being laid.

The master craftsman drew up a plan for his assistants to follow.



INTERNET LINK

For links to websites where you can take a fly-through of a Roman villa and see close-ups of Roman mosaics, go to www.usborne-quicklinks.com

