

Table IV

Table XI

Table V

The Roman

Twelve Tables

Table VII

I. All women, even those old and grown, must have

Table XI

HOW FAIR WERE THE LAWS  
IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE?

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## **Instructions:**

**This activity is presented in two ways, one that is more advanced and one that is more basic. The “basic” version is more simplified, is easier to read, has simpler questions, however still accomplishes the overarching goal of the lesson. The “advanced” version contains more information about each of the Twelve Tables, has more detailed and informative questions, and just provides that “extra step” that many students are ready for. For example, when justifying what Tables justify their answers, the “advanced” copy leaves it open ended as to what tables are involved. Two worksheets are included in the “basic” version: one that provides wither one or two blanks for students to provide some guidance and a second that provides three or four options to choose from. I often use both in my classroom based on the academic needs of my students. Please look over both so you can choose what fits best!**

**To conclude the activity, students complete the “Opinion Column” regarding the Twelve Tables. They should provide their answers on the appropriate column once they have reviewed all of the Twelve Tables and are familiar with the laws created as a result of the deal between Plebians and Patricians.**

# **The Twelve Tables - Basic -**

# The Roman

# Twelve Tables

## Table I

If you are called to court then you are to go. If you do not, you will be captured and brought before the court with force

## Table II

If your witness does not come to court, you can shout and yell outside his house for three days to summon him to appear

## Table III

If someone owes you a debt, that person has 30 days to pay it. If he does not pay, you can enslave the debtor (or sell him as a slave) to recoup your debt

## Table VI

- I. Any and all agreements involving property then it is bound by law
- II. No one, not even the builder, can remove beams from buildings once erect

## Table V

- I. All women, even those old and grown, must have guardians at all times
- II. If you go insane, nearest male relative shall take your property

## Table IV

- I. If you have a child that is seriously deformed, he or she must be put to death
- II. You can be free from your father if he sells you into slavery three times

## Table VII

You are responsible for repairing roads around your property. If you choose not to, others may bring their animals upon your land

## Table VIII

- I. Killing a thief inside your home is not a crime, provided he was truly a thief
- II. If you choose to burn down your home you shall be put to death

## Table IX

You will be put to death for taking bribes or committing treason against your country

## Table XII

- I. No corpses can be burnt or buried within the city
- II. Women may not cry at funerals

## Table XI

If you are a plebeian, you shall not marry a patrician, and vice versa

## Table X

If your slave commits a crime, he or she will be punished, not you

# Breaking Down the Twelve Tables

1. If you are called to court, what are you supposed to do? What are the consequences?

This because of  
Table:

-----

2. How do the Twelve Tables resolve unpaid debts?

This because of  
Table:

-----

3. What kind of powers do parents have over their children?

This because of  
Table:

----- & -----

4. How are issues of inheritance resolved in the event that you go insane?

This because of  
Table:

-----

5. How were women treated unfairly in the Twelve Tables? Give two examples!

This because of  
Table:

----- & -----



6. What responsibilities did owners of buildings and roads have to other people? Give at least two.

This because of  
Table:

\_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

7. If you kill a thief in your home, what penalties will you face?

This because of  
Table:

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Your home is old and needs repairs badly. However, you just want to start over and build from scratch. You decide to burn down your home and start over. What penalties may you face?

This because of  
Table:

\_\_\_\_\_

9. If I were a patrician, what would have been forbidden to you? Why do you think this was?

This because of  
Table:

\_\_\_\_\_

10. You are a city inspector. Your friend offers you a bribe to "look the other way" in regard to the poor construction of his home. You accept the bribe. What can happen to you?

This because of  
Table:

\_\_\_\_\_



# Breaking Down the Twelve Tables

1. If you are called to court, what are you supposed to do? What are the consequences?

This because of  
Table...  
(circle one)

1 4 8

2. How do the Twelve Tables resolve unpaid debts?

This because of  
Table...  
(circle one)

9 3 2

3. What kind of powers do parents have over their children?

This because of  
Table...  
(circle one)

10 4 3

4. How are issues of inheritance resolved in the event that you go insane?

This because of  
Table...  
(circle one)

5 3 12

5. How were women treated unfairly in the Twelve Tables? Give two examples!

This because of  
Table...  
(circle two)

1 5 8 12

6. What responsibilities did owners of buildings and roads have to other people? Give at least two.

This because of  
Table...  
(circle two)

7 6 2 11

7. If you kill a thief in your home, what penalties will you face?

This because of  
Table...  
(circle one)

12 5 8

8. Your home is old and needs repairs badly. However, you just want to start over and build from scratch. You decide to burn down your home and start over. What penalties may you face?

This because of  
Table...  
(circle one)

8 1 2

9. If I were a patrician, what would have been forbidden to you? Why do you think this was?

This because of  
Table...  
(circle one)

12 1 11

10. You are a city inspector. Your friend offers you a bribe to "look the other way" in regard to the poor construction of his home. You accept the bribe. What can happen to you?

This because of  
Table...  
(circle one)

3 6 9

# **The Twelve Tables - Advanced -**

# The Roman

# Twelve Tables

## Table I: Civil Procedures

- If someone is accused and called to go to court, he must go.
- If he does not go, he may send a witness to stand for him. If he does not come or send a witness, he may be captured and forced to come to court.

## Table II: Civil Procedures

If a person needs evidence or a witness, he may go every third day to the doorway of the person and call for him.

## Table III: Debt

- If a person owes a debt and is brought to court, he shall have 30 days to pay the debt.
- After 30 days if the debt is not paid, the person owing the debt may be put in chains.
- After 60 days in custody the person owing the debt can be sold into slavery or be put to death if the debt is not settled.

## Table VI: Property

- If a person makes a promise or contract verbally, it shall be considered binding and must be fulfilled.
- If a man and woman shall live together for a year, they shall be considered married.

## Table V: Inheritance

- If a person goes insane, he shall not have power over his goods and they shall be given to his nearest male relative.
- If a person dies without a male heir, his nearest male relative shall inherit his goods.
- Women shall always be given a male guardian to accompany them

## Table IV: Parents & Children

- If a child is born with a severe deformity, it shall be killed.
- Parents have the right to sell their children into slavery.

## Table VII: Real Property

- If a person builds a road and it becomes unusable because of decay or damage, travelers may travel across the property wherever they wish and are not bound to use the road.
- If a person's road or building shall cause damage to another's property, the owner of the road or building shall pay for the damage.

## Table VIII: Crimes

- If a person insults or gossips about another person publicly, the person who did the insulting or gossiping shall be clubbed to death.
- If a person injures another person physically, he will be injured in the same way unless he agrees to pay for damages.
- No one may hold meetings at night.
- If a person who is called to be a witness in court and lies, he shall be thrown from a cliff.
- If a person throws something without aiming and injures another person, he shall owe that a person one ram.

## Table IX: Constitutional Principles

- A man can not be put to death without first having been found guilty in court.
- A judge who is found guilty of taking a bribe shall be put to death.
- It is forbidden to pass laws in private.

## Table XII: Punishments

- If a person accuses another but is lying, the liar must pay double the penalty of the crime or be put to death.
- The eight forms of punishment are: fines, placing in chains, whipping, inflicting the same injury as was committed, public humiliation, banishment from the city, slavery and death.

## Table XI: Marriage Laws

- Marriages are forbidden between plebeians and patricians.
- Men in the army may not marry until their training is complete.

## Table X: Funerals

- No man shall be buried or cremated within the city.
- Women are not allowed to mourn loudly or slap their own cheeks or tear their clothes during a funeral.

# Breaking Down the Twelve Tables

1. If a person is accused and called to court, what are the two things that can happen? What happens if he doesn't go?

This because  
of Table(s):

2. What are the three steps for resolving unpaid debts?

This because  
of Table(s):

3. What kind of powers do parents have over their children?

This because  
of Table(s):

4. How are issues of inheritance resolved in the event of insanity or death? Based on this excerpt what rights of inheritance do women seem to have had?

This because  
of Table(s):

5. How did the ancient Romans view promises and other verbal contracts? How did they view men and women who lived together for a period of time?

This because  
of Table(s):

6. What responsibilities did owners of buildings and roads have to other people? Give at least two.

This because  
of Table(s):

7. How did the ancient Romans view people who lied or gossiped about other people?

This because  
of Table(s):

8. What constitutional principles of the ancient Romans are still believed in today by modern Americans?

This because  
of Table(s):

9. If I were a patrician man, what two marriages would have been forbidden for me?

This because  
of Table(s):

10. Which of the eight forms of punishment are still used in the United States today? (Name at least three, but there are four total).

This because  
of Table(s):



# The Opinion Column

GIVE YOUR HONEST AND TRUTHFUL OPINION TO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS REGARDING THE TWELVE TABLES

WHICH OF THE SPECIFIC LAWS IN THE TWELVE TABLES DO YOU THINK ARE UNFAIR AND WHY? DISCUSS TWO.

WHICH OF THE SPECIFIC LAWS IN THE TWELVE TABLES DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE PRACTICED TODAY AND WHY? DISCUSS TWO.

DO YOU THINK MOST MODERN AMERICANS WOULD APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE OF THE TWELVE TABLES AS A SYSTEM OF LAW TODAY? WHY OR WHY NOT?