



# The Twelve Tables

## Table I

If one is called to court, he is to go.  
If he does not,  
he shall be captured  
and brought before  
the court by force.

## Table II

If one's witness does  
not come to court, he  
who called can wail  
outside the witness's  
house every three  
days to summon  
him to appear.

## Table III

A person who owes  
a debt has thirty days  
to pay. Then he can be  
enslaved by the lender  
or sold as a slave  
to repay that debt.

## Table IV

Seriously deformed  
children must be  
put to death.  
  
A son can be free from  
his father if the father  
sells the son into  
slavery three times.

## Table V

Women must always  
have guardians,  
even adult women.  
  
If a man goes insane,  
the nearest male  
relative shall take  
over his property.

## Table VI

If one makes an  
agreement involving  
property, it shall be  
binding by law.  
  
No one can remove  
beams from vineyards  
or buildings.

## Table VII

Property owners must  
keep roads around  
their property in repair,  
or else others may  
drive their animals  
wherever they wish.

## Table VIII

If one kills a thief  
in his own home,  
it is not a crime.  
  
If one purposely burns  
down a house, he  
shall be put to death.

## Table IX

Taking bribes or  
committing treason  
are crimes that shall  
be punished by death.

## Table X

No one can burn  
or bury corpses  
in the city.  
  
Women are not  
to wail at funerals.

## Table XI

Marriages are not  
permitted between  
plebeians (lower  
class) and patricians  
(upper class).

## Table XII

If a slave commits  
a crime, that slave  
shall be punished;  
not the master.

# YOU BE THE ROMAN JUDGE



**DIRECTIONS:** Read the following cases. Decide which of the Twelve Tables would apply, and explain how you think the Romans would rule in each case.

1. A man calls for the city guards because strange noises have been coming from his neighbor's house. When the house is searched, the guards find evidence that the man may be plotting to harm members of the government.
2. A man's neighbor has a tree on his land that he does not care for properly. The tree breaks and falls onto the man's house, causing much damage. The man is very angry and asks the court to step in.
3. A woman is called to court to testify on behalf of her neighbor. She is nervous and afraid and does not want to go, so she asks her uncle to go in her place.
4. A boss owes one of his workers money, so the worker asks the court to force him to pay the money owed.
5. A man and his neighbor have been enemies for years. A passer-by hears the two men shouting and calls for the guards. When the guards arrive, they find the man has stabbed his neighbor to death on his own (the killer's) property.
6. A father is beginning to show signs of forgetfulness, so his son wants to take over control of all of his money and property. He asks the court to help.