



Twelve Tables: Lesson Plan

Topic	
The Twelve Tables, also known as the Law of the Twelve Tables, contained Rome's first set of written laws. Composed around 450 B.C., the Twelve Tables dealt primarily with private law and topics relevant to an agricultural society. Although they were destroyed when Rome was sacked by the Gauls in 390 B.C., the Twelve Tables had a lasting impact on the development of Roman law.	
Possible subjects/classes	Time needed
Government, History, Politics, Philosophy	30-45 minutes
Video link:	
https://academy4sc.org/topic/twelve-tables-equal-access-to-the-law/	
Objective: <i>What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?</i>	
Students will be able to... <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain how the Twelve Tables were created, and one potential reason why.• Describe the three characteristics of the Twelve Tables that were influential in the development of Roman law.• Explain how the Twelve Tables protected citizens from the arbitrary rule of magistrates.	
Key Concepts & Vocabulary	
Arbitrary, magistrate, private law, public law	
Materials Needed	
Worksheet	
Before you watch	
Turn & Talk: Imagine you live in a society where the laws are not written. Discuss any problems that might arise in this system. Would this system lead to inequality	



and injustice? Why or why not?

While you watch

Complete the *While you watch* section of the Worksheet.

After you watch/discussion questions

1. Why is it so important that laws are written and publicly accessible? What are the consequences if this is not the case?
2. What is the benefit of having laws that are specific?
3. Do you think that the legal system of the United States was influenced in any way by the Twelve Tables? Why or why not?

Activity Ideas

- **Op-ed:** In your opinion, what are the most important characteristics for a legal system to have (e.g. written laws) in order to ensure equality and justice for all citizens? Compose your thoughts in at least four paragraphs, and be sure to defend your reasoning.
- **Critical Research Paper:** While the Twelve Tables were meant to provide equal access to the law to all citizens, many people in Rome, including women and slaves, did not count as citizens. What are some ways in which the legal system of the United States falls short of providing full equality? Support your answer with evidence.

Sources/places to learn more

1. Boatwright, Mary T., et al. *A Brief History of the Romans*. 2nd ed., New York, Oxford University Press, 2014.
2. Cartwright, Mark. "Twelve Tables." *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, Ancient History Encyclopedia, Apr. 2016, https://www.ancient.eu/Twelve_Tables/.
3. Lobingier, Charles Sumner. *The Evolution of the Roman Law from Before the Twelve Tables to the Corpus Juris*. 2nd ed., Charles Sumner Lobingier, 1923. *HeinOnline*.
4. *The Twelve Tables*. Translated by P. R. Coleman-Norton, Project Gutenberg, 2005, www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/14783/pg14783-images.html.