

GRADE 9

HISTORY

ROMAN LAW

At the very beginning of Rome's development, her laws came and went with the kings who made them. However, in the mid-5th century B.C., a plebian tribune suggested that a permanent law be written. Many years later the idea was fully accepted: the Greek law written by Solon was copied and edited to fit Rome. Thus, the 12 tables of the Roman law were created. These laws did not apply to everyday life; rather, they were like a guideline for interpreting the up-to-date laws. Unfortunately, these 12 tables were destroyed in 387 B.C. when the Gauls invaded Rome.

Starting around 200 B.C., new and flexible laws were beginning to be created. A praetor would make some new laws for the good of the common people, or to correct something he felt was a problem. Then, the old praetor's term would end, and a new praetor would reign. He would look over the old rules, keeping some while throwing others out, and make new laws.

Around A.D. 130, Salvius Iulianus created a standard law that the praetors would base their laws on. This worked for little while, at least until the government began to take more control of things. Slowly but surely, it was transformed into an absolute monarchy. Most of the former laws were forgotten, and the empire of Rome began its long decline.

Today, our laws are loosely based on the old Roman law. Because it is so general and is able to be modified for any situation, country, and time, it is held in high regard by those who study the law and its history.