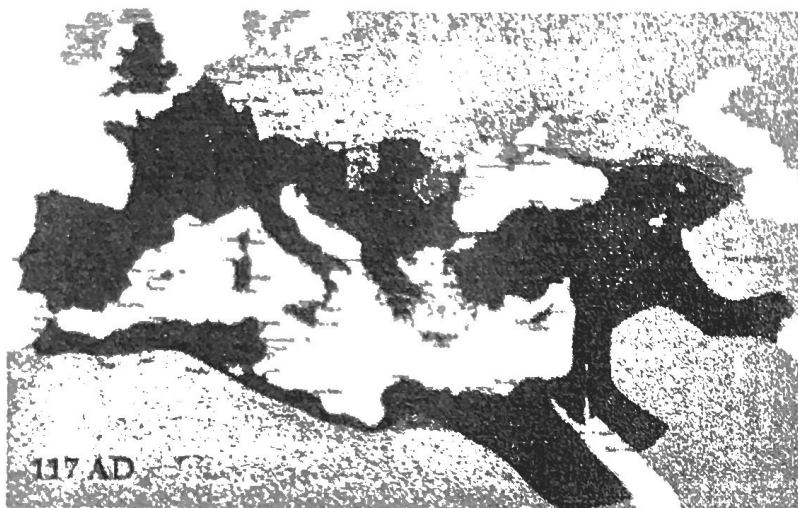


## An Introduction to *The Twelve Tables of Rome*



The Roman Empire at its greatest extent.

In 509 BCE, the Roman Republic was established in Italy. At first, the government was only made up of **patricians**, members of the landholding upper class of Rome. Later, the farmers, merchants, artisans, and traders known as **plebeians** won the right to be elected to the government too. The plebeians demanded that all of the Roman laws be written down and displayed in public so all Romans would know the rules and the punishments for breaking them. As a result, around 450

BCE the government had the laws inscribed on twelve stone tablets and placed in the Roman marketplace, called the Forum. The following are excerpts from the Twelve Tables of Rome.

### 1a. Pre-Reading Questions: Contextualization

Who wrote <i>The Twelve Tables</i> ?	
When were <i>The Twelve Tables</i> written?	
Where were <i>The Twelve Tables</i> written?	
Where were <i>The Twelve Tables</i> located? Why were they located there?	
Who was the audience for <i>The Twelve Tables</i> ?	
What was the <b>perspective</b> of the author? (Hint: What is the main interest or goal of the author?)	

Why were *The Twelve Tables* written?

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## **451 BC Twelve Tables are written**

- a. 1<sup>st</sup> written law code for Rome
- b. Provided protection for all **citizens**
- c. Became basis for western legal system  
ex. U.S. Constitution

### **Basic Principles of Roman Law:**

All citizens had the right to equal treatment under the law

A person was considered innocent until proven guilty

The burden of proof rested with the accuser; not the accused

A person should be punished only for action, not thoughts

Any law that seemed unreasonable or grossly unfair could be set aside