

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Socratic Seminar Journal

## Women in Ancient Rome



Piece to be discussed: "The Twelve Tables", circa 450 B.C.

### **108. The Twelve Tables (excerpts). Rome, 450 B.C. (traditional date). (FIRA2, vol. 1, p. 23. Tr. ARS. L)**

These laws, the basis of Roman civil law, have their origins in what the Romans called *mos maiorum*, the tradition of their ancestors. The codification and publication of the ancestral laws on twelve bronze tablets in the Roman Forum represented a victory for the plebeian class, which hitherto had been subject to prejudiced legal interpretations by the patricians. Though some of the laws became outdated, the code was never abolished.

#### **Table IV. Paternal power**

1. A notably deformed child shall be killed immediately.
3. To repudiate his wife, her husband shall order her ... to have her own property for herself, shall take the keys, shall expel her. [3]
4. A child born within ten months of the father's death shall enter into the inheritance ...

#### **Table V. Inheritance and guardianship**

1. ... Women, even though they are of full age, because of their levity of mind shall be under guardianship ... except Vestal Virgins, who ... shall be free from guardianship. [4]
2. The conveyable possessions of a woman who is under guardianship of male agnates [5] shall not be acquired by prescriptive right unless they are transferred by the woman herself with the authorisation of her guardian ...
4. If anyone who has no direct heir dies intestate, the nearest male agnate shall have the estate;
5. If there is not a male agnate, the male clansmen shall have the estate.
6. The agnatic relatives are guardians of those who are not given a guardian by will. [6]

**Table VI. Ownership and possession**

5. ... If any woman is unwilling to be subjected in this manner to her husband's marital control, she shall absent herself for three successive nights in every year and by this means shall interrupt his prescriptive right of each year. [7]

**Table X. Sacred law**

4. Woman shall not tear their cheeks or shall not make a sorrowful outcry on account of a funeral.

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**Notes**

3. In the later Republic and the Empire, either spouse-or father, if a spouse was still in his power-could divorce the other by simple notification and

4. Twenty-five was the age of majority for both women and men. A woman remained subject to either her father's power (*potestas*) or her husband's (*manus*) or, lacking both, that of a tutor.

5. Agnatic relationships are traced through the male line and can include artificial relationships, as through adoption; cognatic relationships are traced through the female line and are confined to blood relations.

6. Boys 7-14, girls 7-12, and women who were not under a father's or husband's power. This law, for which there is no surviving text, is derived from *Gaius, Institutes* 1.155.

7. This law too is derived from the *Institutes* of *Gaius* 1.111 (below, no. 000), where the jurist explains that the institution had become obsolete by his day.

**Preparation**

(due \_\_\_\_\_)

1. Read the selection several times out loud and quietly to yourself.
2. Take on the role of Illustrator and illustrate the pages.



## 2. Vocabulary

Take on the role of Vocabulary Enricher. Select five words from the text that you do not understand or that you think are interesting or unusual. Since this is a Dr. Seuss story, the words you choose might not be in the dictionary. Write the part of speech and make up a definition for the words as it is used in the reading. Next, write a synonym and an antonym for the word. Finally, use the word in an original sentence.

Word: \_\_\_\_\_

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### 3. Open-ended Questions

Take on the role of Discussion Director. Develop and write three open-ended questions that require discussion.

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## Part II

(Date: \_\_\_\_\_)

Put a star next to the words you shared and the question you turned in.

## Part III

(Date: \_\_\_\_\_)

### Concluding Activity

(Due: \_\_\_\_\_)

In your Historian's Journal, you will write an entry that characterizes the status of women in ancient Rome.

Make your historian's notes below to brainstorm your entry:

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