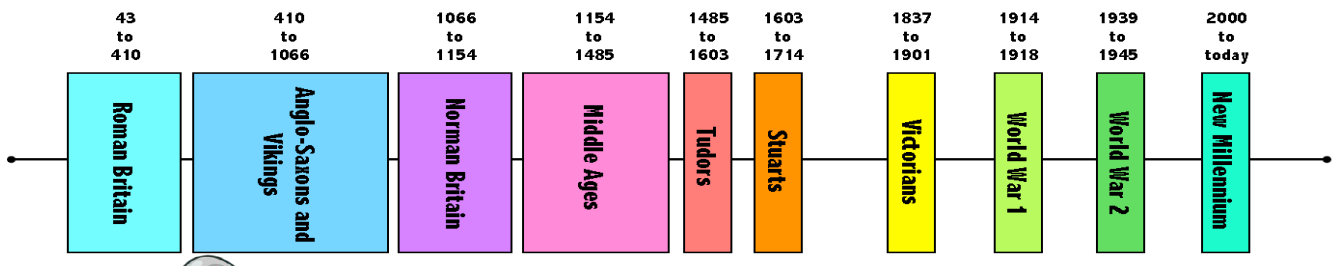


Crime and Punishment: Roman Times

This term, we would have been learning about crime and punishment throughout history so we will make a start now. Read the information here and then have a go at the tasks. The tasks may involve thinking about something or writing something down on paper. If you need any help then please remember to contact us on our email addresses:

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By the time the Romans ruled Britain, they had lots of laws in place. They believed that if you punished people harshly, then they wouldn't commit crimes. People were expected to catch criminals themselves and take them to a court. (There were no police.)

Have a look at the following crimes and guess what you think the punishment would have been:

Stealing from a temple:

A fine

Sold into slavery

Death

Refusing to worship the Emperor as a god:

Being shot at with arrows

Being thrown down a well

Execution at the Colosseum

Selling bread that was underweight

Being whipped

Being tickled

Being crucified

(Answers at the bottom!)

Because there were no police, people asked their friends for help in catching someone who had committed a crime against them but if that didn't work then they asked the gods by writing on a curse tablet.



A Roman curse tablet

Tasks

If you have some paper, then you can write down your answers.
If you don't, then you can still think about you answers.

1. What problems do you think there were in Roman times because there was no police force and people were expected to catch criminals themselves and take them to court?
2. Look at the punishments for the crimes and see if you were right:
Stealing from a temple = death
Refusing to worship the Emperor as a god = execution at the Colosseum
Selling bread that was underweight = whipped
What do you think of those punishments. Do they seem fair or harsh?
3. What does the use of a Roman curse tablet tell you about the beliefs of Roman people at the time?
4. Use the facts that you have learnt so far, the following information and anything else that you can find out to create a fact file about Roman Crime and Punishment. This could be a written report or a poster. See if you can show were things are the same as or different to today.

| Other Roman Facts | |
|--|--|
| The main crimes at this time were crimes dealing with a person's property. Property included his wife, children and slaves as well as his house and any possessions. | Roman people also had to deal with many of the same crimes we face today, such as murder, arson (setting fire to something) and vandalism. |
| Treason against the Empire was the most serious crime. (Treason means plotting against the country). | The Romans had laws to cover every possible crime, from assassination of the Emperor to polluting the streets and the River Tiber. |
| How you were punished depended on how important you were. For example, important people were sometimes sent away instead of being executed for a crime. | Prisons were not used as punishment but only to hold those awaiting trial or execution. |
| The Romans had lots of creative ways to put people to death for their crimes. For example, patricide (killing your father) was punished by throwing the person into a sack full of snakes and throwing them into the river to drown. | The worst punishment was crucifixion. Crucifixion involved being nailed to a wooden cross and being left to die. It was a slow, disgraceful and extremely painful death. |
| A judge or magistrate would decide whether or not a person was guilty. For more serious crimes, a jury would decide guilt. | A person was always thought to be innocent until proven guilty and had the right to present evidence in his defence. |