



# Roman Education

"The teacher must decide how to deal with his pupil.

Some boys are lazy, unless forced to work; others do not like being controlled; some will respond to fear but others are paralysed by it. Give me a boy who is encouraged by praise, delighted by success and ready to weep over failure. Such a boy must be encouraged by appeals to his ambitions."

Quintilian, a teacher in the 1st Century AD.

# Ludus Litterarius

- ◆ This was the Roman equivalent of our primary schools.
- ◆ It was usually run by poorly-paid Greek slaves.
- ◆ Teaching was not a highly regarded profession and some Roman noblemen complained about the fact that their children were being taught by Greeks. They worried that they may not learn 'traditional' Roman values.
- ◆ Boys attended these schools from the age of six or seven to twelve or thirteen.
- ◆ They were taught reading, writing and basic arithmetic.

- ◆ Schools began early in the morning, at first light.
- ◆ As students had to pay to attend school, it was not an option open to everyone.
- ◆ The school was often in a makeshift classroom - part of a shop for example - with little to separate the students from the hustle and bustle of the outside world.

# Secondary School

- ◆ Students attended secondary school when they were between twelve and sixteen years of age.
- ◆ This was an option only open to the sons of wealthy families.
- ◆ Students studied Greek as well as Latin and were expected to be fluent in both.
- ◆ They studied the work of writers such as Virgil and Homer.
- ◆ A teacher in a secondary school was called a 'grammaticus'.

# Higher Education

- ◆ This was an option open to students who wished to learn the art of oratory: speaking in public.
- ◆ This was very important for any boy who hoped to go on to become a lawyer or an important political figure.
- ◆ The teacher in such a school was called a Rhetor.
- ◆ Just as a student nowadays may go abroad to pursue their studies, so a student in Ancient Rome may have chosen to go to cities such as Athens to perfect the art of rhetoric.

- ◆ Students wrote on wax tablets (cerae) and used a stylus instead of a pen.
- ◆ The stylus was pointed at one end (for writing) and flat at the other end (for erasing the writing on the wax).



Wax tablet and stylus



- ◆ School did not end on Friday. Students worked through the weekend.
- ◆ Happily for the students, there were many religious and public holidays, and schools closed on these days.
- ◆ The emphasis was on learning by rote.
- ◆ Cicero tells us that when he was a boy he had to learn The Laws of the Twelve Tablets by heart. These were the first attempts by ancient Romans (circa 450 BC) to create a code of law.

- ◆ Discipline was very strict.
- ◆ Pupils were beaten, sometimes severely, for the slightest infraction.
- ◆ Children of very wealthy parents could avoid the disadvantages of public schooling if their parents were willing to buy an educated Greek slave and thus enable their child to be home schooled.