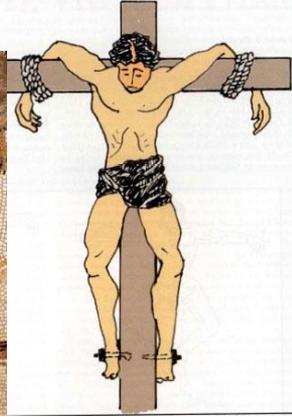
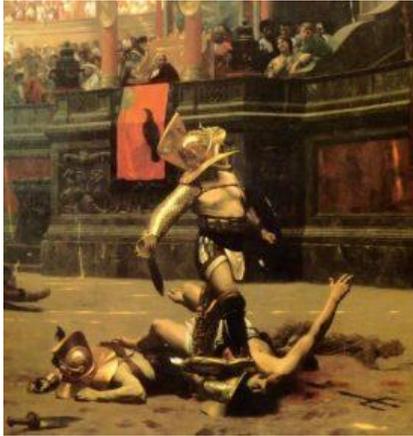
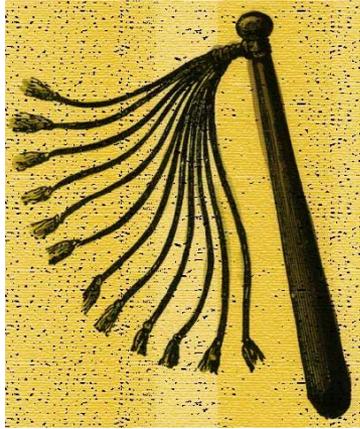


# Roman Crime and Punishment



## **Source A: From a school textbook about crime in the Roman Empire.**

It is difficult to estimate the extent of crime in Rome and the Empire. There was no real police force and therefore the chances of being caught committing a crime were not very high. We do know from what some observers wrote that there was much arson and thieving. We also know that burglary was quite common as was theft on the street. One crime which was not tolerated was selling underweight bread.

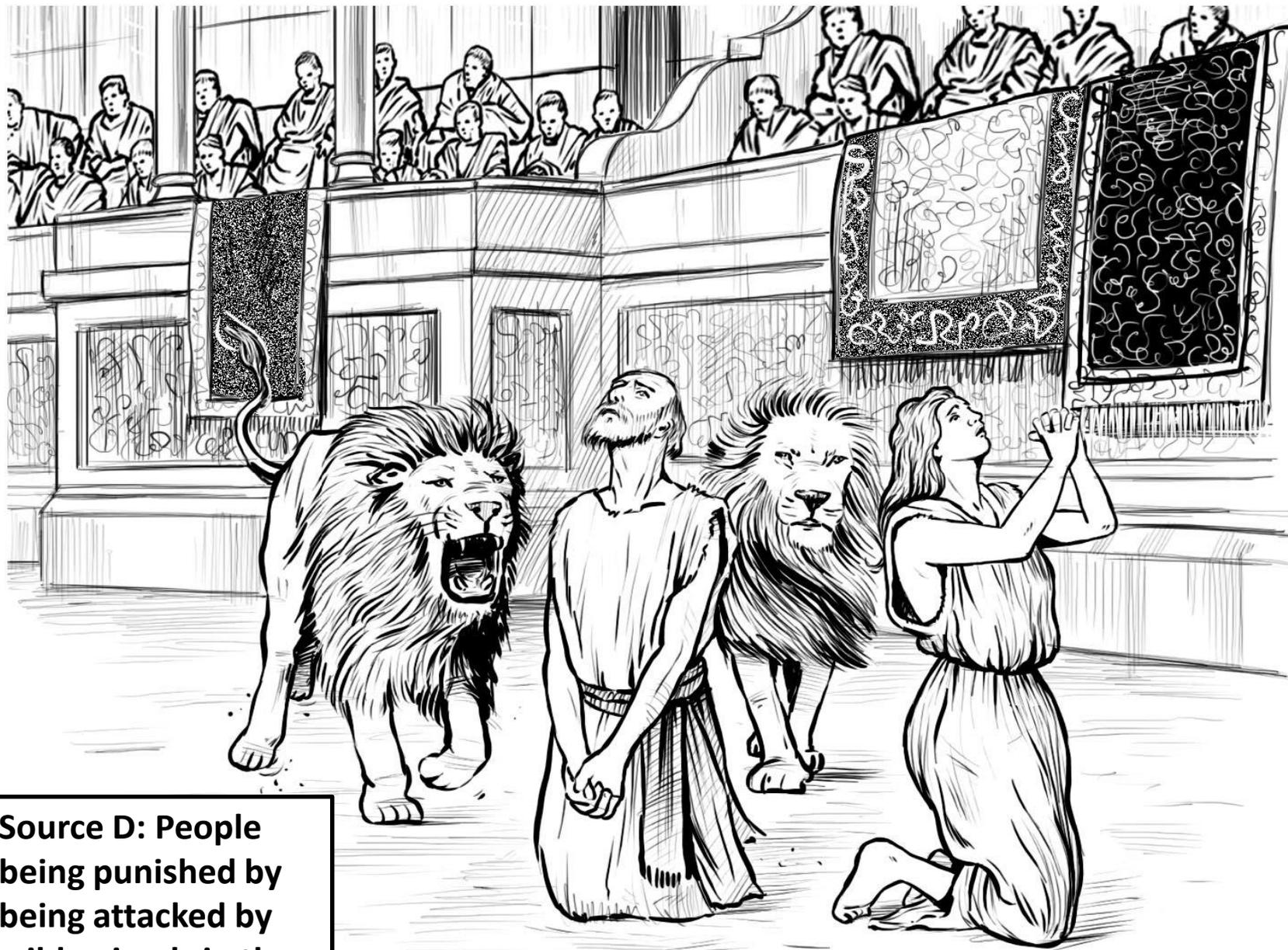
**Source B: From the works of Juvenal,  
a Roman writer, AD100.**

When your house is shut, when bar and chain  
have been made fast and your shop is silent, you  
will be robbed by a burglar or perhaps a cut-  
throat will do for you with cold steel.

## **Source C: From a school textbook about crime and punishment.**

The purpose of punishment in the Roman Empire was to deter other would-be criminals from committing crimes. Some punishments for crimes were harsh. Punishments included cutting off limbs, execution, whipping, beating and confiscation of property. Someone found guilty of a serious crime might have molten lead poured down their throat or be tied up in a sack of poisonous snakes and then thrown into the river.

People who refused to accept the authority of the emperor were usually crucified. Some were forced to become gladiators or simply thrown to the wild animals in the Colosseum.



**Source D: People  
being punished by  
being attacked by  
wild animals in the  
Colosseum.**

## **Source E: From a school textbook about the history of crime and punishment.**

Women had few rights before the law in Roman times. They were regarded as inferior to men and could not become magistrates nor were they allowed to be present in court. Roman law stated that the wife was in the power of the husband.

The rich people in Roman society were able to avoid harsh punishments by paying money to victims. They could also afford to bribe the magistrates.

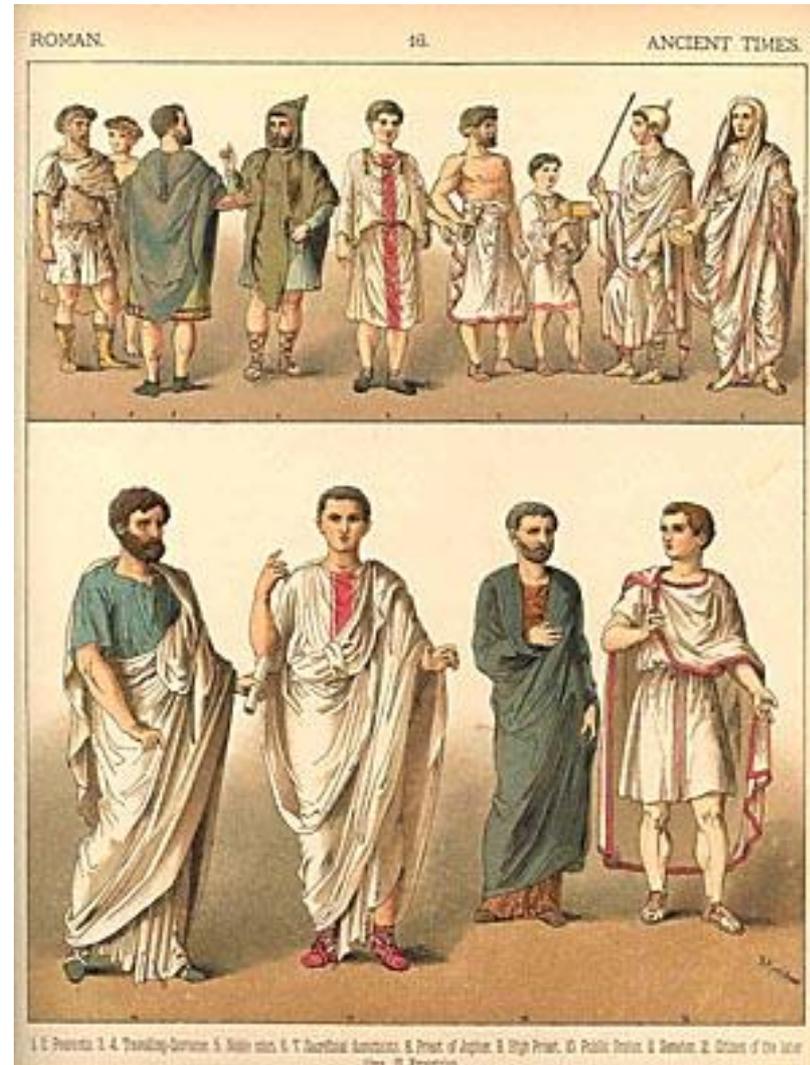
In Rome the person in charge of the court was the magistrate and he was chosen from the upper classes. He was able to consult legal experts if he wished.

In the provinces it was the governor who was in charge of the courts. The juries were made up of upper-class citizens, who made their decisions by majority vote.

There was cross-examination of witnesses. An accuser who won a case would be awarded money. An accuser who lost would be fined for bringing a false case

Defendants and accusers were expected to put their own case but could be helped by a lawyer. At first lawyers were not trained in law but in the art of speaking.

# Roman Courts



## Upholding the law in Rome

*Vigiles* – 7000, who were used to catch runaway slaves

Guards to protect the emperor

*Cohorts* to break up riots

