

# Did Roman children go to school?

In the early days, rich Roman families paid private tutors to teach their children at home. Later, boys' schools were set up, but parents still had to pay to send their boys to

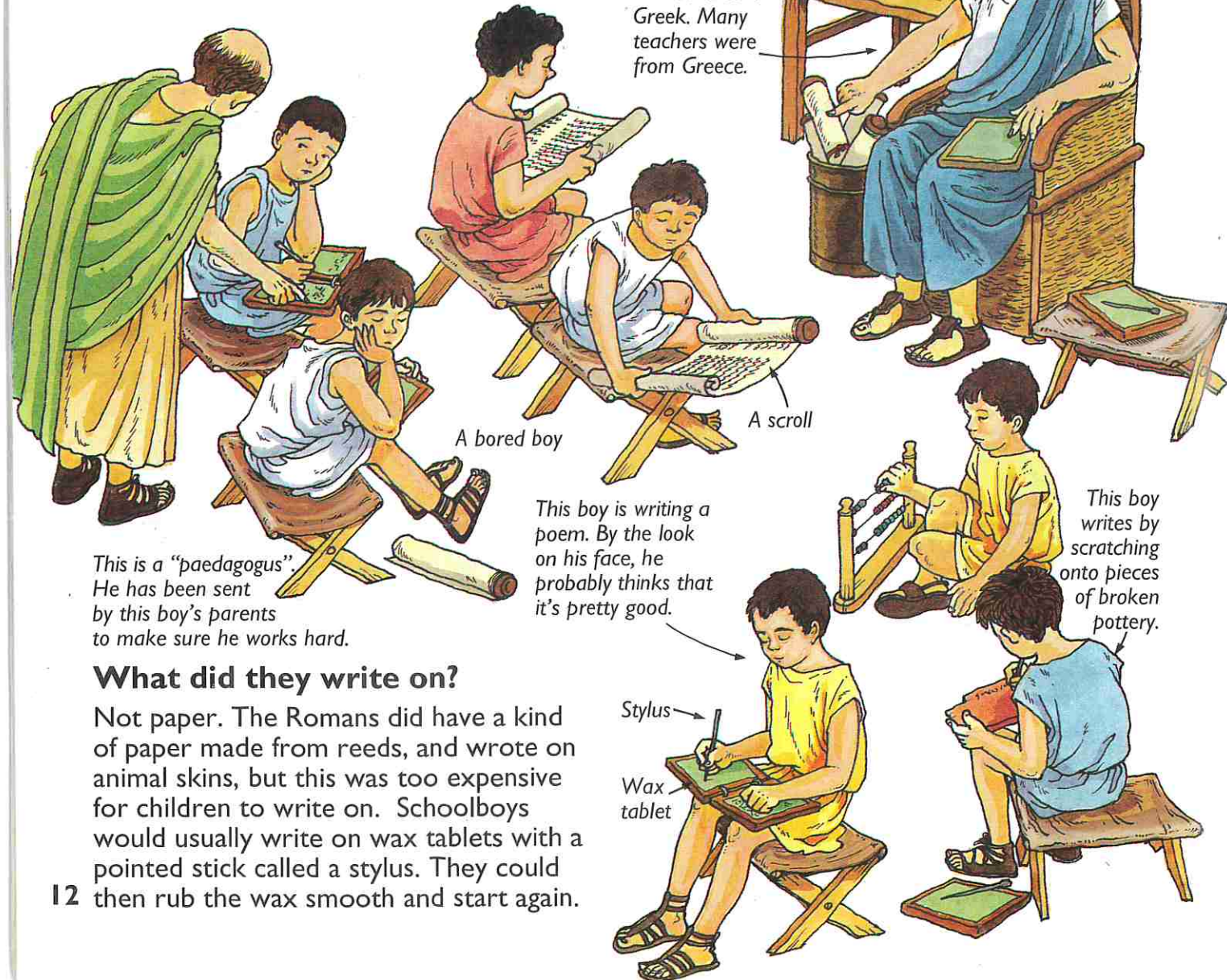
them. This meant that poorer children never went to school, so they never learned to read or write. Very few girls were sent to school. Some were taught by their mothers.

## What were the schools like?

Most schools had only one room and only one class. There were about twelve pupils. Schools were often above or behind a store.

This school is called a "ludus". It is for six to eleven year old boys.

This teacher is Greek. Many teachers were from Greece.



A bored boy

A scroll

This is a "paedagogus". He has been sent by this boy's parents to make sure he works hard.

This boy is writing a poem. By the look on his face, he probably thinks that it's pretty good.

This boy writes by scratching onto pieces of broken pottery.

Stylus  
Wax tablet

## What did they write on?

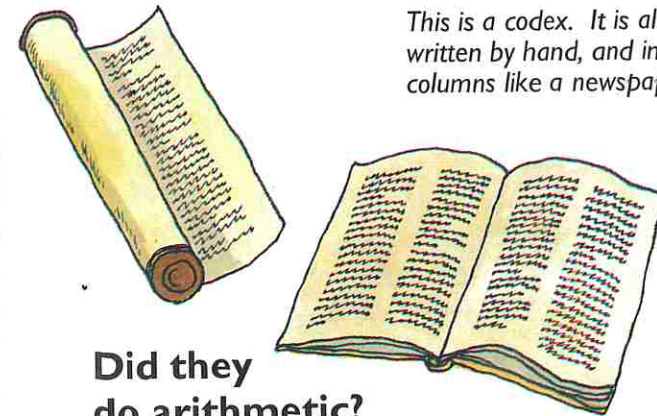
Not paper. The Romans did have a kind of paper made from reeds, and wrote on animal skins, but this was too expensive for children to write on. Schoolboys would usually write on wax tablets with a pointed stick called a stylus. They could then rub the wax smooth and start again.

## Did they read books?

Yes. A school would have had a few books, but not like this one you are reading now. Printing had not been invented, so books had to be written by hand. They were usually made from one long piece of paper rolled around a stick. This was called a scroll. Later, a new type of book called a codex was invented. A codex was shaped more like a book today.

This is a scroll. It is 10m (over 30ft) long. The writing is in columns.

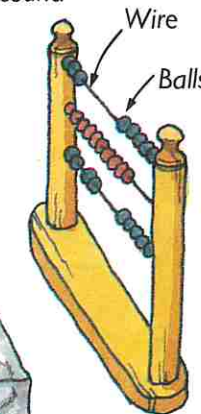
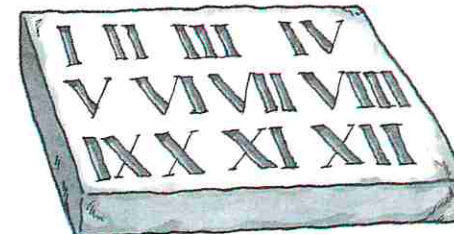
This is a codex. It is also written by hand, and in columns like a newspaper.



## Did they do arithmetic?

Yes, and they didn't have electronic calculators. Roman numbers looked different from ours. They were written as capital letters. The Roman numbers from one to twelve are shown below.

This is an abacus. People slide the wooden balls along the wires as they count.



## What else did they learn at school?

As well as reading, writing and numbers, boys were also expected to learn Greek. When they were older, boys could learn to speak in public if they wanted to be a politician or a lawyer. This could take years and was very expensive.

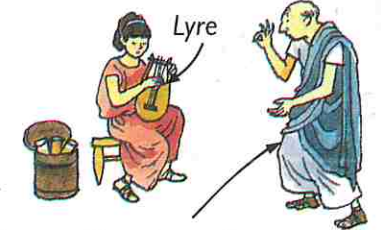
This boy is learning public speaking with a special teacher called a "rhetor".



## What did the girls learn at home?

Girls in the richer Roman families were taught how to read and write, and run a household. Some of them had private tutors and music teachers.

This girl is being taught to play the lyre. It is made from a tortoise shell.



A very old music teacher

## What's the difference?

Roman numbers are still used for some things today. See if you can find a watch or clock with Roman numbers on its face. What is the difference between the Roman numbers on the clock and the more traditional Roman numbers shown on the left?