

Jacques-Louis David, *The Lictors Bring to Brutus the Bodies of his Sons*, 1789, oil on canvas, 323 x 422 cm (127 x 168")
The large painting was factured with the assistance of David's students.

Initial analysis

The picture plane clearly divides in two, the sections, both left to right and top to bottom are divided using the Euclidean proportion of 1: 1.618, using the column vertically and a horizontal line joining the top of the pedestal to the front edge of the central table to the top of the chair on the right. The sections separate Brutus and the Lictors, with the bodies of his Sons, from the maternal family. There is a pattern of colour linking different parts of the painting. The blue cloth of the maid and one of the Lictors, the red of the table cloth with the cushion on Brutus' chair.

The painting was submitted to the Salon of 1789 and refused. A public outcry brought the painting into the exhibition where it was guarded by a group of David's students.

In the left hand section Lictors bring in the bodies of the sons of Brutus on stretchers. The legs and feet of one of them are clearly visible. Their entrance is partly concealed by a Roman sculpture of *Justice*. In the foreground Brutus sits on a Roman style chair, his right elbow rested on the top of the sculpture's pedestal with his lower arm and hand raised in the manner of the prophet Isaiah in Michelangelo's Sistine fresco. His sandalled feet are also crossed in the manner of Isaiah. His left hand holds a paper signifying his authority. In the lower part of the pedestal is a relief sculpture depicting Romulus and Remus suckled by a Wolf signifying the origins of Rome. Lucius Junius Brutus was the founder of Republican Rome in 509 BCE.



In the right hand section the wife of Brutus with her two daughters, fraught with distress from the sight of the arrival of the dead sons. Behind her what could be a maid servant in distress beneath a lifted cloth. To the right of Brutus' wife, a table with a basket of sewing and balls of wool. There are two chairs designed in the eighteenth-century in an antique Roman style. Behind this a curtain hung from classical columns.

The foreground floor is paved in yellow and grey paving with cement frames. The joins in the paving accentuate the perspective of the floor. A strong sunlight highlights the Son's body entering from the left and the scene on the right, leaving most of Brutus in shadow.

The painting is in the Musée du Louvre, Paris

David *The Lictors Bring to Brutus the Bodies of his Sons* analysis