

0. THE ROMAN GAMES - Story Preface

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A mosaic, at Madrid's National Archaeological Museum, gives us a look at a Roman-style game. Two gladiators are fighting. One is a *retiarius* (or, net-fighter) whose name is Kalendio. He is fighting a *secutor* named Astyanax.

Life in ancient Rome was hard. Fathers were often separated from their families, defending the Empire's far-flung borders. Mothers had lots of children, (the empress Faustina had thirteen), but many babies died. People lived in the city, but wealthy folks had beautiful 0 in the country.

To distract citizens from the daily grind, and to protect their own base of power, the Emperor and other wealthy families hosted (and advertised) games. And what games they were! (The videos in this paragraph provide a history of the Roman games and an understanding of how wild animals were used in the gladiatorial arenas.)

In the Colosseum, Rome's citizens were safely seated, separated by class distinctions. Sometimes they watched men fight other men. These gladiators, as they were called, were Rome's equivalent of movie stars - except that gladiators were members of the lowest class.

Sometimes gladiators fought wild animals instead of each other. Sometimes animals killed other animals. The arena floor was always covered with sand, to absorb all the blood.

At the Circus Maximus, where chariot races and other fanciful activities fascinated the crowd, seating by class distinction was also part of Roman life. Even today's ruins tell a story: Where were the crowds? Where was the Emperor?

In today's world, we can also participate in a Roman game, albeit virtually. The BBC has created an online Gladiator Battle, allowing us to dress a gladiator, select his weapon and have him fight for his freedom.

Near the end of his disastrous rule, the Emperor Commodus was in the arena, a "gladiator," dressed as Hercules Venator (Hercules, the Hunter). It was the final mockery.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-ROMAN-GAMES-Roman-Gladiators>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-ROMAN-GAMES-Roman-Gladiators>

Media Stream



Gladiators Depicted on the Vase

Image online, courtesy the Maxwell School website.

PD

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Gladiators-Depicted-on-the-Vase>



Gladiators Fighting Wild Animals - Carved Relief

Image online, courtesy the ancientworlds.net website.

PD

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Gladiators-Fighting-Wild-Animals-Carved-Relief>



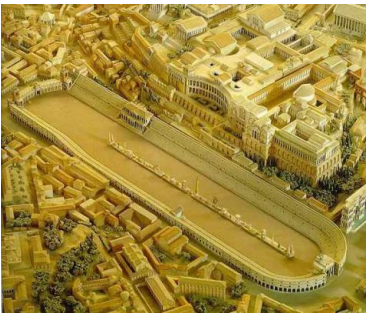
Gladiators Fighting Wild Animals - Mosaic

Image online, courtesy the Ancient Olympics website.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Gladiators-Fighting-Wild-Animals-Mosaic>



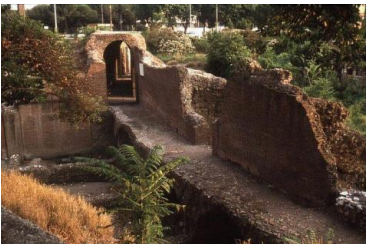
The Circus Maximus - Aerial View Model

Image online, courtesy the University of Miami Website.

PD

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Circus Maximus Ruins

Image online, courtesy the romeguide.it website.

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Circus Maximus - View of the Ruins

Image online, courtesy the College of William and Mary website.

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Emperor Commodus

Image online, courtesy Ancient Rome website.

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Commodus - Dressed Like an Animal

Image online, courtesy the Maxwell School website.

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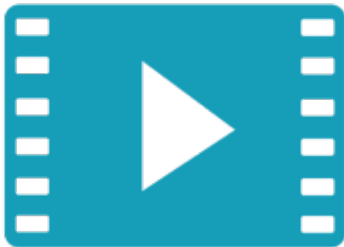
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THE ROMAN GAMES

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Roman Games - Animals in the Arena

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Roman Games - Base of Power for Sponsors

This clip is from *Beasts of the Roman Games* (a BBC documentary using ancient sources, modern excavations, expert interviews and recreated scenes). Online, courtesy BBC Worldwide Channel at YouTube.

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Roman Games - Death in the Arenas

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