

0. THUMBS DOWN FOR COMMODUS - Story Preface

1. GLADIATORS

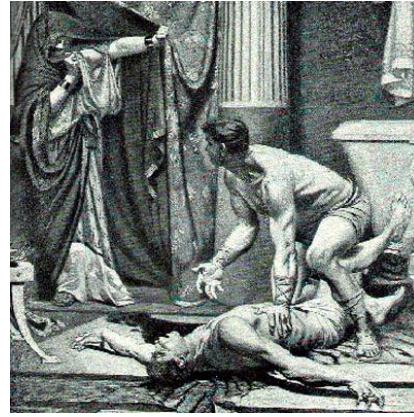
2. LEGACY of MARCUS AURELIUS

3. COMMODUS - IN CHARGE

4. THE ROMAN GAMES

5. COMMODUS IN THE ARENA

6. THUMBS DOWN FOR COMMODUS



This drawing, by an anonymous artist, depicts the artist's conception of the "Death of Commodus." Having concocted a scheme to kill the newly elected Roman consul, Commodus thought the New Year would be good for him. He wouldn't live to see it.

It is believed that Laetus, a highly placed Roman, had engineered a conspiracy to make sure the gladiator-Emperor would never perform again.

Although the facts are not clear—see what it would be like to investigate an Ancient-Rome murder—one of the stories about the death of Commodus persists. Narcissus, a young athlete with whom the Emperor wrestled, strangled Commodus while he was taking a bath.

When news of his death (which was differently depicted in Gladiator, the film) spread throughout the city, Roman Senators could hardly contain their joy at the Emperor's demise. Herodian reports the Senate's reaction:

He that killed all, let him be dragged with the hook; he that killed persons of all ages, let him be dragged with the hook; he that killed both sexes, let him be dragged with the hook; he that did not spare his own blood, let him be dragged with the hook; he that plundered temples, let him be dragged with the hook; he that destroyed testaments, let him be dragged with the hook; he that plundered the living, let him be dragged with the hook.

Laetus, the man who planned the conspiracy, saved Commodus from being mutilated and dragged through the streets of Rome with a hook. He gave him a private burial.

Pertinax, Rome's city prefect (and a former slave), succeeded Commodus as Emperor. He had the body of Commodus exhumed and buried in Hadrian's Mausoleum. Eighty-seven days into his reign, Pertinax was assassinated.

The next Caesar, Didius Julianus, won the position of Emperor when he was the highest bidder in an auction for the throne of Rome. Julianus lasted 66 days before he, too, was killed.

Order, in Rome and in the empire, was finally restored when Septimius Severus took over. The damage Commodus had caused, however, was incalculable.

He finally got his wish, though. Four years after Commodus died, Septimius Severus made him a god - just like so many other Roman Emperors before him.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THUMBS-DOWN-FOR-COMMODUS-Roman-Gladiators)

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See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THUMBS-DOWN-FOR-COMMODUS-Roman-Gladiators)

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Commodus

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Didius Julianus

Image online, courtesy [Find a Grave](#).

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Pertinax - Emperor of Rome, Successor to Commodus

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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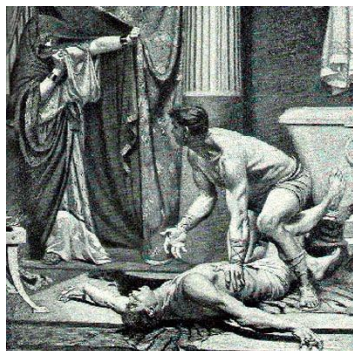


Septimius Severus

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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THUMBS DOWN FOR COMMODUS

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Gladiator - Trailer

Gladiator, released by DreamWorks SKG, written by David Franzoni, directed by Ridley Scott, starring Russell Crowe (as Maximus, the gladiator) and Joaquin Phoenix (as Commodus).

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Gladiator-Trailer>