

- 0. THE ROMAN GAMES - Story Preface
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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 homes 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!

In the Colosseum - away from the wild animals that were often brought into the arena - 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?

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-Gladiator>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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

## Media Stream



Gaiffres de femmes romaines du premier et du deuxième siècle. (Bustes du musée du Louvre.)

### Rome - Women from the Second Century

This image depicts the types of hairstyles which ancient Roman women wore during the 2nd Century A.D.

The busts, depicted in the illustration, are maintained at the Louvre, in Paris.

Image online via Costumes.org.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Rome-Women-from-the-Second-Century>

### Gladiators - Illustration

Image online, courtesy the [romans-latin.net](http://romans-latin.net) website.

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### Wall Sculpture of Gladiators

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### Circus Maximus Ruins

Image online, courtesy the [RomeGuide](#) website.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Circus-Maximus-Ruins0>



### Bust of Emperor Commodus

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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### Bust of Commodus Dressed as Hercules

Image online, courtesy the Maxwell School website.

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