

0. THUMBS DOWN FOR COMMODUS - Story Preface

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Having concocted a scheme to kill the newly elected Roman consuls, Commodus thought the New Year would be good for him. He wouldn't live to see it. Laetus, a highly placed Roman, had engineered a conspiracy to make sure the gladiator-Emperor would never perform again.

Narcissus, a young athlete with whom Commodus wrestled, strangled the Emperor 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. But, the damage Commodus had caused was incalculable.

He finally got his wish, though. Four years after his death, Septimius Severus made Commodus 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-Gladiator>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THUMBS-DOWN-FOR-COMMODUS-Gladiator>

Media Stream



### Commodus Bust

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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### Bust of Emperor Pertinax

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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### Emperor Didius Julianus

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

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## Emperor Septimius Severus

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