



# *Roman Gladiators*

Ancient Professional Fighters

# *How Did it All Start?*

When we think of the gladiator games, we think of the Romans, when we really should be think of the Etruscans. Why? Because they created the gladiator games. Etruscans lived in the central part of Italy from the 8th to the 3rd century B.C, until the Romans conquered their land.

Not only did the Romans take their area, but the gladiator games along with it. I like to call the Romans, “the copycats”, because they stole their culture from both the Greeks and the Etruscans.

# *What Were Roman Gladiators?*

Roman gladiators were either slaves or prisoners. In a more political matter, they would also throw Christians out there as well. Christian women, men and even children. 99% of gladiators were all men. It was VERY rare for women to fight.

Gladiators are known for fighting in a place called, “The Coliseum” in Rome. There were also had gladiator games in other countries such as Israel and more.

# *Ways Gladiators would Fight*

Gladiators would fight in SO MANY different ways. Think of some right now, and how much you wanna bet they did it? Here are a few examples. So, gladiators would fight animals, and they were not nice. They were wild animals that had probably been starved for weeks before the fight. Gladiators would fight gladiators, gladiators would fight animals, animals would fight animals.

One way that was mind-blowing, was that they use to flood the coliseum and make the gladiators fight each on a boat. There are so many more crazy ways they used to fight.

# *Turning the Thumb*

The thumb method was a way for the crowd to give their opinion on the fight. When a person had their thumbs up, they would say “mitte, mitte, mitte,” which meant, “let him live!” When a person had their thumbs down, they would say “pollis versal”, which meant the opposite.

It didn't really matter what the audience thought though, it was all up to the emperor. He had control of everything that happened at these games.

# *Crixus and Spartacus*

**Spartacus:** the most famous gladiator of them all. Spartacus started his life out as a Thracian soldier who was captured then sold to a guy named, Lentulus Batiatus. Although he was captured, he was still a strong and skilled man who had a knack for fighting and leadership. He escaped from Batiatus along with another gladiator named Crixus.

**Crixus:** was Spartacus' right hand man. Once they both escaped, Spartacus was happy he was free, but Crixus wanted revenge. So, they both split up. Crixus fought the Roman empire along with 150,000 other slaves. Crixus died and the empire won the revolt while killing 20,000 other slaves. Spartacus lived a long time after that. For many years the Roman empire was after him, but was never able to catch him until the day of his death by the general.

# Gladiators and Food

Certain foods were very expensive back then. Especially meat, but barley on the other hand, was VERY cheap. What I'm getting here, is that the owner of the gladiator didn't want to waste all that money on feeding him high-quality stuff. So, he was fed barley 3 times everyday for the rest of his life. Barley is VERY high in calcium, which adds tons of fat. Only the "not-so-great" gladiators would get fed this stuff. Other gladiators like Spartacus and Crixus were fed barley as well, but along with meat, veggies, etc.

The "not-so-great" gladiators were actually lucky. They might have not had any muscle whatsoever, but they were heavy. Being heavy was a good thing when being a gladiator. You were able to squish your opponent, and it was hard to stab them really good, because you had to get through all that fat, while the really muscular guys more likely got the worse stabs.

# *Animals*

It was very scary to fight a wild animal. Under the coliseum, there were trap doors where the animals were held. They always had the guys who were “less-skilled” fight animals, such as: **bears, lions, tigers, elephants, rhinos, dogs, crocodiles, hippos, bulls, etc.** Why? Because, they wouldn't want to lose their really good and entertaining, again, for example: Spartacus and Crixus.

# Types of Armor

Gladiators wore many different types of armor. A retiarius gladiator was a gladiator with a net, trident, and just a little bit of armor. Jean-Leon Gerome, was a french painter who created a painting that shows a defeated retiarius asking for mercy from the emperor while the crowd is wildly giving their opinion. Here are a few types of armor.

- *Scutum*: a large oblong shield made from three sheets of wood, glued together and topped with leather or canvas coating.
  - *Galea*: plumed helmet with visor and small eyeholes.
- *Gladius*: short sword called “divides the throat,” used the most by Roman foot soldiers but also by gladiators.
  - *Manicae*: leather elbow and wristbands.
- *Greaves*: leg armor that goes from ankle to right below the knee.

Gladiators would wear that along with many other pieces of armor.



Painting by: Jean- Leon Gerome

# *How Did it End?*

One day, in the middle of the gladiator games. A monk came along and stopped the fight. He was stoned to death by the angry audience, but emperor Constantine stood and said, “no more”.

There was never a gladiator game again in Rome. Everyone was very confused for years why the games stopped.

Gladiator games went on from the 8th century A.D. to 400 B.C. It went on for 1000 YEARS!

# *In Conclusion...*

To be a gladiator was very scary, but I am so glad that I picked this for my project. Gladiators, Rome, Emperor Constantine, it's all a big part of history, so I felt like this helped me understand the bible and history a bit more! 🤔👊

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