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Information

Gladiator life

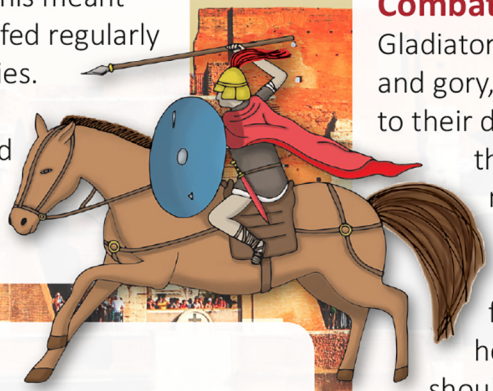
Gladiators were often slaves, criminals or prisoners of war, who had sworn an oath to fight. They were specially trained to fight each other or wild animals in an open air arena called an amphitheatre. Huge crowds would gather to watch gladiators fight and many became the celebrities of their time, but it wasn't a sport for the fainthearted! Being a gladiator was extremely dangerous and often resulted in death.



Lifestyle

Life as a gladiator was very tough and most gladiators were not allowed to leave their barracks. The barracks were more like prisons, as the gladiators had very little freedom.

However, gladiators had a team of staff to look after them including trainers, armourers, cooks and doctors. This meant that gladiators were fed regularly and treated for injuries. In fact, they usually had a better standard of living than many lower class Romans.



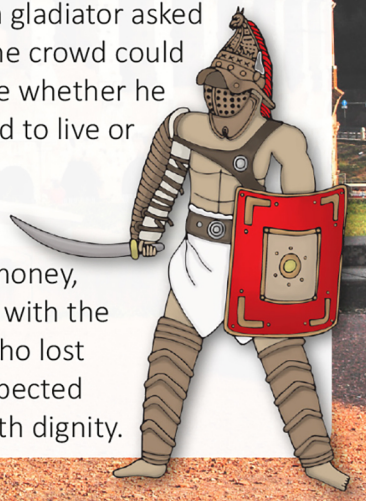
Weapons and armour

Gladiators were provided with swords, daggers, spears, tridents, shields, armour and nets when they fought. Some gladiators fought in full body armour, which helped to protect them from attacks. However, the heavy armour could also slow them down. Other gladiators wore less armour, which meant they could move quickly but had little defence against blows from weapons or animal attacks.

Combat and death

Gladiator combats were extremely violent and gory, and gladiators often fought to their deaths. As well as trying to defend themselves, the gladiators had to make sure they put on an entertaining show to please the crowds. If a gladiator asked for mercy, the crowd could help to decide whether he should be allowed to live or put to death.

Winners of the fights received prizes and money, and became popular with the crowds. Gladiators who lost their battles were expected to die bravely and with dignity.



Food and drink

Gladiators ate very little meat or dairy products. Instead, they ate vegetables, barley, wheat and beans to provide them with vitamins, minerals, fibre and carbohydrates. They drank a special mix of charred wood, bone or plant ashes as a source of calcium.

Exercise and training

Gladiators lived in special training schools called barracks or ludi, where they would exercise and train every day. They lifted weights to build their strength and learnt how to fight using wooden swords or rudes. Gladiators were often trained by men who had fought as gladiators themselves, and were taught about specific skills and techniques needed for combat.

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