

Chapter 1 : BBC - History - Ancient History in depth: Gladiators: Heroes of the Roman Amphitheatre

For a book entitled Emperors and Gladiators it certainly features very little of the former. The focus of the book is entirely on the gladiator and on the Roman games (munera). It might seem a small thing but the title says a lot about a book.

The Paestum frescoes may represent the continuation of a much older tradition, acquired or inherited from Greek colonists of the 8th century BC. This is described as a munus plural: The enemy, besides their other warlike preparation, had made their battle-line to glitter with new and splendid arms. There were two corps: The Romans had already heard of these splendid accoutrements, but their generals had taught them that a soldier should be rough to look on, not adorned with gold and silver but putting his trust in iron and in courage. The Dictator, as decreed by the senate, celebrated a triumph, in which by far the finest show was afforded by the captured armour. So the Romans made use of the splendid armour of their enemies to do honour to their gods; while the Campanians, in consequence of their pride and in hatred of the Samnites, equipped after this fashion the gladiators who furnished them entertainment at their feasts, and bestowed on them the name Samnites. Their Campanian allies stage a dinner entertainment using gladiators who may not be Samnites, but play the Samnite role. Other groups and tribes would join the cast list as Roman territories expanded. Most gladiators were armed and armoured in the manner of the enemies of Rome. High status non-Romans, and possibly Romans too, volunteered as his gladiators. By BC, "small" Roman munera private or public, provided by an editor of relatively low importance, may have been so commonplace and unremarkable they were not considered worth recording: The climax of the show which was big for the time was that in three days seventy four gladiators fought. It proved immensely popular. Gladiator games offered their sponsors extravagantly expensive but effective opportunities for self-promotion, and gave their clients and potential voters exciting entertainment at little or no cost to themselves. Despite an already enormous personal debt, he used gladiator pairs in silvered armour. Legislation of AD by Marcus Aurelius did little to stop it, and was completely ignored by his son, Commodus. Later games were held by an editor, either identical with the munerator or an official employed by him. As time passed, these titles and meanings may have merged. From the Principate onwards, private citizens could hold munera and own gladiators only under Imperial permission, and the role of editor was increasingly tied to state officialdom. Bigger games were put on by senior magistrates, who could better afford them. The largest and most lavish of all were paid for by the emperor himself. In the mid-republican munus, each type seems to have fought against a similar or identical type. In the later Republic and early Empire, various "fantasy" types were introduced, and were set against dissimilar but complementary types. For example, the bareheaded, nimble retiarius "net-man", armoured only at the left arm and shoulder, pitted his net, trident and dagger against the more heavily armoured, helmeted Secutor. Passing literary references to others has allowed their tentative reconstruction. Other novelties introduced around this time included gladiators who fought from chariots or carts, or from horseback. The trade in gladiators was empire-wide, and subjected to official supervision. Their training as gladiators would give them opportunity to redeem their honour in the munus. Mark Antony chose a troupe of gladiators to be his personal bodyguard. Tiberius offered several retired gladiators, sesterces each to return to the arena. Cassius Dio takes pains to point out that when the much admired emperor Titus used female gladiators, they were of acceptably low class. Before he became emperor, Septimius Severus may have attended the Antiochene Olympic Games, which had been revived by the emperor Commodus and included traditional Greek female athletics. His attempt to give Rome a similarly dignified display of female athletics was met by the crowd with ribald chants and cat-calls. Most of his performances as a gladiator were bloodless affairs, fought with wooden swords; he invariably won. On another occasion, he decapitated a running ostrich with a specially designed dart, carried the bloodied head and his sword over to the Senatorial seats and gesticulated as though they were next. Other highlighted features could include details of venationes, executions, music and any luxuries to be provided for the spectators, such as an awning against the sun, water sprinklers, food, drink, sweets and occasionally "door prizes". For enthusiasts and gamblers, a more detailed program libellus was distributed on the day of the munus, showing the names, types and match records of gladiator pairs, and

their order of appearance. The event may also have been used to drum up more publicity for the imminent game. They were followed by a small band of trumpeters *tubicines* playing a fanfare. Images of the gods were carried in to "witness" the proceedings, followed by a scribe to record the outcome, and a man carrying the palm branch used to honour victors. The magistrate editor entered among a retinue who carried the arms and armour to be used; the gladiators presumably came in last. A crude Pompeian graffito suggests a burlesque of musicians, dressed as animals named *Ursus tibicen* flute-playing bear and *Pullus cornicen* horn-blowing chicken, perhaps as accompaniment to clowning by *paegniarii* during a "mock" contest of the *ludi meridiani*. A general melee of several, lower-skilled gladiators was far less costly, but also less popular. Even among the *ordinarii*, match winners might have to fight a new, well-rested opponent, either a *tertiarius* "third choice gladiator" by prearrangement; or a "substitute" gladiator *suppositicius* who fought at the whim of the editor as an unadvertised, unexpected "extra". Most were probably of poor quality, [88] but the emperor Caracalla chose to test a notably skilled and successful fighter named Bato against first one *suppositicius*, whom he beat, and then another, who killed him. Combats between experienced, well trained gladiators demonstrated a considerable degree of stagecraft. Among the *cognoscenti*, bravado and skill in combat were esteemed over mere hacking and bloodshed; some gladiators made their careers and reputation from bloodless victories. Suetonius describes an exceptional *munus* by Nero, in which no-one was killed, "not even *noxii* enemies of the state. Most matches employed a senior referee *summa rudis* and an assistant, shown in mosaics with long staffs *rudes* to caution or separate opponents at some crucial point in the match. Referees were usually retired gladiators whose decisions, judgement and discretion were, for the most part, respected; [92] they could stop bouts entirely, or pause them to allow the combatants rest, refreshment and a rub-down. Their instruments are a long straight trumpet *tubicen*, a large curved horn *Cornu* and a water organ *hydraulis*. *Pollice verso* A match was won by the gladiator who overcame his opponent, or killed him outright. Victors received the palm branch and an award from the editor. An outstanding fighter might receive a laurel crown and money from an appreciative crowd but for anyone originally condemned *ad ludum* the greatest reward was manumission emancipation, symbolised by the gift of a wooden training sword or staff *rudis* from the editor. Martial describes a match between Priscus and Verus, who fought so evenly and bravely for so long that when both acknowledged defeat at the same instant, Titus awarded victory and a *rudis* to each. His gravestone in Sicily includes his record: Delicatus made this for his deserving comrade-in-arms. The contract between editor and his *lanista* could include compensation for unexpected deaths; [] this could be "some fifty times higher than the lease price" of the gladiator. When Caligula and Claudius refused to spare defeated but popular fighters, their own popularity suffered. In general, gladiators who fought well were likely to survive. Once a band of five *retiarii* in tunics, matched against the same number of *secutores*, yielded without a struggle; but when their death was ordered, one of them caught up his trident and slew all the victors. Caligula bewailed this in a public proclamation as a most cruel murder. To die well, a gladiator should never ask for mercy, nor cry out. So the gladiator, no matter how faint-hearted he has been throughout the fight, offers his throat to his opponent and directs the wavering blade to the vital spot. The Christian author Tertullian, commenting on *ludi meridiani* in Roman Carthage during the peak era of the games, describes a more humiliating method of removal. One arena official, dressed as the "brother of Jove", *Dis Pater* god of the underworld strikes the corpse with a mallet. Another, dressed as Mercury, tests for life-signs with a heated "wand"; once confirmed as dead, the body is dragged from the arena. Whether the corpse of such a gladiator could be redeemed from further ignominy by friends or familia is not known. The taint of *infamia* was perpetual. According to Cassius Dio, the emperor Caracalla gave the gladiator Bato a magnificent memorial and State funeral; [89] more typical are the simple gladiator tombs of the Eastern Roman Empire, whose brief inscriptions include the following: Titus Flavius Satyrus set up this monument in his memory from his own money. *Paitraeites* with his cell-mates set this up in memory". Modern scholarship offers little support for the once-prevalent notion that gladiators, *venatores* and *bestiarii* were personally or professionally dedicated to the cult of the Graeco-Roman goddess Nemesis. Rather, she seems to have represented a kind of "Imperial Fortuna" who dispensed Imperial retribution on the one hand, and Imperially subsidised gifts on the other "including the *munera*. Having no personal responsibility for his own defeat and death, the losing gladiator remains the better

man, worth avenging. Doom killed me, not the liar Pinnas. No longer let him boast. I had a fellow gladiator, Polyneikes, who killed Pinnas and avenged me. Claudius Thallus set up this memorial from what I left behind as a legacy. Few gladiators survived more than 10 contests, though one survived an extraordinary bouts; [] and another died at 90 years of age, presumably long after retirement. He was lanista of the gladiators employed by the state circa BC to instruct the legions and simultaneously entertain the public. Socially, they were infames, on a footing with pimps and butchers and despised as price gougers. In the late Republican era, a fear of similar uprisings, the usefulness of gladiator schools in creating private armies, and the exploitation of munera for political gain led to increased restrictions on gladiator school ownership, siting and organisation. Their contract auctoramentum stipulated how often they were to perform, their fighting style and earnings. A condemned bankrupt or debtor accepted as novice novicius could negotiate with his lanista or editor for the partial or complete payment of his debt. Faced with runaway re-enlistment fees for skilled auctorati, Marcus Aurelius set their upper limit at 12, sesterces. Fighting styles were probably learned through constant rehearsal as choreographed "numbers". An elegant, economical style was preferred. Training included preparation for a stoical, unflinching death. Successful training required intense commitment. Soldiers were routinely marked on the hand. Juvenal describes the segregation of gladiators according to type and status, suggestive of rigid hierarchies within the schools: Retiarii were kept away from damnati, and "fag targeteers" from "armoured heavies". As most ordinarii at games were from the same school, this kept potential opponents separate and safe from each other until the lawful munus. Its replacement could have housed about and included a very small cell, probably for lesser punishments and so low that standing was impossible. Their daily, high-energy, vegetarian diet consisted of barley, boiled beans, oatmeal, ash and dried fruit. Gladiators were sometimes called hordearii "eaters of barley ". Modern customs and institutions offer few useful parallels to the legal and social context of the gladiatoria munera [] In Roman law, anyone condemned to the arena or the gladiator schools damnati ad ludum was a servus poenae slave of the penalty , and was considered to be under sentence of death unless manumitted.

Chapter 2 : Your Rome Experience » Gladiators And Emperors Of Rome

Emperors and Gladiators has 23 ratings and 6 reviews. Stephanie said: (I edited down a book review I wrote for class) Thomas Wiedemann's *Emperors and Gl.*

Hollywood movies and television shows often depict gladiatorial bouts as a bloody free-for-all, but most fights operated under fairly strict rules and regulations. Contests were typically single combat between two men of similar size and experience. Referees oversaw the action, and probably stopped the fight as soon as one of the participants was seriously wounded. A match could even end in a stalemate if the crowd became bored by a long and drawn out battle, and in rare cases, both warriors were allowed to leave the arena with honor if they had put on an exciting show for the crowd. Since gladiators were expensive to house, feed and train, their promoters were loath to see them needlessly killed. Trainers may have taught their fighters to wound, not kill, and the combatants may have taken it upon themselves to avoid seriously hurting their brothers-in-arms. Nevertheless, the life of a gladiator was usually brutal and short. Most only lived to their mids, and historians have estimated that somewhere between one in five or one in 10 bouts left one of its participants dead. If a gladiator was seriously wounded or threw down his weapon in defeat, his fate was left in the hands of the spectators. In contests held at the Colosseum, the emperor had the final say in whether the felled warrior lived or died, but rulers and fight organizers often let the people make the decision. Some historians think the sign for death may have actually been the thumbs up, while a closed fist with two fingers extended, a thumbs down, or even a waved handkerchief might have signaled mercy. They were organized into different classes and types. By the time the Colosseum opened in 80 A. Fighters were placed in classes based on their record, skill level and experience, and most specialized in a particular fighting style and set of weaponry. These warriors tried to ensnare their opponents with their net before moving in for the kill, but if they failed, they were left almost entirely defenseless. They only rarely fought against animals. The Colosseum and other Roman arenas are often associated with gruesome animal hunts, but it was uncommon for the gladiators to be involved. Nine thousand animals were slain during a day ceremony to mark the opening of the Colosseum, and another 11, were later killed as part of a day festival held by the Emperor Trajan in the 2nd century A. While most animals were merely slaughtered for sport, others were trained to do tricks or even pitted against one another in fights. Wild animals also served as a popular form of execution. Women also fought as gladiators. Female slaves were regularly condemned to the arena alongside their male counterparts, but a few citizens took up the sword of the own free will. Historians are not sure when women first suited up to fight as gladiators, but by the 1st century A. These lady warriors may not have been taken seriously in the patriarchal Roman culture—the Emperor Domitian enjoyed pitting women against dwarves—but a few appear to have proven themselves in single combat. A marble relief dating to around the 2nd century A. Women also joined in the animal hunts, but their stint in the arena may have come to an end around A. Some gladiators organized themselves into trade unions. When a warrior fell in battle, these groups would ensure that their comrade received a proper funeral and grave inscription honoring his achievements in the arena. If the deceased had a wife and children, they would also see that the family received monetary compensation for their loss. Several Roman emperors participated in staged gladiatorial bouts. Hosting gladiator games was an easy way for Roman emperors to win the love of the people, but a few took it a step further and actually participated in combat. Several rulers performed in the arena including Caligula, Titus and Hadrian—though most likely under highly controlled conditions or with dull blades. A deadeye with a spear, the deranged Emperor Commodus often tried to wow the crowds by killing bears and panthers from the safety of a raised platform. He also competed in a few gladiator fights, though usually against inexperienced fighters or even terrified and poorly armed members of the audience. When he inevitably won the contests, Commodus made sure to reward himself with the massive sum of one million Roman sesterces. Gladiators often became celebrities and sex symbols. Though often dismissed as uncivilized brutes by Roman historians, the gladiators won massive fame among the lower classes. Their portraits graced the walls of many public places; children played with gladiator action figures made of clay; and the most successful fighters even endorsed products just like the top athletes

of today. They were also renowned for their ability to make Roman women swoon.

Chapter 3 : Emperors and Gladiators - Thomas E. J. Wiedemann - Google Books

Of all aspects of Roman culture, the gladiatorial contests for which the Romans built their amphitheatres are at once the most fascinating and the most difficult for us to come to terms with.

A gladiator puts down his shield to admit defeat. Wall-painting from Colchester Britain. Courtesy of the Colchester Archaeological Trust. Funerary relief showing a victorious and a defeated gladiator. Courtesy of the Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht. Terra sigillata beaker with a secutor and a retiarius, who holds up his finger in an appeal for mercy. Courtesy of the Colchester Museum. A defeated gladiator awaits the death-blow; the hand held out in blessing on the left shows that he will be granted his life. Funerary relief representing the pompa with which a gladiatorial munus began. Rome, Museo Nuovo Capitolino. Courtesy of the German Archaeological Institute, Rome. Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum. Courtesy of the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden, inv. Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, many vols Berlin, on. English translation by C. Pharr NY, C. The Journal of Roman Studies on. Migne, Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Graeca Paris, on. Series Latina Paris, on. Rutilius Rufus consul; lanistae used to train recruits Social War: They have perhaps been put off by the popularity of the games, the fact that they fascinated the Romans, and "worse" fascinate ordinary people today. Recent decades have indeed seen more objective investigations of the topic, in particular by George Ville, M. Golvin on architectural aspects. It has not been my intention to compile a comprehensive collection of the surviving evidence about munera, and readers will have to go to these books for such evidence. Nor have I wished to repeat competent descriptions of different types of gladiators and their styles of fighting I hope that the Glossary may suffice for technical terms. I wish rather to try to explore the significance of gladiatorial combat in the context of Roman ideas about society, morality and mortality. Pine-Coffin, reproduced by permission of Penguin Books Ltd. I should like to thank those who commented on the issues raised in discussions about gladiators following papers I was invited to give at Gregynnog, the Oxford Triennial Conference in , Bonn and elsewhere. This paperback edition differs from the hardback edition only in respect of some minor changes. I am grateful to a number of friends, colleagues and reviewers for their comments on the hardback edition, and particularly to Pat Witts for much helpful information about representations of gladiators on mosaics. They were without a doubt also of major significance to the way the Romans themselves ordered their lives. Although the popular image of the Roman mob spending most of the year looking on from its comfortable seats in the Colosseum while men killed each other and killed or were killed by wild beasts in the arena is a considerable distortion, the investment of time, wealth, and emotion into the games was nevertheless enormous. Attending the games was one of the practices that went with being a Roman. They were held in the most visible single building in a Roman city "whether a purpose-built amphitheatre as was usual in the west, or a reconstituted theatre as in the Greek east. Notwithstanding the unease and embarrassment that many apologists for Rome have felt at what went on in these buildings, they cannot be dissociated from Roman civilization. Roman tradition held that the activities that took place in the amphitheatre were not originally Roman at all. Where they came from, in terms of both cultural and geographical origins, is considerably less certain than many scholars, ancient as well as modern, have assumed. Roman writers believed that the traditional spectacles of the Roman community were not munera but the ludi, ceremonial processions followed by chariot-races which took place in the Circus Maximus or in the so-called Circus Flaminius, an open space not a building in the Campus Martius. The circus-games were state occasions, presided over by magistrates, and financed at least in part by the state treasury. There were respects in which the two types of spectacle played a similar social and ritual role, and many studies of Roman social life rightly discuss them together; but there are also significant distinctions to be made between them. The Romans themselves, before the third century AD, used different words for the two types of ceremonies: Gladiatorial contests did not originate as state occasions, but as obligatory offerings munera owed to important men at their deaths. Nevertheless it is worth examining the role of such ludi, since they give us a context for public spectacles at Rome. In the Circus, footraces, boxing, wrestling, and chariot racing; in the theatre, singing, lyre-playing and fluteplaying. Originally, Dionysius tells

us, the people took their places by curiae, tribal or electoral units. The Circus, and at least some theatres, were templa, sacred places belonging to the gods. And the Circus Maximus was said to have been laid out by Tarquinius Priscus at the same time as he laid out the Roman Forum. Although the individual magistrate who presided over each occasion was given credit for putting on a particularly splendid programme—credit which would be realised in the form of votes at his next election—ludi were an offering to the gods by the whole community, and not by the presiding magistrate alone. They were suitable occasions for parading the power of the Roman community. Once Rome had come to dominate the entire Mediterranean, one way of symbolising that power was to display various exotic beasts imported from the territories Rome had conquered, and then slaughter them in the presence of the Roman people assembled in the Circus or theatre as a visual symbol of Roman control: The central role which the exercise of power in warfare played within the system of political competition and in the self-esteem of the Roman elite and in Roman life generally during the republic is well-known. Military success was rewarded in all ranks of the Roman army; for those who commanded successful armies, the highest sign of public recognition was the award of a triumph. They have to be distinguished from the regular ludi. At the same time the power that the triumphal procession advertised was the power of the Roman people, as put into effect by a Roman army. When Metellus returned in great glory from his year in Further Spain, men and women came to meet him from everywhere, and people watched him in every street and from the rooftops. His quaestor Gaius Urbinus and others knew what he wanted; when they invited him to dinner, they took greater pains than Romans and indeed human beings generally do to adorn the house with tapestries and insignia, and set up stages for actors to perform. The ground was covered with crocuses and other flowers, as the finest temples are. When he had sat down, they sprang a surprise on him by letting down a representation of Venus to the sound of artificial thunder, to place a crown on his head. As he went in to dine, they honoured him with incense like a god. As he reclined, he wore the embroidered toga and cloak sc. These things lost him some of his reputation, especially among the older and more conservative men, who thought such things haughty and dangerous and unworthy of Roman power *superba illa, gravia, indigna Romano imperio*. The historical tradition pinpointed the first occasion of a munus at Rome: His sons Marcus and Decimus had three pairs of gladiators fight to the death on the Forum Boarium between the Palatine and the Tiber. The competitive nature of republican politics meant that ever more imagines were displayed on these occasions. At the funeral of M. Claudius Marcellus after his death at the Battle of Petelia in BC, in his fifth consulship, the funeral masks of Claudii were paraded; at the funeral of the dictator Sulla in 78 BC, there were said to have been 6, Seventy-four men were said to have fought over a period of three days. Unlike the funerals themselves, the munera had the very great advantage that they did not have to be put on immediately after the death of the deceased: Towards the end of the republic, politicians seeking election to a praetorship or consulship were under great pressure to find appropriate relatives to honour in this way. Where there was no famous father, even a deceased woman, who had played no formal political role, would do: There is no clear evidence for gladiators at the funeral of his aunt in 65 BC, when Caesar was aedile; but after his election to that office, he promised the electorate that he was going to put on a spectacle greater than any before, so much so that his rivals in the Senate introduced restrictions on the allowable expenses; as a result, he was prevented from presenting the pairs of gladiators he had advertised. Although the distinction between public and private affairs was a very important one to the Romans, the fact that gladiatorial displays were public events put on by public figures in their private capacity sometimes confused both later Roman writers and modern scholars, particularly after Augustus made the blurring of that distinction between private and public an essential feature of his new imperial system. In late antiquity, it was argued that in the year BC, or even regularly from BC on, the consuls had provided gladiatorial games on behalf of the state. Rutilius Rufus, using gladiatorial trainers to give hastily raised recruits basic weapons training after the Roman defeat at Arausio. Funerals continued to be the occasion on which games were presented by private individuals with social, but not necessarily political ambitions. The munus is an alternative way of expressing publicly the wealth and social importance of the deceased. Tiberius had to send military units to quell a riot at Pollentia in Liguria when the population, with the support or connivance of their magistrates, refused to allow the funeral of a principal centurion primus pilus to take place until his heirs had promised to provide a munus. Another man is said to have taken a vow to

appear as a gladiator himself if the emperor should recover from a serious illness. As early as the 20s BC, Augustus restricted the praetors to two gladiatorial shows during their year of office, with a maximum of participants. Hand-in-hand with this control of munera by the emperors went the establishment of the system of imperial gladiatorial training institutions ludi in the city, probably also originating under Augustus. That confusion between public and private has made it difficult for some scholars to realise that, while the munera given by the Caesars were public, they must be distinguished from state occasions like religious or triumphal ludi. Gladiatorial contests remained the personal gifts of those who gave them, and not obligations formally required of magistrates. The original distinction, as well as its later blurring, can most clearly be seen in the provisions for their financing. Ludi were regularly financed by grants from the Aerarium, the state treasury of the Roman people. The charters of Spanish municipalities established by Caesar specify the sums of money to be paid out by the city treasury; they are of course very much smaller than those that applied for Rome. At Urso, each of the two chief magistrates duumviri are to be granted 2, HS to cover the four-day games honouring Juppiter, Juno and Minerva; they were obliged to match this sum with at least as much from their own purses. In requiring individual magistrates to match the money provided by their city with funds from their private resources, Julius Caesar was in effect institutionalising what was by now common practice at Rome. For the less honorific aedilician games, the city and the magistrates had to provide 1, H S each. But no sums of money are allocated to gladiatorial munera: Pollentia expected a munus when a leading citizen died. The greater the honours a local magistrate attained, the greater the expectation that he would provide a munus: Later emperors had to legislate to set an upper limit for what might be expected, to the relief of provincial magnates see Chapter 4. On occasion, cities had to make grants to their magistrates to enable them to provide what were in theory free gifts to the people. The effect was that the responsibility for providing games, like other liturgies, had to be made semi-official. From being voluntary gifts to the community, gladiatorial shows had turned into obligatory offices required of the wealthiest citizens, or wealthy outside patrons. At Praeneste, the holder of this position was called a curator: At Beneventum, he was called a munerarius. It will not necessarily have been insignificant, although the sums involved on individual occasions might be quite small.

Chapter 4 : Gladiators & Emperors of Rome for Kids and Families

Of all aspects of Roman culture, the gladiatorial contests for which the Romans built their amphitheatres are at once the most fascinating and the most.

He is viewed as having been an inept Emperor, his megalomaniac tendencies leading to odd behaviors which frustrated and upset the Roman people. It appeared that he had no interest in being a leader, and only wanted to take advantage of his leadership powers to fulfill his own wants and desires. Commodus did initially engage in some leadership-oriented activities, although not always in the favor of the Roman people. He also devalued Roman currency, reducing the weight of the denarius and reducing the purity of silver. He was very vain, and strongly believed himself to be the reincarnation of Hercules "so much so that he ordered statues of himself be dressed like Hercules, and he ordered that people call him Hercules, son of Zeus. Bust of Commodus as Hercules, hence the lion skin, the club. Public Domain While fighting in the arena, opponents would submit to Commodus, as Emperor, and their lives were spared. However, in private practice fights, Commodus would slay his opponents. The Romans were outraged when Commodus would order wounded soldiers and amputees into the arena to be slayed. Non-military citizens who had lost their feet due to injury or illness would be tied together for Commodus to club to death. In addition to the crippled, Commodus would slay exotic animals, such as lions, ostriches, hippos, elephants, and giraffes. This horrified the Roman people. Hercules and the Hydra ca. In November he held Plebian Games, where he would use arrows and javelins to shoot hundreds of animals every morning, and then engaged in gladiator battles each afternoon. By December of that year, he declared that he would inaugurate the New Year on January 1, as a gladiator in the arena. This caused much outrage, and inspired prefect Laetus to start a conspiracy to assassinate the Emperor. First, she attempted to kill him by poisoning his food. He vomited the poisoned food up, foiling that plan. Despite the fact that Commodus caused much anger and resentment during his reign, few written records were kept. Bust of Commodus, 17th Emperor of the Roman Empire. Roman artwork, - AD.

Chapter 5 : Emperors and Gladiators: 1st Edition (Hardback) - Routledge

Emperors and gladiators. [Thomas E J Wiedemann] -- Of all aspects of Roman culture, the gladiatorial contests for which the Romans built their amphitheatres are at once the most fascinating and the most difficult for us to come to terms with.

Commodus had an elder twin brother, Titus Aurelius Fulvus Antoninus, who died in 192. Commodus received extensive tutoring by a multitude of teachers with a focus on intellectual education. It was presumably there that, on 15 October, he was given the victory title Germanicus, in the presence of the army. On 20 January, Commodus entered the College of Pontiffs, the starting point of a career in public life. Having been accepted as Emperor by Syria, Judea and Egypt, Cassius carried on his rebellion even after it had become obvious that Marcus was still alive. During the preparations for the campaign against Cassius, Commodus assumed his toga virilis on the Danubian front on 7 July, thus formally entering adulthood. Cassius, however, was killed by one of his centurions before the campaign against him could begin. Commodus subsequently accompanied his father on a lengthy trip to the Eastern provinces, during which he visited Antioch. The Emperor and his son then traveled to Athens, where they were initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries. They then returned to Rome in the autumn of 182. Joint rule with father [edit] Head of Brutia Crispina Marcus Aurelius was the first emperor since Vespasian to have a legitimate biological son and, though he himself was the fifth in the line of the so-called Five Good Emperors, each of whom had adopted his successor, it seems to have been his firm intention that Commodus should be his heir. On 27 November, Marcus Aurelius granted Commodus the rank of Imperator and, in the middle of 183, the title Augustus, giving his son the same status as his own and formally sharing power. On 23 December of the same year, the two Augusti celebrated a joint triumph, and Commodus was given tribunician power. On 1 January, Commodus became consul for the first time, which made him, aged 15, the youngest consul in Roman history up to that time. He subsequently married Brutia Crispina before accompanying his father to the Danubian front once more in 183, where Marcus Aurelius died on 17 March, leaving the year-old Commodus sole emperor. Solo reign [edit] Upon his ascension, Commodus devalued the Roman currency. He reduced the weight of the denarius from 96 per Roman pound to per Roman pound 3. Whereas the reign of Marcus Aurelius had been marked by almost continuous warfare, that of Commodus was comparatively peaceful in the military sense but was marked by political strife and the increasingly arbitrary and capricious behaviour of the emperor himself. In the view of Dio Cassius, a contemporary observer of the period, his accession marked the descent "from a kingdom of gold to one of iron and rust". The principal surviving literary sources are Herodian, Dio Cassius a contemporary and sometimes first-hand observer, but for this reign, only transmitted in fragments and abbreviations, and the Historia Augusta untrustworthy for its character as a work of literature rather than history, with elements of fiction embedded within its biographies; in the case of Commodus, it may well be embroidering upon what the author found in reasonably good contemporary sources. A Denarius featuring Commodus Commodus remained with the Danube armies for only a short time before negotiating a peace treaty with the Danubian tribes. He then returned to Rome and celebrated a triumph for the conclusion of the wars on 22 October. Unlike the preceding Emperors Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, he seems to have had little interest in the business of administration and tended throughout his reign to leave the practical running of the state to a succession of favourites, beginning with Saoterus, a freedman from Nicomedia who had become his chamberlain. Dissatisfaction with this state of affairs would lead to a series of conspiracies and attempted coups, which in turn eventually provoked Commodus to take charge of affairs, which he did in an increasingly dictatorial manner. Nevertheless, though the senatorial order came to hate and fear him, the evidence suggests that he remained popular with the army and the common people for much of his reign, not least because of his lavish shows of largesse recorded on his coinage and because he staged and took part in spectacular gladiatorial combats. One of the ways he paid for his donatives imperial handouts and mass entertainments was to tax the senatorial order, and on many inscriptions, the traditional order of the two nominal powers of the state, the Senate and People Senatus Populusque Romanus is provocatively reversed Populus Senatusque

He also had four surviving sisters, all of them with husbands who were potential rivals. His eldest sister, Lucilla, was over ten years his senior and held the rank of Augusta as the widow of her first husband, Lucius Verus. The first crisis of the reign came in , when Lucilla engineered a conspiracy against her brother. Her motive is alleged to have been envy of the Empress Crispina. Her husband, Pompeianus, was not involved, but two men alleged to have been her lovers, Marcus Ummidius Quadratus Annianus the consul of , who was also her first cousin and Appius Claudius Quintianus , attempted to murder Commodus as he entered a theater. Quadratus and Quintianus were executed. Lucilla was exiled to Capri and later killed. Pompeianus retired from public life. One of the two praetorian prefects , Tarrutenius Paternus , had actually been involved in the conspiracy but his involvement was not discovered until later on, and in the aftermath, he and his colleague, Sextus Tigidius Perennis , were able to arrange for the murder of Saoterus, the hated chamberlain. Salvius and Paternus were executed along with a number of other prominent consulars and senators. Didius Julianus , the future emperor and a relative of Salvius Julianus, was dismissed from the governorship of Germania Inferior. Cleander was in fact the person who had murdered Saoterus. After those attempts on his life, Commodus spent much of his time outside Rome, mostly on the family estates at Lanuvium. Being physically strong, his chief interest was in sport: According to Herodian [12] he was well proportioned and attractive, with naturally blond and curly hair. War broke out in Dacia: Also, in Britain in , the governor Ulpius Marcellus re-advanced the Roman frontier northward to the Antonine Wall , but the legionaries revolted against his harsh discipline and acclaimed another legate, Priscus, as emperor. According to Dio Cassius, Perennis, though ruthless and ambitious, was not personally corrupt and generally administered the state well. The fall of Perennis brought a new spate of executions: Aufidius Victorinus committed suicide. Ulpius Marcellus was replaced as governor of Britain by Pertinax ; brought to Rome and tried for treason, Marcellus narrowly escaped death. Unrest around the empire increased, with large numbers of army deserters causing trouble in Gaul and Germany. Pescennius Niger mopped up the deserters in Gaul in a military campaign, and a revolt in Brittany was put down by two legions brought over from Britain. In , one of the leaders of the deserters, Maternus, came from Gaul intending to assassinate Commodus at the Festival of the Great Goddess in March, but he was betrayed and executed. As a result, Commodus appeared even more rarely in public, preferring to live on his estates. Early in , Cleander disposed of the current praetorian prefect, Atilius Aebutianus , and himself took over supreme command of the Praetorians at the new rank of a pugione "dagger-bearer" with two praetorian prefects subordinate to him. Now at the zenith of his power, Cleander continued to sell public offices as his private business. In the spring of , Rome was afflicted by a food shortage, for which the praefectus annonae Papirius Dionysius , the official actually in charge of the grain supply , contrived to lay the blame on Cleander. At the end of June, a mob demonstrated against Cleander during a horse race in the Circus Maximus: Cleander fled to Commodus, who was at Laurentum in the house of the Quinctilii , for protection, but the mob followed him calling for his head. At the urging of his mistress Marcia , Commodus had Cleander beheaded and his son killed. Papirius Dionysius was executed, too. The emperor now changed his name to Lucius Aelius Aurelius Commodus. At 29, he took over more of the reins of power, though he continued to rule through a cabal consisting of Marcia, his new chamberlain Eclectus, and the new praetorian prefect Quintus Aemilius Laetus. Megalomania â€” [edit] A Denarius of Commodus In opposition to the Senate, in his pronouncements and iconography , Commodus had always stressed his unique status as a source of god-like power, liberality, and physical prowess. Innumerable statues around the empire were set up portraying him in the guise of Hercules , reinforcing the image of him as a demigod, a physical giant, a protector, and a battler against beasts and men see "Commodus and Hercules" and "Commodus the Gladiator" below. Moreover, as Hercules, he could claim to be the son of Jupiter , the supreme god of the Roman pantheon. These tendencies now increased to megalomaniacal proportions. Far from celebrating his descent from Marcus Aurelius, the actual source of his power, he stressed his own personal uniqueness as the bringer of a new order, seeking to re-cast the empire in his own image. During , the city of Rome was extensively damaged by a fire that raged for several days, during which many public buildings including the Temple of Pax , the Temple of Vesta , and parts of the imperial palace were destroyed. Perhaps seeing this as an opportunity, early in Commodus, declaring himself the new Romulus , ritually re-founded Rome, renaming the city Colonia Lucia Annia Commodiana. All the

months of the year were renamed to correspond exactly with his now twelve names: The legions were renamed Commodianae, the fleet which imported grain from Africa was termed Alexandria Commodiana Togata, the Senate was entitled the Commodian Fortunate Senate, his palace and the Roman people themselves were all given the name Commodianus, and the day on which these reforms were decreed was to be called Dies Commodianus. He also had the head of the Colossus of Nero adjacent to the Colosseum replaced with his own portrait, gave it a club, and placed a bronze lion at its feet to make it look like Hercules Romanus, and added an inscription boasting of being "the only left-handed fighter to conquer twelve times one thousand men". The abbreviation "CO" has been restored with paint. In November, Commodus held Plebeian Games, in which he shot hundreds of animals with arrows and javelins every morning, and fought as a gladiator every afternoon, winning all the fights. Also, in December, he announced his intention to inaugurate the year as both consul and gladiator on 1 January. At this point, the prefect Laetus formed a conspiracy with Eclectus to supplant Commodus with Pertinax, taking Marcia into their confidence. Upon his death, the Senate declared him a public enemy a de facto damnatio memoriae and restored the original name to the city of Rome and its institutions. His body was buried in the Mausoleum of Hadrian. Commodus was succeeded by Pertinax, whose reign was short lived, being the first to fall victim to the Year of the Five Emperors. His great simplicity, however, together with his cowardice, made him the slave of his companions, and it was through them that he at first, out of ignorance, missed the better life and then was led on into lustful and cruel habits, which soon became second nature. It seems likely that he was brought up in an atmosphere of Stoic asceticism, which he rejected entirely upon his accession to sole rule. One such notable event was the attempted extermination of the house of the Quinctilii. Commodianus and Maximus were executed on the pretext that, while they were not implicated in any plots, their wealth and talent would make them unhappy with the current state of affairs. In October he changed his praenomen from Lucius to Marcus, presumably in honour of his father. He later took the title of Felix in AD 192. The latter eventually would be used as a conventional title by Roman emperors, starting about a century later, but Commodus seems to have been the first to assume it. The historian Herodian, a contemporary, described Commodus as an extremely handsome man. He was left-handed and very proud of the fact. Commodus the gladiator[edit] Commodus also had a passion for gladiatorial combat, which he took so far as to take to the arena himself, dressed as a secutor. Thus, these public fights would not end in death, although wounded soldiers and amputees would be placed in the arena for Commodus to slay with a sword. Commodus was also known for fighting exotic animals in the arena, often to the horror of the Roman people. According to Gibbon, Commodus once killed lions in a single day. He is played by Joaquin Phoenix. Son of Rome is named Commodus and is one of the main antagonists of the game. The son of Emperor Nero, he shares several traits with the historic Commodus. Commodus is a minor antagonist in the video game Colosseum: The player can fight Commodus in the game, who dresses as the god Hercules. The game takes liberties with the events surrounding his death, with the player being the one who actually kills him rather than the wrestler Narcissus. The mini-series Roman Empire: Reign of Blood retells his story.

Chapter 6 : Emperors and Gladiators - Thomas Wiedemann - Google Books

Emperors & Gladiators pits 2 to 5 players against each other to see who will emerge from the floor of the coliseum to become the Emperor's champion. Each player will take the role of a roman gladiator in a free-for-all fight in front of the Emperor and the citizens of Rome.

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Conscripts and volunteers Today, the idea of gladiators fighting to the death, and of an amphitheatre where this could take place watched by an enthusiastic audience, epitomises the depths to which the Roman Empire was capable of sinking. Yet, to the Romans themselves, the institution of the arena was one of the defining features of their civilisation. Hardly any contemporary voices questioned the morality of staging gladiatorial combat. So who were these gladiators, and what was their role in Roman society? The Romans believed that the first gladiators were slaves who were made to fight to the death at the funeral of a distinguished aristocrat, Junius Brutus Pera, in BC. This spectacle was arranged by the heirs of the deceased to honour his memory. Gradually gladiatorial spectacle became separated from the funerary context, and was staged by the wealthy as a means of displaying their power and influence within the local community. Advertisements for gladiatorial displays have survived at Pompeii, painted by professional sign-writers on house-fronts, or on the walls of tombs clustered outside the city-gates. The number of gladiators to be displayed was a key attraction: Most gladiators were slaves. They were subjected to a rigorous training, fed on a high-energy diet, and given expert medical attention. Hence they were an expensive investment, not to be despatched lightly. For a gladiator who died in combat the trainer lanista might charge the sponsor of the fatal spectacle up to a hundred times the cost of a gladiator who survived. Hence it was very much more costly for sponsors to supply the bloodshed that audiences often demanded, although if they did allow a gladiator to be slain it was seen as an indication of their generosity. Remarkably, some gladiators were not slaves but free-born volunteers. The chief incentive was probably the down-payment that a volunteer received upon taking the gladiatorial oath. Some maverick emperors with a perverted sense of humour made upper-class Romans of both sexes fight in the arena. But, as long as they did not receive a fee for their participation, such persons would be exempt from the stain of infamia, the legal disability that attached to the practitioners of disreputable professions such as those of gladiators, actors and prostitutes. The minutiae of the rules governing gladiatorial combat are lost to modern historians Sometimes these graffiti even form a sequence. One instance records the spectacular start to the career of a certain Marcus Attilius evidently, from his name, a free-born volunteer. As a mere rookie tiro he defeated an old hand, Hilarus, from the troupe owned by the emperor Nero, even though Hilarus had won the special distinction of a wreath no fewer than 13 times. Attilius then capped this stunning initial engagement for which he himself won a wreath by going on to defeat a fellow-volunteer, Lucius Raecius Felix, who had 12 wreaths to his name. Both Hilarus and Raecius must have fought admirably against Attilius, since each of them was granted a reprieve missio. It was the prerogative of the sponsor, acting upon the wishes of the spectators, to decide whether to reprieve the defeated gladiator or consign him to the victor to be polished off. Mosaics from around the Roman empire depict the critical moment when the victor is standing over his floored opponent, poised to inflict the fatal blow, his hand stayed at least temporarily by the umpire. The figure of the umpire is frequently depicted in the background of an engagement, sometimes accompanied by an assistant. The minutiae of the rules governing gladiatorial combat are lost to modern historians, but the presence of these arbiters suggests that the regulations were complex, and their enforcement potentially contentious. Gladiators were individually armed in various combinations, each combination imposing its own fighting-style. Gladiators who were paired against an opponent in the same style were relatively uncommon. The most vulnerable of all gladiators was the net-fighter Some of the most popular pairings pitted contrasting advantages and disadvantages against one another. The murmillo had a large, oblong shield that covered his body from shoulder to calf; it afforded stout protection, but was very unwieldy. The thraex, on the other hand, carried a small square shield that covered only his torso, and the hoplomachus carried an even smaller round one. Instead of calf-length greaves, both these types wore leg-protectors that came well above the knee. So the murmillo and his opponent were comparably protected, but the size and

weight of their shields would have called for different fighting techniques, contributing to the interest and suspense of the engagement. The most vulnerable of all gladiators was the net-fighter retiarius, who had only a shoulder-guard *galerus* on his left arm to protect him. Being relatively unencumbered, however, he could move nimbly to inflict a blow from his trident at relatively long range, cast his net over his opponent, and then close in with his short dagger for the face-off. He customarily fought the heavily-armed *secutor* who, although virtually impregnable, lumbered under the weight of his armour. As the retiarius advanced, leading with his left shoulder and wielding the trident in his right hand, his shoulder-guard prevented his opponent from striking the vulnerable area of his neck and face. Not that all gladiators were right-handed. A disconcerting advantage accrued to the left-handed; they were trained to fight right-handers, but their opponents, unaccustomed to being approached from this angle, could be thrown off-balance by a left-handed attack. Left-handedness is hence a quality advertised in graffiti and epitaphs alike. Originally the different fighting-styles must have evolved from types of combat that the Romans met among the peoples whom they fought and conquered - *thraex* literally means an inhabitant of Thrace, the inhospitable land bordered on the north by the Danube and on the east by the notorious Black Sea. It also became politically incorrect to persist in naming styles after peoples who had by now been comfortably assimilated into the empire, and granted privileged relationships with Rome. Hence by the Augustan period the term *murmillo* replaced the old term *samnis*, designating a people south of Rome who had long since been subjugated by the Romans and absorbed into their culture. **Top Barrack life** The gladiatorial barracks were marked by heterogeneity. Membership was constantly fluctuating, as troupes toured the local circuit. Some members survived to reach retirement; new recruits were enlisted, many of them probably unable to understand Latin. In the larger barracks, members of the same fighting-style had their own dedicated trainer, and they often bonded together in formal associations. Yet gladiators must frequently have met their intimate fellows in mortal combat. Within a training-school there was a competitive hierarchy of grades *palo* through which individuals were promoted. The larger barracks, at least, had their own training arena, with accommodation for spectators, so that combatants became accustomed to practising before an audience of their fellows. The system meant that combat and heroic prowess were brought right into the urban centres of the Roman empire, whereas real warfare was going on unimaginably far away, on the borders of barbarism. Both pagan philosophers and Christian fathers scorned the arena. But they objected most vociferously not to the brutality of the displays, but to the loss of self-control that the hype generated among the spectators. Gladiatorial displays were red-letter days in communities throughout the empire. The whole spectrum of local society was represented, seated strictly according to status. The combatants paraded beforehand, fully armed. Exotic animals might be displayed and hunted in the early part of the programme, and prisoners might be executed, by exposure to the beasts. As the combat between each pair of gladiators reached its climax, the band played to a frenzied crescendo. The thirst for thrills even resulted in a particular rarity, female gladiators. Above all, gladiatorial combat was a display of nerve and skill. The gladiator, worthless in terms of civic status, was paradoxically capable of heroism. Under the Roman empire, his job was one of the threads that bound together the entire social and economic fabric of the Roman world. Not even Spartacus, most famous of all gladiators, has left his own account of himself. But shreds of evidence, in words and pictures, remain - to be pieced together as testimony of an institution that characterised an entire civilisation for nearly years.

Chapter 7 : Gladiator () - IMDb

Roman Emperor Lucius Aurelius Commodus was a corrupt ruler who was not well received by the Roman people during his reign. He believed himself to be a reincarnation of Hercules, and enjoyed fighting in an arena as a gladiator.

Chapter 8 : Gladiator - Wikipedia

Several Roman emperors participated in staged gladiatorial bouts. Hosting gladiator games was an easy way for Roman emperors to win the love of the people, but a few took it a step further and.

Chapter 9 : Commodus – the Outrageous Emperor who Fought as a Gladiator | Ancient Origins

Kings of Entertainment. Roman gladiator games were an opportunity for Emperors and rich aristocrats to display their wealth to the populace, to commemorate military victories, mark visits from important officials, celebrate birthdays or simply to distract the populace from the political and economic problems of the day.