

The classical world

People



The Classical World The Colosseum What is the Colosseum? ** It is an ancient building which is a national symbol of the long history of Rome (the Eternal City) and a long surviving building of the Roman Empire. ** It was built for performances which were a basic part of the ancient Roman culture. ** Its size, date of construction (antiquity) and central place in old culture make it an obvious choice as Rome's symbol. Its Role and Purpose: ** It was built by the Emperors of the Flavian family in Rome, and it is a theatre where the seats are in a circle. So it's called the " Flavian Amphitheatre" as well as the Colosseum. ** Many games were held there in the olden days, such as: gladiator fights, wild-beast displays, and events in which criminals and early Christians were executed. ** It was a symbol of the greatness and power of Rome as the greatest city of the Empire, even in the eighth century CE.

Omnibus by Thomas Weidemann: (Resource Book I) a. Ancient sources (for his research): mosaics, ruins of old amphitheatres, inscriptions and written works, etc. b. Why were the games played, and the role of the Colosseum and the arena in the ancient Roman society c. What do we learn about the Roman civilization by studying about the Colosseum? Romans and Greeks: Games were played and popular even before the Colosseum was built in both Rome and Greece (which had a sophisticated culture several hundred years before the Romans); however, these shows and displays were criticized by philosophers and Christian thinkers as cruel and immoral. The struggle with nature: The people were to be grateful to the Emperor for killing all dangerous and harmful animals in the games, in the arena, and the Emperor was a considered a hero for getting his people rid of these animals (Hercules was a suitable symbol for the Emperors as he had killed many monsters in his legendary adventures). (Color Plate 23 and 16) It was built in <https://assignbuster.com/the-classical-world/>

the beginning to show the Roman victory over the Jews who had rebelled against them in Judea. Life and death: Possible origins of the gladiatorial fights and lists of the different ways in which criminals were killed in the arena. Punishment for any crime was shown openly in the arena to be seen by the rulers and the people. To forgive brave and successful fighters was also done together as a " collective and popular responsibility" of the rulers and the people gathered in the arena. Therefore, this place could give the opportunity for active discussion between the Emperor and people, as well as a way to separate the social position of people which showed them to be separate from criminals. Gentlemen and Players: The gladiators belonged to enemy fighters captured in wars, revolt, or those charged with serious crime; men who had no rights, and were slaves to the men who trained them to fight. Some of them were professional gladiators who were heroes, especially to women. (Even of the court). Christians looked at the gladiators as an enemy who was a devil and to defeat him would be a victory of true faith against a pagan practice. So, for a Christian to win over a gladiator was to win a religious victory and die a martyr. (Plates 25-28): Show how noble men would also become gladiators and highlight the fact that gladiators were both outcasts of society and glamorous attractions in society. Sources: I. WRITTEN SOURCES: a. Graffiti (on walls). b. Writings of that time (fragment papers). c. Books from a later empire. Contemporary Writings: The " Achievements of the Divine Augustus", by Emperor Augustus, 14CE (about 60 years before the Colosseum was built) It was a political writing to be used in the grave of one of the ruling families. It mentions the games and their political implications. The games were organized to basically please the people. As a complete work, it appears to be a record of the Rule of Emperor

<https://assignbuster.com/the-classical-world/>

Augustus but written in a personal way and talks about the greatness of his life after his death and a proof of his great military and political powers in his lifetime. This document is also used by Wiedemann to show proof of the great killing of animals as an accepted and celebrated practice of that time and the attitude of a good citizen toward his ruler. The arrangements of these killings, and the games, were the responsibility of the rulers; so we can think of how it helped to make the power, status, influence and great name of the Emperors.

II. VISUAL SOURCES:

- Buildings of the same type (archaeological evidence)
- Decorative art on or in buildings

The El Djem Amphitheatre: It's copied from the original with some variations but a good visual source along with the other ruins, to show the importance of the games and the arena in cities all over the Roman Empire. The Colosseum combined great architecture with safety and crowd control. The El Djem was an example of the variety of Roman civil philosophy and the Romanization of the area. The decorative art is shown in the floor mosaics of many villas, including the Roman villa at Nennig. Gladiators' scenes, the activities in real fights, description of different skills, weapons and type of gladiatorial art are found in the mosaics and sculptured images.

Judgments: Ancient and Modern Perceptions of the Games: Reactions to the buildings, & the shows held in them Experience and Attitudes of the ancient World: ** The selected educated people of that time had different reactions to this practice. E. g., Cicero, a famous lawyer, speaker and politician, living in the troubled times of the late Roman Republic, shows the audience's reaction and feelings to the animals. It shows the courage in the games as examples of good Roman qualities, the power and energy that made Rome a great city. ** The gladiators' fights started as colorful shows at Funerals, where slaves and

<https://assignbuster.com/the-classical-world/>

prisoners fought to the death in honor of the dead person. **Also, there are expressions of fear that the fights could turn into cruel blood shed. E. g., the philosopher, Seneca, who virtually ruled Rome five years on behalf of the young Emperor Nero, did not approve of this kind of entertainment, before the time of the Colosseum. ** Both Seneca and St. Augustine (a Christian writer) were critical of the effects of these fights on the audience; but neither seems to care about the feelings of the victims who are killed in these games as punishment or the cruelty of such punishment. ** The Christian debater (polemicist), Tertullian, second Century, CE, tried to discourage Christian followers from attending these games by showing their pagan tones. So we see that all types of people went to these shows including Christians who were among the victims of the gladiators. The main arguments against the games were based on their effects on the people who went to watch them. But the games were praised as suitable punishment for crime, a noble art of fighting skills, especially in an Empire that was most interested in expanding their power through wars and a very strong military level. The modern opinion about death as a punishment is that people are worried about the mental effect on those who give the punishment, decide on it, agree to it and carry it out. All these thinkers and writers from both the ages were more worried about the cruelty and psychological damage as effects of such practices which are a result of violence carried out by an institution or the government. Generally the ancient writers were not too concerned with the suffering of the punished can make us judge the customs and rules of the Roman society by modern moral values. Deaths in such cases were made spectacles for people to see and enjoy through graphic details and visual in staging shows in the fights. The Form of the Building: Amphitheatre (Greek): <https://assignbuster.com/the-classical-world/>

a place with seats for spectators all around, which makes it different in design from other Roman and Greek theatres. Arena (Roman): building, Latin "Harena" for sand that covered the ground of performing area. It was not inherited from the Greek like other Roman things. Pompeii: Cultural roots of the amphitheatre. Second Century BCE, Pompeii prospered and generally shared the Greek culture because of commerce and travel. Most of the richer houses were decorated with mosaics and wall paintings based on Greek culture and the town had Greek type theatres. 80 BC: big change in status of the town as it developed in public buildings as it became a settlement for retired soldiers from the Roman army. It received a new civic position and many different and new buildings were made to give the town facilities of a Roman centre. The amphitheatre, seating about 20.000 people, was one of the new buildings. It brought the Roman image to the town. This amphitheatre was the oldest permanent structure to survive the years. In the olden days, gladiators' events used to be held outside in natural arenas with the people watching from the sides of surrounding hills or temporary wooden seats were made where possible but didn't survive. Rome: Rome's gladiators' shows were held in the Forum. The Forum was the cultural and political centre of the city. Many buildings, made in later first century BCE, and earlier, didn't survive, except for a stone one in 30 BCE. In 71 CE, Emperor Vespasian began to build his amphitheatre, the Colosseum, to give Roman people a huge, permanent setting for the gladiatorial shows that would take 50.000 people. It was built on land taken by the Emperor Nero. The first parts were dedicated in 75 CE and Vespasian's successor, Titus, opened the extended building in 80 CE. It was constantly being built and repaired through out its ancient history. The Functions of the Colosseum: <https://assignbuster.com/the-classical-world/>

BASIC FEATURES IN THE DESIGN: 1) The area was 3357 square meters. Complex structure of the building made excellent access and maximum safety for performers and spectators. 2) Seating allowed 45. 000 spectators with 5. 000 more standing. 3) The weight of such a large number was maintained by the use of enormous piers to carry the arches and corridors of different building materials for the best effect. 4) Continuous rows of seating gave everyone a chance to see. 5) There were 76 numbered gates to the amphitheatre where the spectators entered with the help of numbered tickets, climbed wide staircases to the correct levels and find their seats. 6) Entrances on the short sides show richer decoration and led directly to the boxes looking down at the arena used by the Emperor and his officials. 7) Water was provided for refreshment through pipes which brought water to the fountains on the levels. 8) Shade was provided by a very big sunshade which could be drawn across the arena. Sailors were used to work the shade with its attachments. 9) Seating was made according to their particular social status and position according to the Roman social legislation. 10) The main figure in the audience was the Emperor. His box was at the centre of one of the long sides of the amphitheatre as his actions had to be seen by the people. People of status, the consuls and vestal virgins sat on the other side of his box. 11) There were five different sections of seating separated by the levels: a. The lowest level was for the senators. b. Next would be the so-called maenianum premium, the first gallery, which had at least 8 rows of marble seats. c. Then the maenianum secundum, the second gallery, which was divided into upper and lower sections. d. Finally, the maenianum summum, the highest gallery, which had rows of wooden seats for the women and slaves. e. Inscriptions carved on the stairway and the back of the

<https://assignbuster.com/the-classical-world/>

seats showed the seating. f. Only senators, who sat according to family groups, had seats reserved by names. g. Safety measures were provided by a balustrade which separated the front seats from the arena. h. Archers, men with bows and arrows, stood at the higher levels to shoot into the arena if there was any trouble. Provisions for the Performers: NEEDS: 1. Enough space in the arena for their acts 2. Suitable accommodation 3. Entrances and exits 4. Work space for the workers who had to make quick changes, clean up, put up background displays and shift living and dead bodies These arrangements were different according to the needs and status of particular performers, since there were many different types of shows performed. A typical major day would have the game begin with beast shows, move to the killing of criminals and prisoners, and end with gladiatorial fights. The gladiators were kept in barracks outside the Colosseum but nearby to it and made a ceremonial entry into the arena; but the beasts and prisoners had to be brought in, kept in chains, or in cages, and pushed into the arena when their turn came. The entrance for gladiators was wide and easy to spot, set in the main part from where they marched into the arena with officials and different musicians and passed in front of the presiding authorities in their boxes before fighting. The gladiators would leave by one exit after the end of the fight; while the dead were pulled out through a narrow passage called the Gate of Death. Digging in the arena in the 19th century showed the network of cells and corridors under its surface, where animals and prisoners were kept. There would be problems of starving, weak and restless animals, and prisoners wanting to escape, so security had to be strong.