

Colosseum and gladiators essay



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TASK: Compare and contrast the film 'Gladiator' to set the century of Ancient Rome. Discuss similarities, differences, inaccuracies and omissions. The feature film 'Gladiator' was a fairly accurate portrayal of the gladiatorial games and all the pageantry and ceremony it attracted. However, while the tone and atmosphere of a living Rome was created, the film was littered with inaccuracies and oversights.

This is particularly relevant to the gladiators themselves. The inaccuracies of the film are sorted into three central categories, socially, gladiatorial combat and the Colosseum. The history of gladiators and how gladiatorial combat began is essential in understanding the social status of the gladiators. As this was omitted from the film, the audience were left to assume they were nothing more than expendable slaves. However, this is extremely inaccurate. The gladiators were extremely valuable.

Put simply, completely trained gladiators were priceless. There were different types of events of which various combatants performed. Generally, the men were purchased as slaves and were later trained at a gladiatorial school. Yet, this was absolutely overlooked during the film. The gladiators were often men who had been seized during war.

Jo Ann Shelton states: "Some were slaves who had displeased their masters ... sold to a gladiatorial school was punishment. A free man, who had no other source of income, may sign up to a gladiatorial school." [As The Romans Did; page: 350; 2008] When a free man signed this oath, he complied to be considered a slave. The Brooklyn College department website

describes the oath as ' the ultimate social disgrace'. However, disbelievably, there were advantages.

The gladiator became a part of a unified group which was notorious for their courage, outstanding poise, and complete fidelity to its master to his point of death. The life of a gladiator soon developed into that of military discipline and through audacious conduct he was later adept of achieving honour.

(Similar to that of Roman soldiers)The gladiators' popularity was completely overlooked in the film, this key element is vital in understanding the gladiators' way of life. [<http://depthome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/classics/gladiatr/gladiatr.htm>]

The training that these men received was an expensive and lengthy process. Gladiators learned to utilize various types of equipment. As the end of their training approached, they began to focus with a single particular type. The Gladiator gained knowledge of the time at which to strike, the rapidity in recovery from the thrust to the on-guard.

Many gladiators were paid well for their efforts. The website, ablemedia.com quotes: " Gladiators trained like true athletes, much like professional athletes do today. " [<http://ablemedia.com/ctcweb/consortium/gladiator3.html>] However, the training that was endeavoured briefly in the film was no more than concise conflict.

Once established, gladiatorial combat was an important part of the Roman way of life. Jo Ann Shelton explains that, " The word gladiator is derived from the Latin word, gladius, meaning sword. Swords were not, however the only type of equipment used by gladiators" [As The Romans Did; page: 350; 2008] There were four central types of gladiators. According to R. A Adkins, <https://assignbuster.com/colosseum-and-gladiators-essay/>

the main types of gladiators were; Murmillo (mirmillo) had a helmet with a fish crest, oblong shield and sword and usually fought a Retarius, who was lightly armed with a net and trident or dagger. The Samnite had a sword, visored helmet and an oblong shield and the Thracian was armed with a curved scimitar and round shield.

The armour worn throughout the film resembled the descriptions of the above. However, it is known, that gladiators armed in several other ways also took place. The most active and vigorous became net-men; they learnt to use nets to capture their opponents and tridents to wound them. Moreover, they wore very little clothing and, in turn, could move very quickly.

The heavily equipped gladiators with swords were well protected but moved slowly in comparison to the lightly armed gladiators. Jo Ann Shelton expressed, " They depended on brute force rather than speed" [As The Romans Did; pages: 350-351; 2008] The owner of the gladiators would rent them out to make strong revenue at the shows. Matches were organised between two fighters, often one was a net man and the other a heavily armed fighter. It would be ludicrous for an owner to invest considerable amounts of money for the purchase, training, feeding and equipping of the gladiators to rent out eighteen fighters knowing that just nine would live to tell the story.

Proximo, a slave trader from the film said; " Some of you are thinking that you won't fight. Others, that you can't fight. They all say that. " [Proximo;

Gladiator; 2000] A gladiator, Tigris, expresses how he feels before a match; “ We who are about to die salute you.

” [Tigris; Gladiator; 2000] The film clearly showed well over two men fighting at one time, nonetheless, the men formed small groups within the arena. Often, the fights in the film, the same type of gladiators fought each other; this is extremely inaccurate. It was evident that the film focussed on the entertainment of the fights rather than being historically accurate. “ A gladiator was a valuable asset to his owner. Understandably, the owner tried to keep his gladiators alive as long as possible because training a replacement was an expensive endeavour.

The owner was usually reluctant to enter a gladiator in combat unless the chances of him surviving were high (even if he lost the fight). ” [[http://www.hillmanwonders.com/coliseum_of_rome_tidbits/coliseum_of_rome_tidbits.](http://www.hillmanwonders.com/coliseum_of_rome_tidbits/coliseum_of_rome_tidbits.htm)

[htm](http://www.hillmanwonders.com/coliseum_of_rome_tidbits/coliseum_of_rome_tidbits.htm)] Some gladiators grew to be so popular that they became idols for the public. The Colosseum, also known as the Flavian Amphitheatre, had eight entrances and seated around 45 000 people. This, including standing room, maximised its capacity to around 60 000 people. It was arranged that people sat according to their status in society. The first level held seats for the rich, the second and third levels were for the general citizens and; whichever seats were not occupied the poor used. [http://library.thinkquest.org/CR0210200/ancient_rome/colosseum.htm]

The politicians discovered that the people’s love of the games could be used to their advantage. Jo Ann Shelton explicates, “ It was important to the emperor’s public image not only that he finance the games, but also that he appear [<https://assignbuster.com/colosseum-and-gladiators-essay/>

regularly at the games; listen to the opinions and demands of these expressions. [As The Roman's did; pages: 333-334; 2008] Furthermore, the emperor presented an image of benevolence, accessibility, acceptance and the people had the satisfaction of knowing that they had been heard. "... The emperors therefore increased the number of annual holidays with ludi (the games), perhaps hoping that these diversions would keep peoples minds off problems like unemployment or food shortages.

" [As The Roman's did; pages: 333-334; 2008] Throughout the film, the emperor, Commodus, appeared at all the shows that were held at the Colosseum. Like in the film, Commodus did have an unusual fascination with the Roman Coliseum and the gladiatorial games. He actually fought many times in the arena as a gladiator, either killing helpless animals or gladiators. " [Scott Cummings; patriotresource. com; last updated: 13/06/08] The games were as popular as they were gruesome, and caused great excitement and destruction.

Civilized people created and promoted these events, and participated in them, because they provided immense political and economic strength and unavoidable commotion. While stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand; When falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall; And when Rome falls the World. " [Lord Byron; Childe Harold's Pilgrimage Canto IV, st. 145; 1818] It is understood that, in terms of historical accuracy the film did not achieve the intended accuracy, yet, some scenes and characters reflected the events in history. It is for this reason that Ancient Rome was not accurately portrayed in the film " Gladiator". References: [http://www.](http://www.https://assignbuster.com/colosseum-and-gladiators-essay/)

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