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Gladiators in Ancient Rome

Overview/Prior Knowledge

Ancient Roman gladiators were professional fighters, who sometimes fought to the death, for the entertainment of royals and the public. While many of the gladiators were slaves or prisoners, some voluntarily participated in the events. Similar to today's athletes, gladiators became celebrities in the public eye and central to ancient Roman entertainment. During this time, Rome was ruled by emperors with a strict definition between societal classes. Several of these classes included soldiers, officers, patricians, senators, freemen, and slaves. In this lesson, the students will examine different perspectives of the gladiator games using several sources.

Objectives

- The students will examine perspectives on the gladiator games using a see-think-wonder thinking protocol.
- The students will demonstrate understanding of a chosen perspective on the gladiator games using a sensory figure.
- The students will determine from a given perspective, if the gladiator games were barbaric, entertaining, or a combination of both.

Time Required

Two 50 minute periods

Recommended Grade Range

6th-8th Grade

Subject/Sub-Subject

- English Language Arts
- Social Studies

Standards

Social Studies

Describe various aspects of Roman culture, including art, language, social class, and recreation.

English Language Arts

- RI 6.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- RI 6.6 Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.
- W 6.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
- W 6.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

Library of Congress - Teaching with Primary Sources Skills:

- Identify details when observing a primary source(s)
- Ask questions related to observations and the topic of a primary source
- Identify points of view with primary sources

Highlighted Strategies:

- See Think Wonder – Making Thinking Visible
- Circle of Viewpoints – Making Thinking Visible

Credits

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Materials

- Primary Sources – See Student Handouts attached
- See Think Wonder Chart - attached
- Life In Rome: Gladiators- video (link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wiEWMTQrxX8>)
- Circle of Viewpoints Chart - attached
- Roman Gladiators “web-quest” activity – (link: http://www.bb-sd.com/documents/Ancient_Rome_WebQuest_3.pdf) - Task 1

Procedures

Introduction

- The teacher will pose a question to the students: “What types of sports/entertainment do you like to watch? Why do you like watching these kinds of events?”
- The teacher will let students share their thoughts. Then the teacher will ask, “What types of crowds do these events draw?”

- The teacher will lead a discussion about expectations and rules in sports games. The students will share some rules and penalties that are common knowledge in different sports. What is acceptable for football players to do? Are they allowed to tackle one another? Are they allowed to use weapons? Are they allowed to kill one another? What do you think are the goals of establishing rules for these games? Do the students realize that the rules have changed to try to protect players more from injury?
- The teacher will explain that social norms often impacted the types of entertainment allowed included the nature of sporting events.
- The teacher will transition this conversation to a brief explanation about gladiators of Ancient Rome comparing them to professional athletes and music artists in today's time (e.g. in their ability to draw the numbers of crowds as athletes and musical artists do).
- The students will view the video referenced and linked above, *Life in Rome: Gladiators*. The video will show students a relief depicting gladiators and describes the games briefly.
- Some guiding/focus questions to keep in mind for today's lesson are:
 - What things were expected and allowed as social norms particularly in entertainment that wouldn't be today?
 - How do beliefs change and stay the same over time?

During

- The teacher will put the students into pairs, and each pair of students will work with a computer to complete the "web quest" activity above. They will only complete Task 1 which focuses on Gladiators. The activity provides the students with background knowledge on gladiators.
- To get the students thinking about different points of view:
 - The teacher will pose the question to students: Based on what you learned in your Webquest, do you think everyone would have the same types of thoughts and feelings about the gladiator games? (If need be, prompt the students by asking - e.g. Do you think the slave gladiators and the Emperor's saw the games the same way?) What different perspectives on the games can you think of?
 - The students will respond and create a list of potential perspectives of gladiators in Ancient Rome.
- The teacher will guide the students in a discussion of the political figures, spectators, and gladiators that would have been at the games.
- The teacher will then explain to the students that they will explore these perspectives. To do this, the students will examine primary sources from various perspectives. They will examine the primary sources using the See-Think-Wonder strategy. (See Primary Sources Guide)
 - The teacher will explain to the students that they are first going to look at the source and pay attention to what they notice. In the "See" element, students are to observe the source and share what they see.
 - Then the students are challenged to think about what is going on in the source. In this stage, it is important that students make interpretations about their observations
- The teacher will model the See-Think-Wonder strategy from the perspective of Cicero using his narrative that comes from primary source.
- The teacher will split the students into groups. The different groups will collaboratively complete the See-Think-Wonder strategy using a narrative from another perspective (Seneca, common spectator, gladiator).
- Then, once the source has been analyzed, the groups will complete the Circle of Viewpoints. The students will respond to the following statements:

- I am thinking of the gladiator games from the point of view of...
- I think (the students will describe the topic from the assigned perspective). Because...(the students will explain their reasoning).
- A question I have from this point of view is...
- The purpose of the Circle of Viewpoints is to create a stronger awareness for students of how other people may be thinking or feeling.
- Each group will present their viewpoints of different perspectives.
- The students will complete a Sensory Figure activity sheet independently that depicts one of the perspectives discussed. Each student may pick any perspective, not limited to the one they completed in their groups.
 - With the Sensory Figure, students explain possible experiences (thinking, seeing, smelling, touching, hearing, tasting, feeling, and standing on) the perspective of their choice went through while watching or participating in the gladiator games.
 - To be successful on the assignment, students must show their understanding of the perspective through their descriptions.
 - The students will use information they have gathered from the primary source narratives, video, and Webquest to complete the Sensory Figure.

After

- Students will complete the exit ticket: From the perspective you reviewed, are spectator sports barbaric, entertaining, or a combination of both?

Assessment

Formative:

- Students' ability to discuss and analyze primary images of Ancient Rome and discuss the ceremonial entertainment in the time period.
- Students' ability to, as a group, explain the perspective of the person they examined by answering – an "I think question" and by asking, "A question I have is..."
- Students' ability to complete a Webquest to further their knowledge of the topic at hand and collaborate with a partner to complete research.

Summative:

- Students will complete a sensory figure from the perspective of Seneca, Cicero, a common spectator, or a gladiator. The sensory figure will include things the person saw, heard and did. It will also include deeper items: what the character fears and what they might dream of.
 - o They will include textual evidence and knowledge they have gained from viewing videos, completing a Webquest, and reading primary source narratives.

Differentiation

- Pairs and group members will be selected by teacher so that each group consists of students of mixed ability.
- The teacher will assist struggling students with written assignments, particularly the final product.

- Students will be given leveled narratives with glossaries to accommodate students with different ability levels.

Supplementary Materials

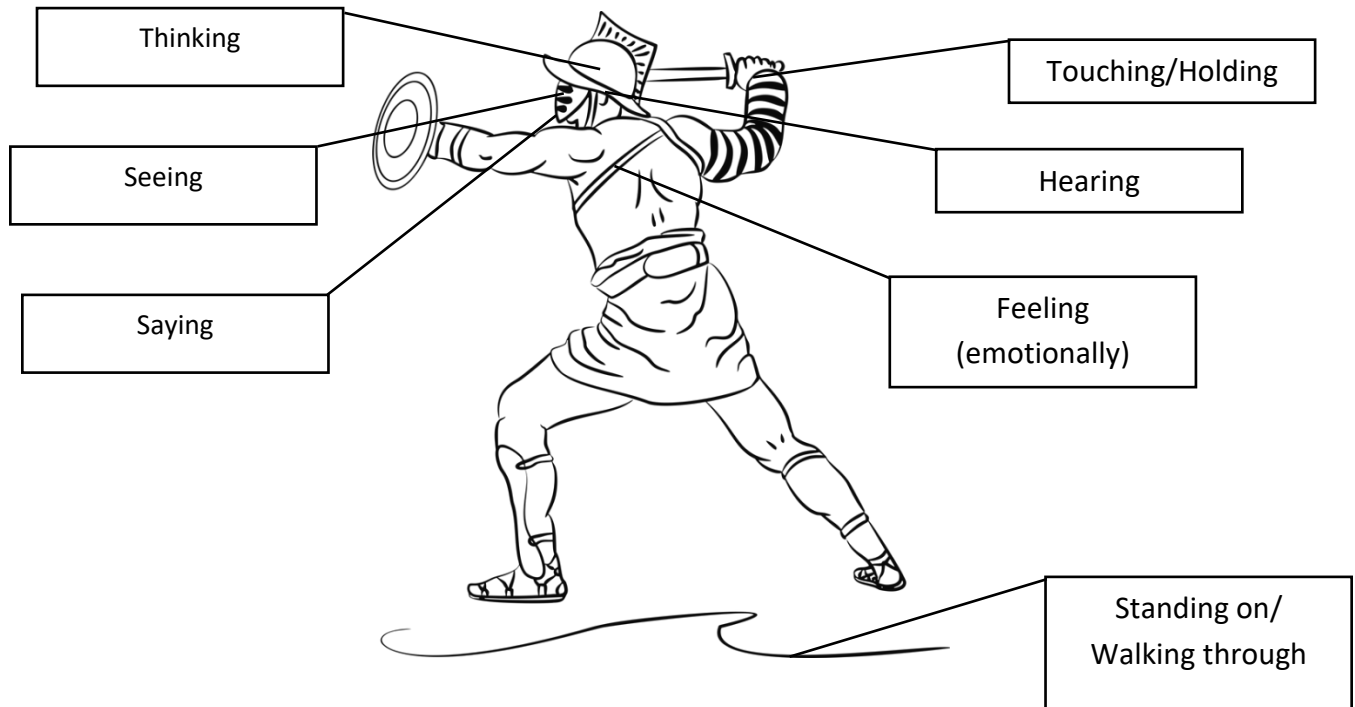
- Webquest – http://www.bb-sd.com/documents/Ancient_Rome_WebQuest_3.pdf (Note - only use Task 1 – focused on Gladiators)
- Life In Rome: Gladiators- video (link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wiEWMTQrxX8>)
- [Comparison of two types of gladiators](https://listverse.com/2017/04/17/top-10-types-of-roman-gladiators/) <https://listverse.com/2017/04/17/top-10-types-of-roman-gladiators/>

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Sensory Figure Assignment

You must *appropriately* complete the sensory figure from one of the perspectives on the gladiator games in Ancient Rome. Your sensory figure must include each of the items indicated below in the task chart. Each statement must show you understand the role of the perspective you have selected. Be as **specific** as possible.

Task	Points Possible	Self-Eval	Points Earned
Thinking (What would the person be thinking about the gladiator games?)	3		
Feeling (What would the person be feeling (emotionally) about the games?)	3		
Touching/Holding	3		
Saying (What would the person be saying about the gladiator games?)	3		
Hearing (What types of sounds or words might the person be hearing?)	3		
Seeing (What would the person be seeing?)	3		
Standing on/Walking Through (Where would the person be? Create the setting.)	3		
Visually appealing/Neat/Color (Up to you to include)	3		
All statements are complete sentences.	7		
Total Points Possible	31		

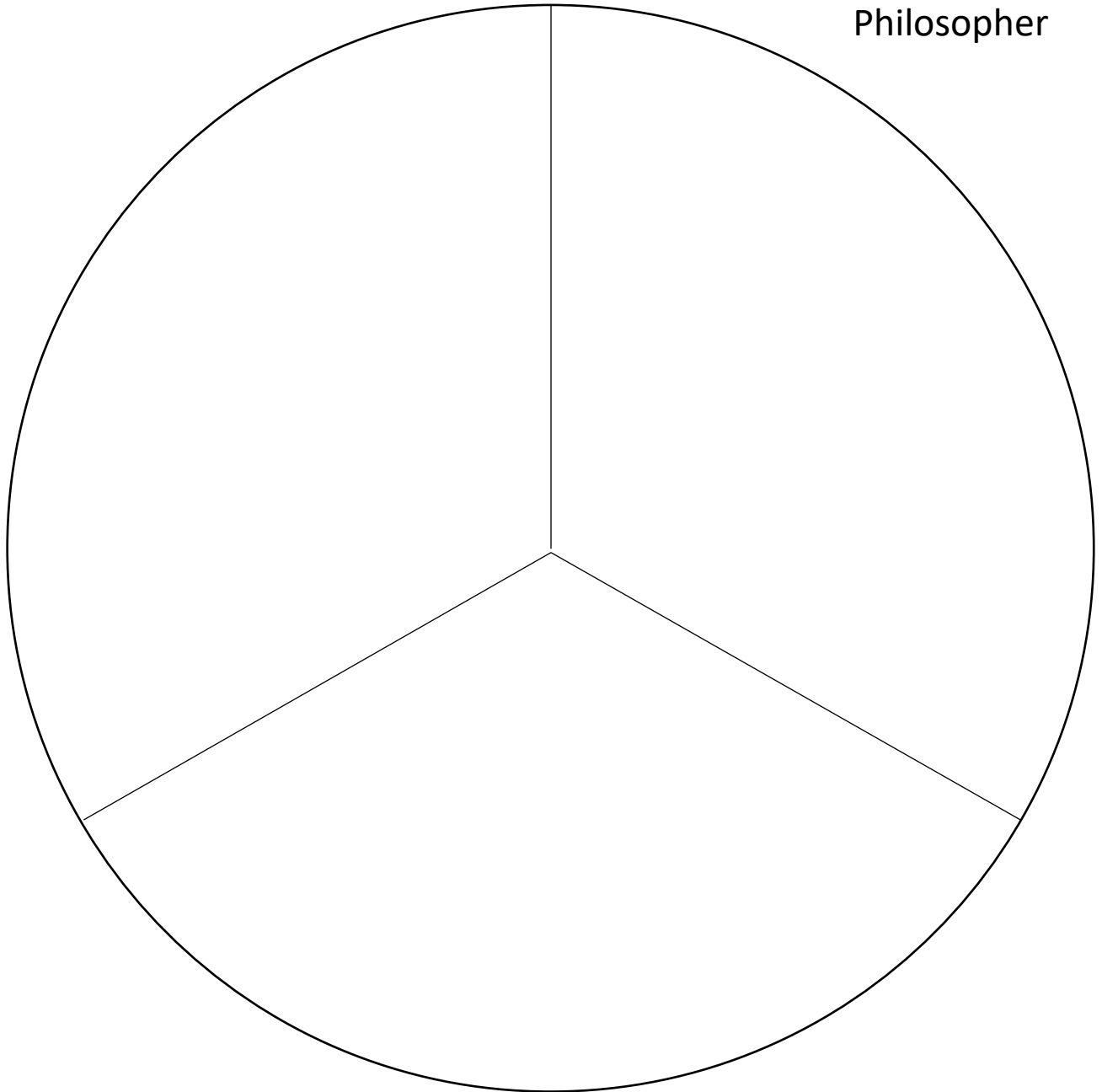


Circle of Viewpoints Note Sheet

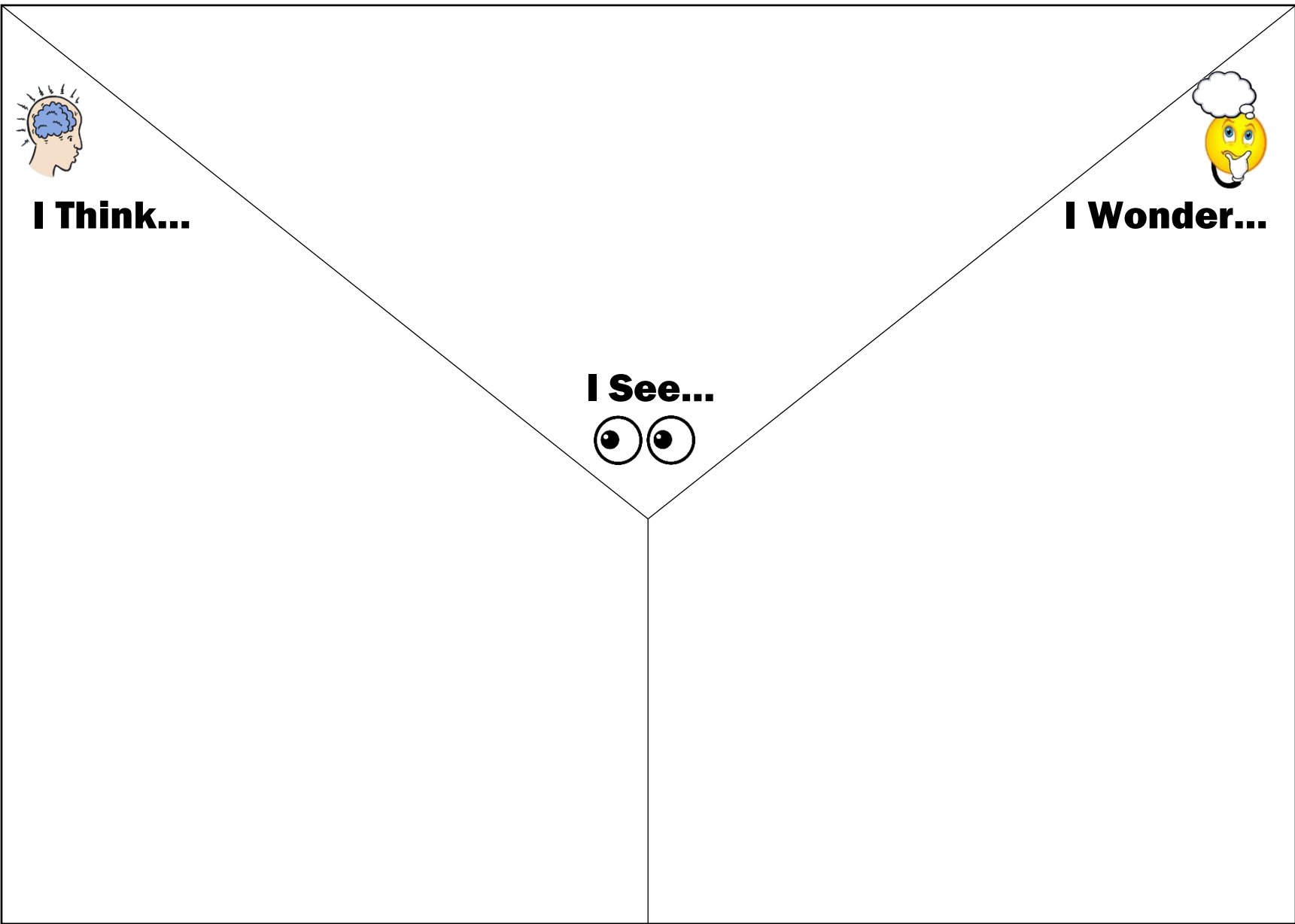
Topic: Gladiator Games

Spectator

“Seneca”
Philosopher



Gladiator



I Think...

I Wonder...

I See...

Teaching with Primary Sources Resource Guide

Perspectives on the Gladiator Games

Background: This source is from Augustus. **Augustus** – 63 BCE – CE 14) - considered to be the first Roman Emperor. He was the adopted son of Julius Caesar. Gladiator games it is believed started as an event held at a funeral to honor someone who just died.

Guiding Questions: Based on this primary source, can you see different reasons the Emperors held gladiator games? What types of things happened at these events? Based on his description, how did Augustus feel about the games that he hosted? What makes you say that?

Three times I gave shows of gladiators under my name and five times under the name of my sons and grandsons; in these shows about 10,000 men fought. Twice I furnished under my name spectacles of athletes gathered from everywhere, and three times under my grandson's name. I celebrated games under my name four times, and furthermore in the place of other *magistrates* twenty-three times. As master of the college I celebrated the *secular games* for the college of the Fifteen, with my colleague Marcus Agrippa, when Gaius Furnius and Gaius Silanus were *consuls* (17 B.C.E.). Consul for the thirteenth time (2 B.C.E.), I celebrated the first games of *Mas*, which after that time thereafter in following years, by a senate *decree* and a law, the *consuls* were to celebrate. Twenty-six times, under my name or that of my sons and grandsons, I gave the people hunts of African beasts in the circus, in the open, or in the *amphitheater*; in them about 3,500 beasts were killed.

I gave the people a *spectacle* of a naval battle, in the place across the Tiber where the grove of the Caesars is now, with the ground *excavated* in length 1,800 feet, in width 1,200, in which thirty beaked ships, *biremes or triremes*, but many smaller, fought among themselves; in these ships about 3,000 men fought in addition to the rowers.

From: <http://abacus.bates.edu/~mimber/blood/gladiator.sources.htm>

Word Bank

Magistrates – elected officials (an officer who usually deals with minor crimes)

Secular games – some of the largest of the gladiator events; only offered about every 100-110 years

Decree – an official order, like a law

Spectacle – a visually striking performance or display

Amphitheater – much like a modern-day football stadium – oval or round, open air, with stands

Consuls - each of the two annually elected chief magistrates who jointly ruled the republic.

Beasts – the animals used in gladiator games such as lions, tigers, bears, etc.

Biremes or triremes – war ship

Perspectives on the Gladiator Games

Plutarch – Plutarch was a historian. He wrote extensively about Greek and Roman history (46 CE-sometime after 119 CE). This source is about gladiator games being planned for the marketplace.

Plutarch Source 1 – Guiding Question: What does this primary source tell you about who would go watch Gladiator games and the popularity of the games? What makes you say that?

A show of gladiators was to be exhibited before the people in the market-place, and most of the *magistrates erected scaffolds* round about, with an intention of *letting* them for advantage. *Caius* commanded them to take down their scaffolds, that the poor people might see the sport without paying anything. But nobody obeying these orders of his, he gathered together a body of laborers, who worked for him, and overthrew all the scaffolds the very night before the contest was to take place. So that by the next morning the market-place was cleared, and the common people had an opportunity of seeing the pastime. In this, the populace thought he had acted the part of a man; but he much *disobliged* the *tribunes* his *colleagues*, who regarded it as a piece of violent and *presumptuous* interference.

From: <http://abacus.bates.edu/~mimber/blood/gladiator.sources.htm>

Word Bank

Magistrates – elected officials (an officer who usually deals with minor crimes)

Erected – put together

Scaffolds – raised wooden platform (would allow people to see the gladiators)

Letting – British English for renting (in this source – basically selling a seat on the scaffold)

Caius – A tribune in 123 and 122 BCE.

Disobliged – offend (someone) by not acting based on that person's wishes

Tribunes – elected officials (chosen by the plebeians – the lower class in ancient Rome to represent them)

Colleagues – co-workers

Presumptuous – failing to observe the limits of what is permitted or appropriate

Perspectives on the Gladiator Games

Background: Plutarch was a historian. He wrote extensively about Greek and Roman history (46 CE-sometime after 119 CE). This source is about Julius Caesar – before he became emperor of Rome.

Plutarch - Source 2 – Guiding Questions: What does this tell you about the purpose of the gladiator games from the perspective of rulers? What was of value? Why was it more valuable than solid goods (such as corn)? What makes you say that?

He [Caesar] was so *profuse* in his expenses that, before he had any public employment, he was in debt thirteen hundred talents, and many thought that by incurring such expense to be popular he changed a solid good for what would prove but a short and uncertain return; but in truth he was purchasing what was of the greatest value at an inconsiderable rate.

When he was made surveyor of the Appian Way, he *disbursed*, besides the public money, a great sum out of his private purse; and when he was *aedile*, he provided such a number of gladiators, that he entertained the people with three hundred and twenty single *combats*, and by his great liberality and magnificence in theatrical shows, in processions, and public feasting, he threw into the shade all the attempts that had been made before him, and gained so much upon the people, that everyone was eager to find out new offices and new honors for him in return for his *munificence*.

From: <http://abacus.bates.edu/~mimber/blood/gladiator.sources.htm>

Word Bank

Profuse – very plentiful (in this source – profuse in expenses means to spend a lot of money)

Disbursed – gave out

Aedile – Either of two (or later four) Roman magistrates responsible for public buildings and originally also for the public games and the supply of corn to the city.

Combats – meaning gladiator games

Liberality – giving or spending freely

Munificence – being very generous

Perspectives on the Gladiator Games

Seneca – 4 BCE – 65 CE. Seneca was a philosopher, statesman in Ancient Rome. This source reveals Seneca’s thoughts about the gladiator games. He considered himself elite and above the common people who enjoyed the games.

Seneca Source 1 – Guiding Question: What does this source say about Seneca’s thoughts about the gladiator games? What makes you say that?

There is nothing so *ruinous* to good character as to idle away one's time at some *spectacle*. *Vices* have a way of creeping in because of the feeling of pleasure that it brings. Why do you think that I say that I personally return from shows greedier, more ambitious and more given to luxury, and I might add, with thoughts of greater cruelty and less humanity, simply because I have been among humans?

The other day, I chanced to drop in at the midday games, expecting sport and *wit* and some relaxation to rest men's eyes from the sight of human blood. Just the opposite was the case. Any fighting before that was as nothing; all *trifles* were now put aside - it was plain *butchery*.

The men had nothing with which to protect themselves.... The common people prefer this to matches on level terms or request performances. Of course they do. The blade is not *parried* by helmet or shield, and what use is skill or defense? All these merely postpone death.

In the morning men are thrown to bears or lions, at midday to those who were previously watching them. The crowd cries for the killers to be paired with those who will kill them, and reserves the *victor* for yet another death. This is the only release the gladiators have. The whole business needs fire and steel to urge men on to fight. There was no escape for them. The slayer was kept fighting until he could be *slain*.

Word Bank

Ruinous – disastrous, destructive, to ruin

Idle – spend time doing nothing

Spectacle – a visually striking performance or display

Vices – immoral/bad behavior

Wit – something intelligent, inventive

Trifles – a thing of little value or importance

Butchery – killing

Parried – ward off an attack; avoid being hurt

Victor – the winner

Slain - killed

Corrupted – caused to act badly for someone else’s benefit

Multitude – a large number

'Kill him! Flog him! Burn him alive!' (the spectators roared) 'Why is he such a coward? Why won't he rush on the *steel*? Why does he fall so meekly? Why won't he die willingly?'"

Unhappy as I am, how have I deserved that I must look on such a scene as this? Do not, my Lucilius, attend the games, I pray you. Either you will be *corrupted* by the *multitude*, or, if you show disgust, be hated by them. So stay away."

References:

Seneca's account appears in: Davis, William, *Sterns, Readings in Ancient History* v. 2 (1913); Wiedman, Thomas, *Emperors and Gladiators* (1995).

From: <http://abacus.bates.edu/~mimber/blood/gladiator.sources.htm>

Perspectives on the Gladiator Games

Seneca Source 2 Background: This source reveals Seneca's thoughts about the gladiator games. It refers to Pompey who was a great general and leader in Ancient Rome and his role in some gladiator games. Seneca considered himself elite and above the common people who enjoyed the games.

Seneca Source 2 – Guiding Question: What does this source say about Seneca's thoughts about the gladiator games? What makes you say that?

Does it serve any useful purpose to know that Pompey was the first to exhibit the *slaughter* of eighteen elephants in the Circus, pitting criminals against them in a *mimic* battle? He, a leader of the state and one who, according to report, was

conspicuous among the leaders of old for the kindness of his heart, thought it a notable kind of *spectacle* to kill human beings after a new fashion. Do they fight to the death? That is not enough! Are they torn to pieces? That is not enough! Let them be crushed by animals of *monstrous* bulk! Better would it be that these things pass into *oblivion* lest hereafter some all-powerful man should learn them and be jealous of an act that was nowise human. O, what blindness does great *prosperity* cast upon our minds! When he was *casting* so many troops of wretched human beings to wild beasts born under a different sky, when he was proclaiming war between creatures so ill matched, when he was shedding so much blood before the eyes of the Roman people, who itself was soon to be forced to shed more. he then believed that he was beyond the power of Nature. But later this same man, *betrayed* by Alexandrine *treachery*, offered himself to the dagger of the *vilest* slave, and then at last discovered what an empty boast his surname was.

From: <http://abacus.bates.edu/~mimber/blood/gladiator.sources.htm>

Word Bank

Slaughter – to kill (usually animals)

Mimic – imitate (in this case to be like a battle, but not a real one)

Conspicuous – standing out, easily seen

Spectacle – a visually striking performance or display

Monstrous – outrageously wrong or evil

Oblivion – not being aware of what is happening

Prosperity – having good fortune (usually with regard to money)

Casting – sending them out

Betrayed – to be disloyal

Treachery – betrayal of trust

Perspectives on the Gladiator Games

Cicero – 106-43 BCE. Roman politician and lawyer.

Guiding Question: Based on this source, what were Cicero's thoughts about gladiators? What makes you say that?

Tusc. 2.41 (on the bravery of gladiators: translation from [D. Noy's "Dying in Public" Seminar](#))

Just look at the gladiators, either *debased* men or foreigners, and consider the blows they *endure*! Consider how they who have been well-disciplined prefer to accept a blow than *ignominiously* avoid it! How often it is made clear that they consider nothing other than the satisfaction of their master or the people! Even when they are covered with wounds they send a messenger to their master to inquire his will. If they have given satisfaction to their masters, they are pleased to fall. What even *mediocre* gladiator ever groans, ever alters the expression on his face? Which one of them acts shamefully, either standing or falling? And which of them, even when he does *succumb*, ever contracts his neck when ordered to receive the blow?

From: <http://abacus.bates.edu/~mimber/blood/gladiator.sources.htm>

Word Bank

Debased – in this case, men who lost their rank in society

Endure – to last, to keep taking the blows

Ignominiously – deserving or causing public disgrace or shame

Mediocre – not very good

Succumb – to give in

Perspectives on the Gladiator Games

You will examine the following items to determine the importance of gladiators in Ancient Roman society.

Guiding Questions: What does the following tell you about the popularity of the games? What do you think it says about the perspectives of the common people about the games? What makes you say that?

Source 1 – Secondary Source

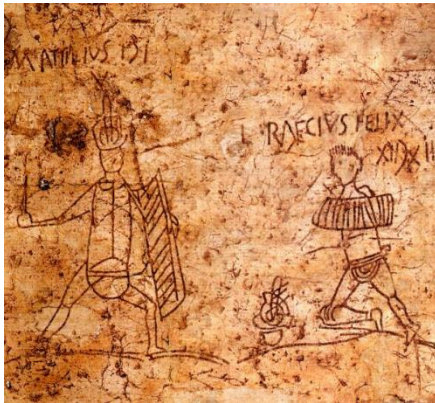
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/gladiators_01.shtml

Regardless of their status, gladiators might command an extensive following, as shown by graffiti in Pompeii, where walls are marked with comments such as *Celadus, suspirium puellarum* ('Celadus makes the girls swoon').

Indeed, apart from the tombstones of the gladiators, the informal cartoons with accompanying headings, scratched on plastered walls and giving a tally of individual gladiators' records, are the most detailed sources that modern historians have for the careers of these ancient fighters.

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.

Source 2 – Primary Source - Sample of Graffiti about gladiators. **Secondary Source** – the Description.



Gladiators could become immensely popular. In Pompeii, graffiti on the walls often show popular gladiators, such as these two *thraeces*, M. Attilius and L. Raecius Felix. The Latin numbers after their names inform us how well they fought in the past. Attilius had fought and won only once (I - I), Raecius had already been in twelve fights, all of which he won. This thirteenth fight against the eager Attilius (V = victor), however, ended in his death

Source 3 –Ancient Roman glass cup.

<http://ancientolympics.arts.kuleuven.be/picEN/slides/P0274.jpg.html>



<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/245397>

CE 50-80

The scene around the cup shows four pairs of gladiators fighting. Each man is identified by name in the Latin inscription above him. Some of the names match those of known gladiators who became famous in games held in Rome during the Julio-Claudian period, suggesting that such cups may have been made as souvenirs (something you take away from somewhere or an event to remember it).

Source 4 --Barracks of the Gladiators, Colosseum, Rome, Italy

<https://www.loc.gov/item/97507315/>

CE 1920-1930

The photo shows the barracks where gladiators lived and trained located adjacent to the Colosseum where they fought. This photo provides students with physical context for the lesson.

Source 5—Roman Colosseum

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3c10299/>

CE 1756

The drawing shows the Colosseum in Rome where gladiators fought. This photo provides students with physical context for the lesson.