



# Gladiator: Fighting for Life, Glory and Freedom

*Ben Hubbard*

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“When everyone had had plenty to eat and drink they called for the gladiators. The moment anyone’s throat was cut, they clapped their hands in pleasure. And it sometimes even turned out that someone had specified in their will that the most beautiful women he had purchased were to fight each other....” – Athenaeus, The Learned Banqueters

With their origins as blood rites staged at the funerals of rich aristocrats, gladiatorial combat is one of the defining images of ancient Rome. For more than 600 years, people flocked to arenas to watch these highly-trained warriors participate in a blood-soaked spectacle that was part sport, part theater, and part cold-blooded murder. On a single day at Rome’s famous Colosseum, 3,000 men fought; on another, 9,000 animals were slaughtered. Gladiatorial contests were a spectacular dramatization of the Roman emperor’s formidable power. *Gladiator* looks at life and service in the Roman arenas from the origins of the games in the third century bce through to the demise of the games in the fifth century ce. It explores the lives of the prisoners of war, criminals, slaves, and volunteers who became gladiators, their training, and the more than 20 types of gladiator they could become, fighting with different types of weapons. From Spartacus’s slave revolt to the real Emperor Commodus who liked to play at being a gladiator, from female gladiators to the great combats involving hundreds of expensively acquired exotic animals, *Gladiator* is a colorful, accessible study of the ancient world’s famous warrior entertainers.

## REVIEWS

It’s all in this fascinating, well-produced guide to the world of the gladiator.  
-History Revealed – Visual Book of the Month

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