The book follows the story of a native Gaul from the province of Gallia in modern-day northern France. He is captured by the Roman army during a battle, and is marched hundreds of miles to the capital of the Roman Empire, Rome itself. Sold into slavery, the Gaul is sent to a *ludus gladiatorius* (or gladiator school) where he is trained to fight. After enduring weeks of hard and gruelling training, and a diet of porridge and ash – which is supposed to help build up body mass and muscles – the new gladiator is taken to the arena to fight to the death for the entertainment of wealthy Romans, including the emperor himself. Life as a Roman gladiator is tough. It is a very violent and often short life. It’s clear that *You Wouldn’t Want to be a Roman Gladiator!*

**About the Roman Empire and gladiators**

The predecessor of the Roman Empire was the Roman Republic, which dated from 509 BC – 27 BC. The end of this period is often regarded as the assassination of Julius Caesar (which actually took place in 44 BC). Caesar’s death marked the start of the transition from the Roman Republic to the Roman Empire. The first ruler of the Roman Empire was Octavian, the adopted son of Julius Caesar. After a period of civil war between 31–27 BC, Octavian became the first emperor. He adopted the name *Augustus* which means ‘sacred’ and has connotations of majesty and grandness in the Roman language of Latin.

The Roman Empire dates from 27 BC to AD 476. It was a hugely successful military machine, which at its height under the Emperor Trajan (AD 98–117) covered an estimated 5 million km² including all of Mediterranean Europe, parts of northern Africa and the Middle East, and large parts of Britain. Roman soldiers were stationed around the Empire to ensure it was well-managed and protected, and that regular taxes were sent to Rome. Roman soldiers sometimes captured slaves from ‘barbarian’ tribes that tried to hold out against Roman rule; it was these men that often became gladiators. ‘Gladiator’ means swordsman in Latin, and comes from the Latin word for sword, *gladius*.

Gladiatorial games were originally *munera* (singular: *a munus*), which means ‘duty’ or ‘obligation’ in Latin. The first gladiatorial contests were fought to honour the dead at funeral games. According to Roman historian Titus Livius (64 or 59 BC – AD 17) the earliest Roman gladiator games took place in 264 BC. They were put on by a man called Brutus Scaeva to honour his dead father, Brutus Pera. Later, gladiatorial contests formed part of the *ludi*; these were games put on by the state and overseen by the emperor, rather than being organised, paid for and hosted by private individuals.
About gladiators (continued)

The most famous gladiatorial arena is the Colosseum in Rome, which can still be seen today. Construction of the Colosseum began in AD 72, and it hosted its first games in AD 80. The Colosseum seated 50,000 people and was the largest amphitheatre in the Empire. Like other arenas, the Colosseum was oval shaped, with high tiers of seating rising above the gladiatorial stage, which was at ground level.

As well as fights between gladiators, gladiatorial games also included fights between men and wild beasts imported from Africa and other Roman provinces (such as tigers, lions and elephants). Sometimes the Colosseum would be flooded to provide a stage for a battle at sea, featuring war ships and gladiators dressed up as Greeks and Persians (an historical entertainment for Roman people!).

Most gladiators were slaves or condemned criminals. They were considered apart from the Roman population and were marginalised, even in death. An unusual Roman cemetery that may confirm this marginalisation was uncovered in 2004 by archaeologists in York (which was called Eboracum by the Romans). The archaeologists from the York Archaeological Trust found the bodies of around 80 well-built young men, the majority of whom had violent wounds that were probably caused by close combat. Lots of the skeletons had head and neck injuries (some of which had healed, suggesting that they may have survived one or more bouts in the arena before being fatally wounded). Some had cuts to the hands probably caused during hand-to-hand combat. Another had a bite wound that was made by a carnivore, identified as probably a tiger, providing possible evidence of wild beast fights! A further body was still wearing a pair of heavy leg irons – a condemned criminal perhaps? The majority of the bodies had had their heads removed, either at or shortly after death, possibly in a ritual fashion. One likely explanation for the bodies in this Roman cemetery is that they were gladiators; unfortunately for this analysis, to date no Roman gladiatorial arena has been uncovered in York, although most archaeologists believe there must have been one, somewhere! The arena or amphitheatre of the legionary city of Chester (which was known as Deva Victrix, or just Deva, to the Romans) has been discovered and is now cared for by English Heritage and Chester City Council. It is the largest amphitheatre yet uncovered in Britain.

Activity 1: Gladiator who’s who?

Gladiators did not all fight with the same weapons and equipment. Some gladiators fought with swords, others had spears, lassos, nets and daggers. One type of specialised gladiator, called an essedarius, fought from a horse-drawn chariot.

Your pupils can familiarise themselves with the different types of gladiators using the ‘Gladiator who’s who?’ activity sheet. Can they match the gladiator pictures with the correct name and description?

You Wouldn’t Want to Be a Roman Gladiator!
Talking point: which gladiator has the best combination of weapons? Ask each pupil to choose their favourite gladiator, and create a bar graph or pie chart showing the results of your class survey.

Extension activity: challenge your pupils to pick two of the gladiators from the line-up. Who would win a fight between the two gladiators, and why? Can your pupils write an account of the fight?

Activity 2: Gladiator training

New gladiators were thrown into a harsh regime of training and body-building at the ludus gladiatorius (or gladiator school). Use the activity sheet to create an itinerary for a new recruit. What exercises will they have to do? Will they practise fighting with fake swords? What will they eat? Will they need to visit the gladiator school’s doctor, and if so, why?

Why not try... training your own gladiators? Fighting with swords (whether real or wooden) is not easy to risk assess and should not be attempted at school. You may want to try a spot of forced marching (use the Latin words sinister and dexter for left and right) or running instead. Quick footwork is very important for a gladiator. You could try getting a pupil to run on the spot (as the trainee gladiator) whilst surrounded just out of arm’s length by four classmates. When you shout one of the classmates’ names, the trainee gladiator needs to step forwards (or turn and step) and reach out with his/her sword arm to touch their classmate’s hand. They should then return to running on the spot. Call out the classmates’ names with increasing speed!

Why not try... creating a ‘man of straw’ (see Activity 8: Arty challenges) and allow your pupils to attack it with a sword made of cardboard?

Activity 3: The Games

The gladiatorial games are a fantastic spectacle (if you’re not one of the gladiators!). Challenge your pupils to create either a poster to promote the games, or a programme outlining the entertainment that a spectator can expect to see. Will the games be attended by a Roman emperor? What fights will take place? Is there going to be a sea battle? Will there be a wild beast hunt?

Talking point: what do your pupils think about the concept of gladiatorial games? Is it right that people fighting to the death was seen as entertainment, even in Roman times? Whilst the games waned in popularity during the early 5th century AD (after the Romans adopted Christianity), wild beast hunts did continue. Fox hunting in the UK only became illegal in 2005. Should hunting animals for sport – or as a means to manage wild animal populations – be allowed?
Activity 4: Final thoughts

Challenge your pupils to imagine that they are the Roman gladiator in You Wouldn’t Want to be a Roman Gladiator! They have been given the opportunity to write a letter to their family back at home in Gallia on the night before they are due to fight in the arena. What are their final thoughts? What do they most miss about Gallia and their life as a Gaul? Do they think that they are ready for the gladiatorial games? Do they expect to win?

Why not try... writing the letter in Roman ink? This method for making Roman ink is reproduced with the permission of the Young Archaeologists’ Club (www.yac-uk.org). You will need 5 teaspoons of fine soot (try asking a local chimney sweep!), 4 teaspoons of vinegar and 2 teaspoons of gum (gum arabic can be bought in art shops or sourced online). Mix the soot, vinegar and gum together to make the ink, and then write with it using a feather quill (or a drinking straw with one end cut to make a point).

Activity 5: Prepare to fight!

Before the fight in the arena begins, the gladiators have a warm-up duel using wooden swords. Then there is time for spectators to bet on their favourite gladiators. Next, the draw is made, and the gladiators are paired up for their fights. It is at this stage that the gladiator is provided with his real weapon, and accompanied by music, he takes to the arena. The crowd is noisy, shouting and cheering on their favourites. The contest begins: a fight to the death. Challenge your pupils to pick two (or more) of the images from the book that illustrated this sequence of events on the activity sheet, and describe how they would be feeling if they were the gladiator. Are they excited, scared, hopeful, dejected, frightened, angry?

Talking point: can your pupils create a list of adjectives that describe how the gladiators might be feeling?

Activity 6: The Colosseum

The most famous gladiatorial arena is the Colosseum in Rome, which can still be seen today. It seated 50,000 people, and was oval shaped.

Challenge your pupils to research the Colosseum using the internet or other resources. Can they create a leaflet, brochure or PowerPoint presentation to encourage today’s tourists to visit the Colosseum?

Extension activity: using the information that they have discovered about the Colosseum, can your pupils design their own gladiatorial arena?

Talking point: can your pupils think of any other modern-day sporting arenas? What are the similarities between a modern sport facility such as a football stadium and the Colosseum? What is different?
Activity 7: Roman numeral maths

Romans didn’t use the same numbers that we use today. Roman numerals used seven letters from the Latin alphabet I, V, X, L, C, D and M:

\[
\begin{align*}
I &= 1 & V &= 5 & X &= 10 & L &= 50 \\
C &= 100 & D &= 500 & M &= 1000
\end{align*}
\]

When used in combination, these seven symbols can be used to express every number. For example, III is three (the equivalent of three ones) and XII is twelve (one ten and two ones). Larger numbers can include many of these elements. For example, CCCXXXVII is 327 (or three hundreds, two tens, one five and two ones) and MMDCXVI is 2616 (or two thousands, one 500 and one 100 (i.e. 600) one ten, one five and a one). The symbols are written from left to right in value order, starting with the largest.

To avoid four identical characters being repeated in a row (such as IIII for 4 or XXXX for 40), a system was developed where I before V or X equals one less (so IV = 4 and IX = 9). This was mirrored with the other symbols too: X before L or C is ten less (so XL = 40 and XC = 90); and C before D or M is a hundred less (so CD = 400 and CM = 900).

There are some maths challenges using Roman numerals on the activity sheets.

Extension activity: Challenge your more able pupils to create their own maths challenges using Roman numerals in place of numbers. Can they design some number sentences using Roman numerals for their classmates? The answers could be given in Roman numerals or numbers.

Activity 8: Arty challenges

The Roman word for a shield was a *scutum* (plural: *scuta*). Roman gladiators were equipped with rectangular or circular shields. Challenge your pupils to design their own shields. Many were plain whilst others were decorated with interlocking geometric patterns. Once your pupils have designed their shields on the activity sheet, they could try making them out of cardboard – like these examples from the Young Archaeologists’ Club (www.yac-uk.org).

The shields are made of strong cardboard from a packing box, covered in papier-mâché and then painted red and gold, before the detailed decoration was added with a black permanent marker pen. The central boss is an upturned yoghurt pot mounted on a square of cardboard and then painted silver (although you could wrap a yoghurt pot in tin foil for a similar effect).
To make a ‘man of straw’ that a gladiator would have used in training, loosely fill an old pillow case with scrunched up balls of newspaper (or use straw, such as small animal bedding from a pet shop). Use a short length of rope or thick twine to tie the pillow case shut. To create the ‘head’, loop a longer piece of rope around the pillow case about a third of the way down from the top knot and tighten it to create a separate head and body. You can then use the end of this length of rope to hang up your man of straw ready for a spot of gladiatorial training.

Pupils’ pack contents

- ‘Gladiator who’s who?’ activity sheet
- ‘A new recruit’s day’ activity sheet
- ‘Prepare to fight’ activity sheets (3)
- ‘Roman numeral maths’ activity sheets (4)
- Design a gladiator shield
- Roman wordsearch
- Blank sheet with the border top and bottom for your pupils’ own artwork and writing

Roman numeral maths (1) Answers

Write these Roman numerals in numbers: Write these numbers in Roman numerals:

a) II = 2 i) 8 = VIII
b) V = 5 j) 13 = XIII
c) VII = 7 k) 22 = XXII
d) XI = 11 l) 51 = LI
e) LV = 55 m) 106 = CVI
f) XVI = 16 n) 170 = CLXX
g) CL = 150 o) 2000 = MM
h) CXV = 115 p) 366 = CCCLXVI

You Wouldn’t Want to Be a Roman Gladiator!
Roman numeral maths (2)    

Write these Roman numerals in numbers:                  Write these numbers in Roman numerals:

a)  IV = 4                                              i)  34 = XXXIV
b)  IX = 9                                              j)  59 = LIX
c)  XXIX = 29                                           k)  190 = CXC
d)  XLV = 45                                            l)  94 = XCIV

e)  XCIV = 94                                           m)  411 = CDXI
f)  CDXV = 415                                          n)  475 = CDLXXV

g)  CMXL = 940                                          o)  2900 = MMCM
h)  MCM = 1900                                          p)  1914 = MCMXIV

Roman numeral maths (3)    

Put these Roman numerals in order, starting with the smallest:

a)    I  IV  VII  IX  X  XIII  XX
      1  4  7  9  10  13  20

b)    XXX  LXXVII  XC  XCVI  CV  CXII  CM
      30  77  90  96  105  112  900

c)    DXCV  DCCC  MCII  MDV  MDX  MCMX  MM
      595  800  1102  1505  1510  1910  2000

Put these Roman numerals in order, starting with the largest:

d)    CV  XCV  LXIV  L  XLI  XXXVIII  X
      105  95  64  50  41  38  10

e)    MMXXV  MM  MDCLX  MCL  DCCVI  DLV  LVII
      2025  2000  1660  1150  706  555  57
Roman numeral maths (4) Answers

Write these Roman numerals in numbers:

a) MMMDCCLX = 3760
b) MMCMLXXV = 2975
c) MMMDXLVII = 3547
d) MDCCCLXXXII = 1882

Write these numbers in Roman numerals:

e) 3965 = MMMCMLXV
f) 2594 = MMDXCIV
g) 1877 = MDCCCLXXVII
h) 2782 = MDCCCLXXXII

Roman wordsearch answer

The hidden gladiator is the Retiarius
Match the gladiator descriptions with the pictures. Write the correct description number into each of the boxes.

1  **Velitus**; his only weapon is a spear
2  **Dimachaerius**; wears very little armour and fights with two swords
3  **Myrmillo**; fights with a dagger and carries a shield
4  **Woman**; although not a common sight, some women were gladiators too
5  **Andabatus**; charges on horseback whilst wearing a helmet with no eye holes!
6  **Thracian**; has a very small shield and a curved dagger
7  **Retiarius**; carries a three-pronged trident and uses a net to try to capture his opponent and has his left arm and shoulder protected by armour
8  **Laquearius**; has a heavily armoured left arm and shoulder, and carries a lasso and trident
9  **Secutor**; chases his opponent whilst wearing a helmet with small eye holes and fighting with a dagger and large shield
10  **Essedarius**; fights from a horse-drawn chariot with a spear
11  **Samnite**; carries a large shield and sword and wears a helmet with a crest
Roman gladiator who’s who? by

1. Velitus; his only weapon is a spear
2. Dimachaerius; wears very little armour and fights with two swords
3. Myrmillo; fights with a dagger and carries a shield
4. Woman; although not a common sight, some women were gladiators too
5. Andabatus; charges on horseback whilst wearing a helmet with no eye holes!
6. Thracian; has a very small shield and a curved dagger
7. Retiarius; carries a three-pronged trident and uses a net to try to capture his opponent and has his left arm and shoulder protected by armour
8. Laquearius; has a heavily armoured left arm and shoulder, and carries a lasso and trident
9. Secutor; chases his opponent whilst wearing a helmet with small eye holes and fighting with a dagger and large shield
10. Essedarius; fights from a horse-drawn chariot with a spear
11. Samnite; carries a large shield and sword and wears a helmet with a crest

Match the gladiator descriptions with the pictures. Write the correct description number into each of the boxes.
**A new recruit’s day**

New gladiators were thrown into a difficult routine of training and body-building at the *ludus gladiatorius* (or gladiator school). Create an itinerary for a new recruit. What exercises will they have to do? Will they practise fighting with fake swords? What will they eat? Will they need to visit the gladiator school’s doctor, and if so, why?

Name: ________________________________________________________________

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Prepare to fight! (1)

Before the fight in the arena begins, the gladiators have a warm-up duel using wooden swords. Then there is time for spectators to bet on their favourite gladiators. Imagine that you are the gladiator, how would you be feeling at both of these points? Make sure you use lots of adjectives in your writing.

Name: _____________________________________________________________________

The warm-up fight
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Place your bets!
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
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Prepare to Fight! (2)

The draw is made to pair up the gladiators for their contests. They see who they are going to fight for the first time. Next, they are then given their real weapons and accompanied by music are marched into the arena. Imagine that you are the gladiator, how would you be feeling at both of these points? Make sure you use lots of adjectives in your writing.

Name: _____________________________________________________________________

You discover your opponent!

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

The music begins... it’s time to go into the arena

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
The crowd is very noisy, cheering and shouting for their favourite gladiators. The sound is deafening. The emperor signals and the contest begins. It is a fight to the death. Imagine that you are the gladiator, how would you be feeling at both of these points? Make sure you use lots of adjectives in your writing.

Name: _____________________________________________________________________

The roar of the crowd

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

The contest begins... it is a fight to the death!

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Name: ________________________________________________________________

Romans didn’t use the same numbers that we use today. Roman numerals used seven letters from the Latin alphabet I, V, X, L, C, D and M:

\[
\begin{align*}
I &= 1 & V &= 5 & X &= 10 & L &= 50 \\
C &= 100 & D &= 500 & M &= 1000
\end{align*}
\]

It is possible to combine these symbols to make every number. The symbols are written from left to right in value order, starting with the largest.

**Examples:**

- III = 3 (or three ones)
- XII = 12 (or one ten and two ones).
- LXV = 65 (or one fifty, one ten and one five)
- CXII = 112 (or one hundred, one ten and two ones)

**Write these Roman numerals in numbers:**

- a) II = _________
- b) V = _________
- c) VII = _________
- d) XI = _________
- e) LV = _________
- f) XVI = _________
- g) CL = _________
- h) CXV = _________

**Write these numbers in Roman numerals:**

- i) 8 = _________
- j) 13 = _________
- k) 22 = _________
- l) 51 = _________
- m) 106 = _________
- n) 170 = _________
- o) 2000 = _________
- p) 366 = _________
Roman numeral maths! (2)

Name: ________________________________________________________________

Remember: Roman numerals used seven letters from the Latin alphabet I, V, X, L, C, D and M:

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\]

The symbols are written from left to right in value order, starting with the largest. To avoid four identical characters being repeated in a row (such as IIII for 4 or XXXX for 40), a system was developed where I before V or X equals one less (so IV = 4 and IX = 9). This was mirrored with the other symbols too: X before L or C is ten less (so XL = 40 and XC = 90); and C before D or M is a hundred less (so CD = 400 and CM = 900).

Examples:

\[
\begin{align*}
XIV &= 14 & CDV &= 405 \\
XIX &= 19 & CMLI &= 951 \\
XLIV &= 44 & CDXLIV &= 444 \\
XCI &= 91 & CMIV &= 904
\end{align*}
\]

Write these Roman numerals in numbers: \hspace{1cm} Write these numbers in Roman numerals:

\[
\begin{align*}
a) \quad IV &= \hspace{1cm} i) \quad 34 &= \hspace{1cm} \\
b) \quad IX &= \hspace{1cm} j) \quad 59 &= \hspace{1cm} \\
c) \quad XXIX &= \hspace{1cm} k) \quad 190 &= \hspace{1cm} \\
d) \quad XLV &= \hspace{1cm} l) \quad 94 &= \hspace{1cm} \\
e) \quad XCIV &= \hspace{1cm} m) \quad 411 &= \hspace{1cm} \\
f) \quad CDXV &= \hspace{1cm} n) \quad 475 &= \hspace{1cm} \\
g) \quad CMXL &= \hspace{1cm} o) \quad 2900 &= \hspace{1cm} \\
h) \quad MCM &= \hspace{1cm} p) \quad 1914 &= \hspace{1cm} 
\end{align*}
\]
Roman numeral maths! (3)

Name: ________________________________________________________________

Remember: Roman numerals used seven letters from the Latin alphabet I, V, X, L, C, D and M:

\[
\begin{align*}
I &= 1 & V &= 5 & X &= 10 & L &= 50 \\
C &= 100 & D &= 500 & M &= 1000 \\
\end{align*}
\]

I before V or X equals one less (so IV = 4 and IX = 9)
X before L or C is ten less (so XL = 40 and XC = 90)
C before D or M is a hundred less (so CD = 400 and CM = 900)

The symbols are written from left to right in value order, starting with the largest.

Put these Roman numerals in order, starting with the smallest:

a) XX  IX  VII  I  IV  X  XIII

b) XXX  XC  CV  LXXVII  CXII  CM  XCVI

c) MM  MDV  MCMX  DCCC  DXCV  MCII  MDX

Put these Roman numerals in order, starting with the largest:

d) L  XXXVIII  XLI  XCV  CV  X  LXIV

e) MCL  DCCVI  MMXXV  DLV  MM  LVII  MDCLX

Top tip: Use a piece of scrap paper to work out what each Roman numeral is in numbers before you put them in order.
Remember: Roman numerals used seven letters from the Latin alphabet I, V, X, L, C, D and M:

I = 1   V = 5   X = 10   L = 50
C = 100  D = 500  M = 1000

I before V or X equals one less (so IV = 4 and IX = 9)
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Larger numbers can include many of these elements. For example, CCCXXVII is 327 (or three hundreds, two tens, one five and two ones) and MMDCXVI is 2616 (or two thousands, one 500 and one 100 (i.e. 600) one ten, one five and a one).

Write these Roman numerals in numbers:

a) MMMDCCLX = _____________
b) MMCMLXXV = _____________
c) MMMDXLVII = _____________
d) MDCCCLXXXII = _____________

Write these numbers in Roman numerals:

e) 3965 = _______________
f) 2594 = _______________
g) 1877 = _______________
h) 2782 = _______________
Design a gladiator shield!

Name: ________________________________
Roman wordsearch!

Name: __________________________________________

Find all of the words in the list below in the grid. They are horizontal, vertical or diagonal, and some are written backwards too. When you have found all the words, rearrange the letters that are not used to find a Roman gladiator...

Andabatus  Colosseum  Man of straw  Shield
Arena  Gallia  Net  Thracian
Ash  Lanista  Rome  Trident
Barbarian  Lasso  Secutor  Vale

The hidden gladiator is: __________________________________________
Welcome to I’m A Gladiator Get Me Out Of Here, where we’re down to our last four contestants. Today’s vote could decide this year’s winner – The Gadiatorus Maximus Prize. Isn’t that so, Antius?

That’s right, Decorus. We’ve got two girl gladiators left in the competition: Flavia and Vita, and two boys: Cassius and Magnus. As always, the losers will be fed to the lions.

In fact, last week’s loser is still waiting to be eaten. He says it’s not in his contract to be eaten alive – so we might have to kill him first. He’s in the lion cage right now going through every word of his contract...

Reading between the lions. Did you see one of the lions grab his girlfriend?

Did it seize her?

Caesar, where? (salutes) Hail Caesar! Oh, I see what you mean. Yes, the lion gobbled her up, you know. The audience went wild.

Not as wild as the lion. He sat licking his lips looking pleased with himself. He seemed really gladiator. Glad-he-ate-her! Get it?

I think that joke’s in bad taste.
Decorus: The lion didn’t think so. Very tasty!

Antius: That’s enough about lions – let’s find out what grisly challenges await our four gladiators this week in the arena of the Colosseum in Rome. And you know what that means?

Decorus: Of course I know what that means. Arena means ‘sand’ because that’s what’s on the floor (it helps to soak up the blood). Colosseum means ‘huge’. It’s a massive amphitheatre where crowds come to cheer as the gladiators fight and get ripped apart.

Antius: It means we’re in for some great fun - so long as you’re not a gladiator. *(Turns to the 4 nervous contestants)* What made you guys want to be gladiators in the first place?

All: We had no choice.

Decorus: So how did you get into this business, Flavia?

Flavia: Not many girls are gladiators but I was a slave and was made to fight other slaves to entertain my owners. I wasn’t much good so they sent me to Ludus Gladiatorus, the training school for gladiators. It was grim.

Cassius: I went there, too. School dinners were gross – always yuk porridge and yuk boiled beans – as well as plenty of yuk ash.

Antius: You mean stew - goul-ash?

Cassius: Just ash – dry, dusty and dire. We had to eat it as they said it built up our bodies.

Flavia: It just made me cough a lot. They used to whip us, too. It was tough. Even playtime was in Latin.
Don’t tell Ofstedius or they may bring it back! But all that wasn’t as tough as what we’ve got in store for you now. We’d better get started. What time is it?

XX past VII. Time to see what’s in the arena for tonight’s show. It’s so exciting as we just don’t know who will win. There’s nothing in it.

Yes there is – I told you there’s lots of sand in the arena.

No, there’s nothing between the contestants. Any one of them could win. It’s a tight contest.

That’s true – this toga is way too small. So what you’re saying is, this contest could be a close shave. Which reminds me... what’s the difference between a mad gladiator and his barber?

I don’t know. What is the difference between a mad gladiator and his barber?

One’s a raving showman, the other’s a shaving Roman! Talking of a raving showman, let’s just have a word with Mad Magnus, our contestant with a terrible temper.

Well wouldn’t you be mad – having to perform like this in front of thousands? And I’m really cross that my twin sister has to be here as well.

Because I’m a celebrity. They all come to see me, that’s why. I add glamour and style. I’m the latest star-brand gladiator.

Yeah – just look at your brand – burnt into your skin: FRE. That’s not glamorous, is it?

What’s wrong with it? It stands for Family Rome Entertainment.
Magnus: No it doesn’t. It should be FHE but you wriggled and blurred the H when the red hot iron was pressed onto your arm. FHE means you once ran away: Fugitivus Hic Est. You were a fugitive with hiccups.

Vita: At least I didn’t accidently sit on the red hot iron and get branded on the behind – like you did. FHE for you was Fiery Hot End!

Magnus: Don’t tell everyone about my burnt backside.

Vita: And don’t you get your subligaculum in a twist!

Magnus: You leave my pants out of this...

Antius: All right, all right, you two. We don’t want fighting to start yet.

Decorus: Get yourselves in the middle of the arena for the first challenge to begin. Make sure you salute our honoured guest, the Emperor. Otherwise we might have to release the tigers early...

All gladiators: *(Raising right arms)* Ave, Caesar! Morituri te salutamus!

Antius: For our viewers at home, that means ‘Hail, Caesar! We who are about to die salute you!’

Decorus: Shouldn’t they also shout ‘Stand and de-liver’?

Antius: I see what you mean. For viewers at home, some spectators in the audience like to cut out a dead gladiator’s liver. Eating it is meant to make you strong and brave. Please don’t try this at home.

Decorus: When a gladiator gets killed in the arena, we sometimes get a rush of sick people who try to drink the blood while it’s still warm.

Antius: Yuk. I’m glad I’ve got a flask of tea instead. But listen up,
Flavia: I hope it doesn’t involve snakes. I hate snakes. Anything but snakes. Last week I had to spend all night in a tank of snakes and scorpions after eating a plate of live maggots and raw rats’ livers.

Decorus: To me that sounds like a great night out!

Cassius: I’m no good with chariots. I failed my essedarius exams at school. I’m useless driving horse-drawn chariots.

Vita: I hope they give me a spear. I’m good with spears. I got the nickname at gladiator school Vita Velitus because I’m good with anything sharp.

Magnus: Yeah – like your tongue. That’s the most dangerous weapon round here. I’m pretty good with a net.

Vita: Who’s Annette? Another one of your useless girlfriends?

Magnus: No – I trained as a retiarius. I was good at catching my opponents in a net.

Vita: Yeah, and it’s the only way you could catch a girlfriend, too.

Magnus: Throwing a net over an opponent is a well-known gladiator technique.

Vita: What a naff weapon that is! A net’s no good if they set a charging animal on you. A spear is much more use against a wild boar.

Magnus: You’re the biggest bore round here – stop all your boring stuff about spears...

Vita: You were hopeless with your net here last week. The only thing
you caught was a fish.

Magnus: That’s because they filled this arena with water for a staged sea battle. At least I wasn’t like you who fell out the trireme and spent all night complaining about being wet and cold.

Decorus: Hush hush... calm down, you two. You have to fight against the enemy, not each other. Now, listen to what you all have to do.

Antius: Your challenge will be armless.

Cassius: That’s a relief. I don’t mind doing something harmless.

Flavia: I’m so glad it’s nothing dangerous.

Antius: No, not harmless. Armless. You will be unarmed. No weapons allowed.

Vita: What, no spears? Please let me have a spear.

Magnus: Shut up! Can I have a net? Just a small one?

Decorus: No weapons. No shields. No armour.

Antius: You will all stand in the middle of the arena totally defenceless as wild and hungry beasts are released. The audience will be gambling on which of you will last the longest.

Cassius: Oh no. I failed my bestiarius exams, too. I’m no good with savage beasts.

Vita: I am – I’m used to my mad brother.

Magnus: Shut up – or I’ll tell Mum.
Flavia: Please don’t make me go in a snake pit. I’m not keen on hyenas, either.

Cassius: Nor crocodiles, hippos or rhinos. Hungry wolves can be nasty, too.

Decorus: The first animals you have to fight are wild bears. Big ones. You’ll have a bear charging at you from the front and a bear behind.

Magnus: I’m not having a bare behind! Not with my branded bottom.

Vita: Don’t be such a wimp. I can deal with a couple of bears. Easy. I’m a great bestiarius.

Magnus: That’s true!

Antius: Not many people know this, but Caesar has a giraffe which is said to be part camel, part leopard – a camelopardalis. That’s true.

Vita: I could easily beat a giraffe.

Magnus: I reckon it might be a close fight – neck and neck.

Decorus: Once you’ve dealt with the bears, there will be elephants.

Flavia: Will they charge us?

Antius: No, they’ll kill you for free. They’ve been known to stamp on gladiators. In fact, they are trained to kneel before the emperor.

Cassius: What if they kneel after the emperor? That’s a joke. I always joke when I get scared. I think I’ll kneel as well – and pray.

Decorus: Prey is just what you’ll be – when the bears see you.
Antius: In this game you must stay alive for five minutes. Anyone who manages that can go on to the next game. Good luck – you’ll need it.

Flavia: Game? I don’t want to play.

Others: We have no choice.

Magnus: Don’t look now, but the bears have seen us. They’re coming closer.

Vita: This could get grisly.

Cassius: No, they’re European brown bears. They’re man-eaters.

Flavia: Vita and I should be all right, then.

Magnus: They’re getting too close. Should we try to attack them?

Cassius: What with? We’re defenceless. The crowd is cheering us on to fight them.

Flavia: Aren’t you supposed to play dead then bears leave you alone?

Vita: Then let’s do it. All fall to the ground. Play dead. *(They do)*

Flavia: Hold your breath. No one breathe.

Cassius: Don’t move a muscle.

Vita: Magnus hasn’t got many to move.

Magnus: Your only muscle is your tongue – so give it a rest for once.

Cassius: The bears are sniffing and growling.
I’m A Gladiator...Get Me Out Of Here!

Flavia: Don’t let them smell fear.

Cassius: I think we can all smell it.

Vita: That’s Magnus. He always does that when things get tense.

Magnus: Stop picking on me.

Antius: Oh no – the crowd is booing.

Decorus: The gladiators have lasted a few minutes but........ (long pause)

Antius: Why the enormous pause?

Decorus: That’s what bears have. Enormous paws and scary teeth.

Antius: But they’re not attacking. They’re walking away.

Decorus: Time up! They’ve all passed the first test, so long as the Emperor agrees.

Flavia: What are the crowds shouting now?

Cassius: Habet, hoc habet!

Vita: That means ‘let us have it’.

Magnus: We must all raise our left hands and appeal to the Emperor.

Flavia: Some are shouting ‘Mitte’ to let us go.

Cassius: Will it be ‘thumbs up’ or ‘thumbs down’?

Vita: Will we be awarded a ‘V’ for Victor?
Flavia: Or maybe an ‘M’ to allow us to fight another day – and go on to the next round.

Antius: So which is it to be folks? Will all our contestants survive this round?

Decorus: The Emperor is standing and his thumb goes up!

All: Yes!

Antius: The Emperor is the referee. He’s about to sit down again – yikes, he’s just slipped off his chair.

Decorus: It’s the fall of the Roman Umpire!

Antius: The gladiators may have to fight the bears with tridents and swords next.

Decorus: I can’t BEAR the suspense but now we’ve got to take a break.

Antius: We’ll be back to find out what happens next.

Decorus: How will you cast your votes to decide who is this week’s winner of I’m A Gladiator Get Me Out Of Here? Which one of our four contestants do you think should win The Gadiatorus Maximus Prize?

Antius: We’ll be giving you the result next week.

Decorus: Can’t we find out before then? I want to know now.

Antius: Rome wasn’t built in a day, you know. Things take time round here. You have to do things the way the Romans do. When in Rome...
Decorus: The Emperor has decided to present palm branches to all four contestants because they survived!

Antius: So now it’s down to viewers to choose tonight’s coolest gladiator. Was it Flavia, Cassius, Vita or Magnus? It’s up to YOU!

Decorus: Just to say - if you have been affected by any of the issues raised in this programme... so have we.

Antius: Because we both hate the sight of blood.

Decorus: Luckily we haven’t seen any today...

Antius: Yet

Decorus: Antius...

Antius: Yes, Decorus?

Decorus: Don’t look now but a bear has escaped and it’s just behind us...

Antius: Yikes! On that breaking news, we must leave you with the shocking picture of another bear behind. Which all goes to show YOU WOULDN’T WANT TO BE A ROMAN GLADIATOR... NEVER! (They both run off screaming)