

Assignment Discovery Lesson Plan Gladiators: Rome's Violent Past

Subject

World History

Grade level

8-12

Duration

One or two class periods

Objectives

Students will

- discuss the role of public entertainment in ancient Rome;
- imagine themselves as a participant at a gladiator games at the Roman Colosseum; and
- write an personal account of the games.

Materials

- Computer with Internet access
- Print resources about the Roman Empire and the gladiator games

Procedures

1. Discuss the role of public entertainment in ancient Rome. Explain that life was difficult for most Romans, who made of the lower class. Because they lived in poverty, Rome's emperor provided free food. Held in large arenas or amphitheaters, gladiator games and chariot races provided public entertainment. The Colosseum, still standing today, was one such arena.
2. Explain to students that their assignment is to imagine themselves in ancient Rome. The emperor has declared a public holiday and ordered gladiator games to take place in the Colosseum. Students should use the Internet and print resources to research the gladiator games and the Roman Colosseum. They will write a personal account of the games from the point of view of a spectator, the emperor, a lanista (an owner of the gladiators), or a gladiator himself. The accounts must answer the following questions:
 - Describe the Colosseum.
 - Describe the gladiator. What type of gladiator is he? How do you know? (What is he wearing? What type of weapons is he using?)
 - Describe what happened during the event. Who or what other than the gladiator was present?
 - Describe the spectators. How do they react? How many are in the arena? What role do they play?
 - Where is the emperor? What role does he play in the games?

- Describe the life and training of the gladiator.
3. The following Web sites provide helpful information:

The Gladiator

<http://ablemedia.com/ctcweb/consortium/gladiators.html>

Roman Gladiatorial Games

<http://depthome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/classics/gladiatr/>

Gladiator: History and Times

<http://www.murphsplace.com/gladiator/glads.html>

Roman Colosseum

http://www.greatbuildings.com/buildings/Roman_Colosseum.html

Rome: Colosseum

http://www.kent.k12.wa.us/curriculum/soc_studies/rome/Colosseum.html

The Colosseum of Ancient Rome

<http://www.eliki.com/ancient/civilizations/roman/>

4. Have students share their accounts with the class. How are the perspectives different? What have they learned about the people of ancient Rome from the gladiator games?

Evaluation

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

3 points: Students were highly engaged in class discussions; created clear and detailed accounts of the gladiator games that provided many facts about the lives of gladiators and the Roman Colosseum.

2 points: Students participated in class discussions; wrote adequate account of the gladiator games that included some facts about the lives of gladiators and the Roman Colosseum.

1 point: Students participated minimally in class discussions; wrote incomplete accounts of the gladiator games that included few or no facts about the lives of gladiators and the Roman Colosseum.

Vocabulary

barbarians

Definition: To Romans, any group of people living outside the Roman world, usually on the fringes of the empire.

Context: When barbarians defeated the Roman Empire and occupied the cities, they put an end to the gladiator games.

empire

Definition: A major political unit with a large territory under one ruler

Context: The gladiator games were meant to reflect the major conquests of the Roman Empire.

gladiator

Definition: A man who participated in fights held in public arenas in ancient Rome

Context: Although most gladiators were criminals, prisoners, or slaves, some were free men who volunteered

lanista

Definition: One who owns and trains gladiators

Context: A lanista often bought slaves to participate in the gladiator games.

ludus

Definition: A school for gladiators, where they lived and trained

Context: At a ludus, gladiators learned how to use many types of weapons, such as swords, daggers, nets, and tridents.

munus

Definition: A game held in honor of someone who has died; given as a gift by the person's descendents

Context: A munus could be held every year or every five years.

National Standards

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of the NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Culture
- People, Places, and Environments
- Power, Authority, and Governance

Credit

Joy Brewster, curriculum writer, editor, and consultant