

ASSIGNMENT: Daily Life: Chariot Races at the Circus Maximus

Shortly before dawn, crowds of men, women, and children streamed through the streets of Rome toward the Circus Maximus, the vast outdoor arena where chariot races took place. Admission to the races was free, but to get a good seat, Romans set out early. As the crowds surged toward the Circus, bets were shouted back and forth. Sometimes Romans bet on a well-known charioteer. More often, they chose a color because the charioteers raced under the colors of four teams: the blues, greens, reds, or whites.

To race, charioteers stood on very frail looking, two-wheeled chariots pulled by teams of two or four horses. The reins were lashed around their waists. They held a whip in one hand and a knife in the other to slash the reins if the chariots overturned. Charioteers were usually slaves trained by wealthy owners. Only the most skilful drivers survived the hazardous course.

The greatest danger in chariot racing was the tight turn at either end of the track. Slaves and race officials stood near these spots to drag fallen charioteers and horses out of the way before they were trampled to death. Despite the danger, a few successful charioteers won as many as 3,000 races and earned fortunes for themselves and their owners.

Chariot races and other spectacles amused the idle crowds who might otherwise be bored and troublesome. On one occasion, an emperor had a Roman naval victory re-enacted. He built an artificial lake and two fleets. He then sent slaves to fight and die as enemies of Rome. Thousands of people died in such events. The poet Juvenal groaned that Romans only cared about free “bread and games in the circus.”

Purpose: to gain an appreciation for the strengths and weaknesses of Roman society.

Procedure

1). Create a *Google Doc*. Name it Unit_6_Chariot_Assignment. Share the document with your teacher giving them full editing privileges (rdelainey@lcbi.sk.ca). Create written answers for each of the questions below. Ensure your answers are sufficiently detailed (this means do not try to pass off single word answers and make sure you always write using complete sentences).

- 1). Why was chariot racing such a dangerous sport?
- 2). Why do you think Juvenal was unhappy about the Roman attitude toward “free bread and games”?
- 3). Go online right now and research the ten reasons why the Roman Empire fell. Use the table on the opposite page to write down those reasons.

Note: do not use a website like Prezi or SlideShare as your source of information. Try to find a website that looks like it is more scholarly reliable, e.g. a site created by an actual historian, etc.

Write down the URL of the website in the space provided below:

Top Ten Reasons Why the Roman Empire Fell	
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