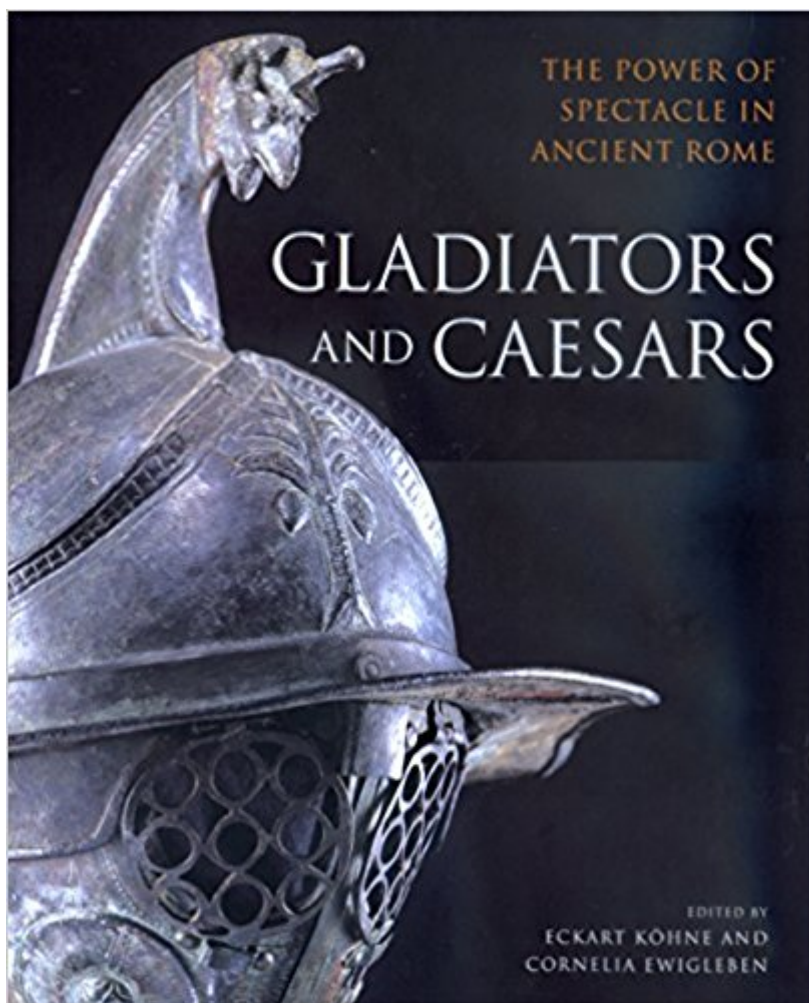


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# Gladiators And Caesars: The Power Of Spectacle In Ancient Rome



## Synopsis

Bread and circuses were what the Romans demanded of their emperors, and for more than 500 years spectacular events in amphitheaters, circuses, and theaters were the most important leisure activities of the masses in all parts of the Roman empire. In Rome itself, public holidays featuring magnificent and costly shows occupied more than half the year. Comedies and tragedies, pantomimes and bawdy folk plays were staged in the theaters, while in the arena of the Colosseum, opened in a.d. 80, gladiators fought in pairs or with wild animals to satisfy the blood lust of the crowd, and hundreds of thousands of race-goers packed the stands of the Circus Maximus to enjoy the thrills of chariot racing. The organization of games came to be part and parcel of electioneering in towns and cities and was increasingly used as a means to consolidate the power of the reigning emperor. Like the sports stars of today, the top gladiators, charioteers, and actors were folk heroes, and the power of their universal appeal was recognized and exploited by politicians and emperors alike. Two thousand years later, the Roman games may seem remote, but, as this superbly illustrated book shows, they satisfied the same need for excitement and hero-worship that gives rise to the intense media coverage of sports in our own time.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Tells you everything about gladiators and other forms of Roman public entertainment that movies seem to leave out." -- Memphis Commercial Appeal

Eckart Köhne is a curator at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg. Cornelia Ewigleben is director of the Historisches Museum der Pfalz, Speyer, Germany.

This was the PERFECT book to help my son on his gladiator project!!! The photos and the text was exactly what he needed!!!

I bought this book for college and it arrived on time with minimal wear and tear. I recommend this for other students.

Although much of our knowledge of classic Roman culture comes from artifacts, statues, friezes, mosaics and sculpture, even these provide us with a tantalizing view of this great age of civilization. In *Gladiators and Caesars*, the authors first lay the groundwork for the adventure, surrounding the reader in the Caesarian succession, the rise of Roman aristocracy and public games, leading to the first gladiatorial games. The authors also go into exquisite detail of each type of gladiator, his or her weapons and manner of fighting, as well as the use of beasts in the arena, naval contests and other variations designed to pique the crowd's interest. Although becoming a gladiator was frequently a death sentence, some succeeded in winning their freedom, continuing on in a life filled with honor. These well trained men and women were some of the first extreme athletes. The gladiatorial games were the foundations for our modern marathons, Olympic Games and wrestling matches. This book, with its incredible photographs, provides brief glimpses into this beautiful and brutal time in human history.

The authors of *Gladiators and Caesars: The Power of Spectacle in Ancient Rome* (University of California Press; edited by Eckart Köhne and Cornelia Ewigleben) can't help drawing parallels to our own games, or our modern depictions of them. You won't find remarks on the authenticity of the recent movie *Gladiator*, but you can learn plenty about *Ben Hur*. The book shows in profuse illustrations the different categories of gladiator, the weapons each was assigned, and the role they played in the games. It goes into the fates of those who were sentenced to the amphitheater; those sentenced to be torn by wild beasts had no chance, but there were others who were sentenced to gladiatorial school and could possibly gain freedom, money, and celebrity. Of course, they had to survive plenty of mortal combat to do so. The book tells repeatedly about how different Caesars used the games to defuse public anger about governmental conditions. The scholars are complimentary about *Ben Hur*: "Although there are a number of inaccuracies, the film as a whole

thrillingly conveys the character and atmosphere, one might even say the quintessence, of such a sporting event, in a way that scholarly attention to detail could never have done on its own." A handsome, profusely illustrated, big (though paperbound) book, *Gladiators and Caesars* has thorough detail about a facet of sports history which we can be glad is now past, but which was important in consolidating power in an empire whose history still affects us. Those who enjoy sports will especially find the analogies to modern competition, hero-worship, and media superstardom amusing and enlightening. Those who have no interest in sports will perhaps remember the brutality of gladiatorial combat, and confronted with endless bowl games or professional wrestling while scanning for something good on TV, will be thankful things aren't worse.

The Romans provided spectacular entertainment in their arenas. Yes, the *noxii*--the condemned--were brutally attacked and killed by wild animals. But it was the gladiators that really drew the crowds. Gladiatorial combat was not invented by the Romans. They only perfected it. They fought on a sandy surface--sand to absorb the blood, and the public "gave loyal support not only to individual heroes of the arena but to certain categories of gladiators. The first and second centuries AD saw passionate altercations between the supporters of gladiators fighting with the large shield and gladiators who fought with the small shield" (p 35). Gladiators were despised as a social class. After all, many of the gladiators were slaves or from the condemned. Nevertheless, athletes who won fight after fight became stars, and even the wives of Roman senators were whispered to have crushes on them.

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I had just got back from Rome and visiting the Coliseum for the first time when I ordered this book among many other books about the Gladiators. I recommend this book. It will teach you a lot about that time period and the politics of it all. Very interesting.

For me, coming from re-enacting Roman gladiators, I did not find this very informative. I guess I was expecting more out of the book but not really sure what to expect. It came very highly recommended. I didn't find it very helpful because I knew the classes of gladiators, what type of armor they wore, who they paired against, the lifestyle they lead, etc.... The only thing that really impressed me were the pictures of gladiator artifacts, and modern Roman gladiators in there

gear!For someone that doesn't know anything or only a little I would recommend this book.

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