

## Ancient Rome and Byzantium Meet Me at the Coliseum



Rome is the capital of Italy, a country in southern Europe. The city is a very popular tourist **destination**.<sup>1</sup> That is mainly because it has so much history. There are many striking things about Rome. For instance, many of its ancient buildings are still standing.

The Coliseum is one ancient building that is still standing. It is one of the most famous ancient buildings in all of Europe. Today, the Coliseum is a **landmark**<sup>2</sup> for tourists to visit. For ancient Romans, the Coliseum was a sports arena.

What happened inside this ancient arena? Gladiators were forced to fight each other to the death. Thousands of **spectators**<sup>3</sup> watched their battles. Sometimes, they even had to fight fierce exotic animals. Imagine having to fight a lion or tiger!

Most gladiators were slaves or prisoners of war. They couldn't choose whether they wanted to fight or not. The crowd, however, could choose whether a gladiator lived or died.

The Roman emperor would let the crowds decide what happened to a **defeated**<sup>4</sup> gladiator. He could be killed or have his life spared. The people would vote with their thumbs. Thumbs up meant the gladiator should live. Thumbs down meant he should die.

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<sup>1</sup> **destination** – a place that is the goal of a journey

<sup>2</sup> **landmark** – a building or place of great importance to an area

<sup>3</sup> **spectators** – people viewing an event

<sup>4</sup> **defeated** – having lost

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What reason does the passage give for Rome being a popular tourist destination?
  - a. It is in Italy.
  - b. It is in Europe.
  - c. Gladiators once fought in the Coliseum.
  - d. It has so much history and many ancient buildings.
  
2. Why might the crowd have given a gladiator thumbs up?
  - a. Because they wanted to see him die.
  - b. Because they wanted to please the emperor.
  - c. Because he had fought bravely and well.
  - d. Because they wanted him to be set free.
  
3. Where would this passage be most likely to appear?
  - a. a book of folk tales
  - b. a book about Rome.
  - c. a book about modern arenas.
  - d. a book about gladiators.
  
4. Read the following sentences: “The Roman emperor would let the crowds decide what happened to a defeated gladiator. He could be killed or have his life spared.”

The word spared means

  - a. saved.
  - b. killed.
  - c. recorded.
  - d. emptied.
  
5. The passage “Meet Me at the Coliseum” is mostly about
  - a. directions to an ancient and famous building.
  - b. a famous building and what happened there.
  - c. the best way to fight against a tiger.
  - d. which capital cities had the best Coliseums.

6. Who were the gladiators?

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7. How are ancient buildings a part of history?

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8. The question below includes an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

Today the Coliseum is a tourist attraction. \_\_\_\_\_, for the ancient Romans, it was a sports arena.

- a. At last
- b. Never
- c. However
- d. Because

9. Read the following sentence.

**The Coliseum was an arena where gladiators fought animals to provide entertainment for the people.**

Answer the questions below based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

1. What is the subject of the sentence? The Coliseum

2. The Coliseum was what? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Where what happened? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Why? \_\_\_\_\_

10. **Vocabulary Word:** defeat: win against someone or something in a competition.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Teacher Guide and Answers**

**Passage Reading Level:** Lexile 610

**Featured Text Structure:** Descriptive – the writer explains, defines or illustrates a concept or topic

**Passage Summary:** The Coliseum is an ancient building in Rome, the capital of Italy. Gladiators used to fight animals and each other in the Coliseum, and the crowd would help decide if they lived or died.

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  - d. It has so much history and many ancient buildings.**
  
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- a. directions to an ancient and famous building.
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  - c. the best way to fight against a tiger.
  - d. which capital cities had the best Coliseums.

6. Who were the gladiators?

**Suggested answer:** Most gladiators were slaves or prisoners of war.

7. How are ancient buildings a part of history?

**Suggested answer:** Answers will vary but should include the idea that ancient buildings are artifacts from a long time ago and they can tell us a lot about the past.

8. The question below includes an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

Today the Coliseum is a tourist attraction. \_\_\_\_\_, for the ancient Romans, it was a sports arena.

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  - b. Never
  - c. However**
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9. Read the following sentence.

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Answer the questions below based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

- 1. What is the subject of the sentence? The Coliseum
- 2. The Coliseum was what? **an arena**

3. Where what happened? **gladiators fought animals**
  4. Why? **to provide entertainment for the people**
10. **Vocabulary Word:** defeat: win against someone or something in a competition.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.