

ENTERTAINMENTS

Most entertainments in the Roman empire were free. Events were paid for by rich and ambitious men. By putting on a lavish show they hoped to gain popularity and improve their chances of winning elections for positions in politics.

Though it was free to enter, people were not allowed to sit anywhere they liked in the arena or theatre. Front seats were reserved for the rich. Poorer people sat behind and slaves had to sit right at the back.

Musical theatre and concerts were popular but the best attended events were violent ones like chariot races and gladiator shows. The main event at gladiator shows was a fight between men armed with different kinds of weapons.

SPINA

The laps were counted from the spina, a building which ran down the centre of the racecourse.

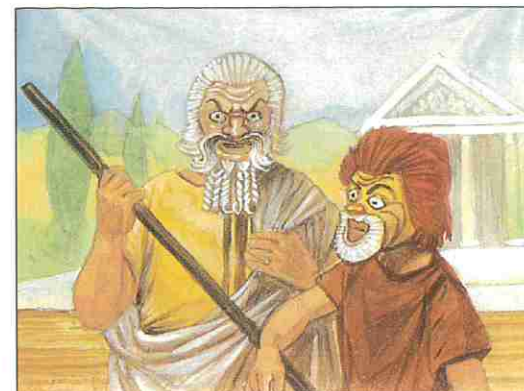
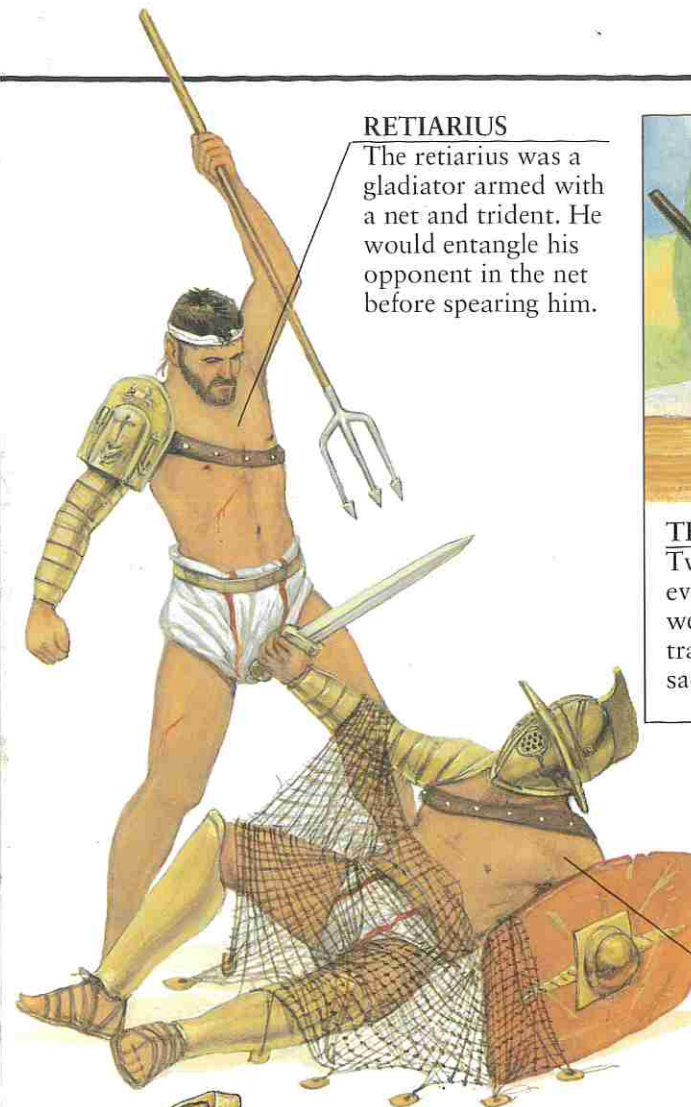


CHARIOT RACING

Chariots were usually drawn by four horses. Races lasted for seven laps, with four chariots in each race. Each team of charioteers had its own supporters. They often fought each other and it was not unusual for dozens of people to be killed. Chariot races were the most popular form of entertainment.

RETIARIUS

The retiarius was a gladiator armed with a net and trident. He would entangle his opponent in the net before spearing him.



THEATRE

Two plays were shown at a theatrical event. The first was a tragedy. There were dramatic effects and music. The tragedy was supposed to make everyone sad, so the second play was a comedy.

MURMILLO

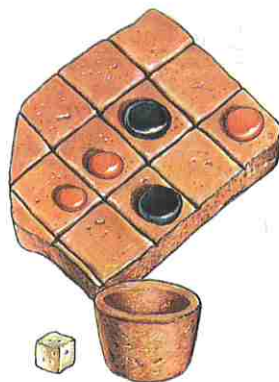
The murmillo was a heavily armoured gladiator. He could be a dangerous opponent. His only weakness was that his helmet obstructed his vision.



LOOK OUT FOR THESE

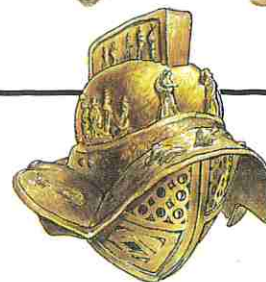
BOARD GAME

The Romans liked to play board games with counters and dice. Unfortunately, no rule books have survived so we do not know how the games were played.



ACTOR'S MASK

All actors wore masks which had exaggerated expressions. This was to help the audience, because many people had to sit a long way from the stage. This is the mask of a tragic character.



HELMET

This richly decorated bronze helmet probably belonged to a champion gladiator. The grille at the front protected the face.

GLASS TROPHY

This glass trophy was made to celebrate a victory by a charioteer called Crescens.



MOSAIC

This mosaic shows two men bringing in a deer after a successful hunt. Much of the countryside was still wild and there was a lot of wildlife. Hunting deer and wild boar was a popular pastime for country people.

