

What did Romans do for fun?

Romans had lots of different pastimes to keep them busy. There were simple games to play at home, plays to go to see and huge public events for thousands of people

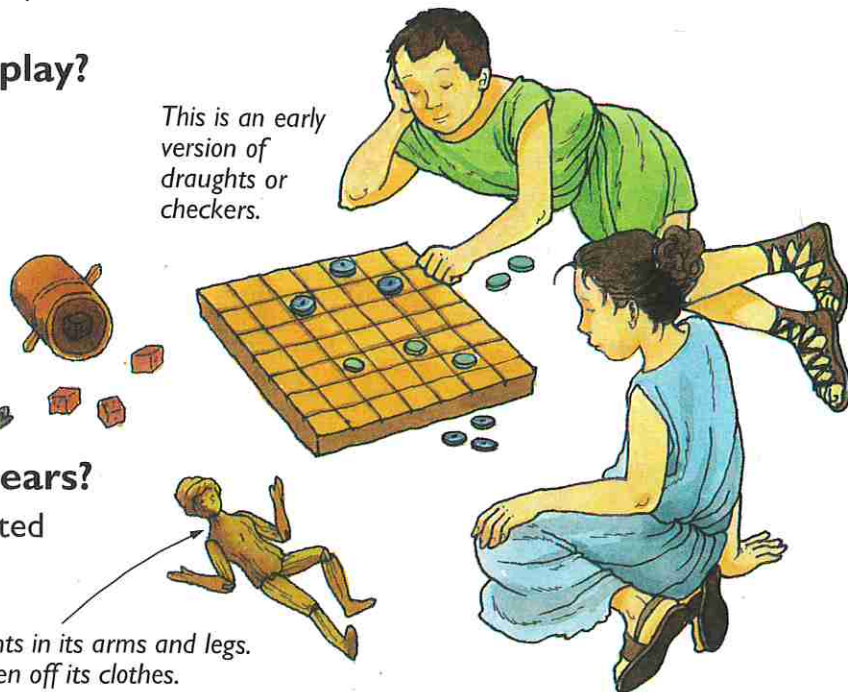
to watch. Because television and radio hadn't been invented, people actually went to the events themselves.

What games did children play?

Roman children had seesaws, swings, kites, hoops and toy houses to play with. *Tali* (knucklebones) was a game that was popular with grown-ups too. It was like rolling dice.

These knucklebones were used like dice.

This is an early version of draughts or checkers.



Did children have teddy bears?

No. Teddy bears were not invented until the 20th century, but there were wooden dolls.

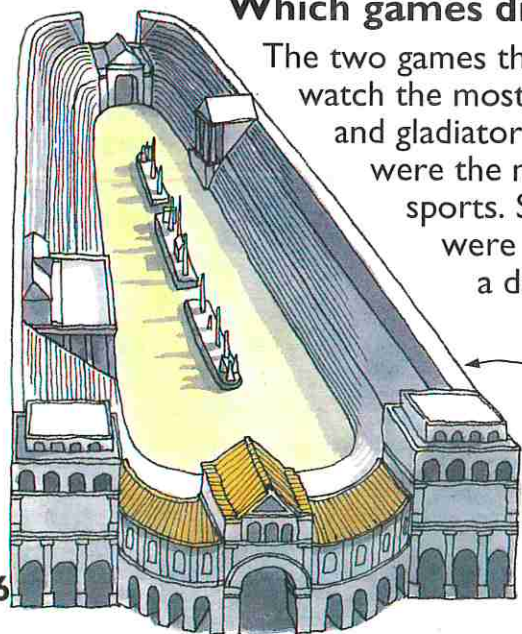
This doll has joints in its arms and legs. The girl has taken off its clothes.



Which games did they like best?

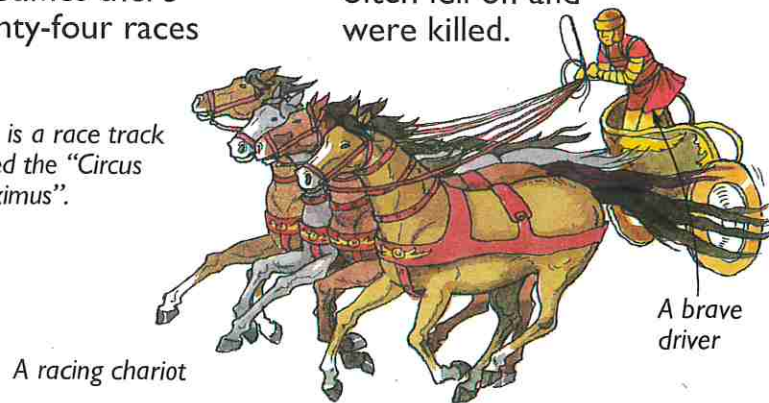
The two games that Romans liked to watch the most were chariot racing and gladiator fights. Chariot races were the most popular of all sports. Sometimes there were twenty-four races a day.

This is a race track called the "Circus Maximus".



What were chariots?

A racing chariot was a small two-wheeled cart, pulled by fast horses. Racing was dangerous, and riders often fell off and were killed.



Who and what were gladiators?

Gladiators were slaves or prisoners made to fight each other, or wild animals, in front of crowds. These fights were part of events called 'the games'. They took place in huge open-air buildings called amphitheatres. Successful gladiators were sometimes freed.

A "Samnite"
Special helmet

Arm covering
Short sword

A "Retarius"

Large shield

Net

Trident

A "Thracian"

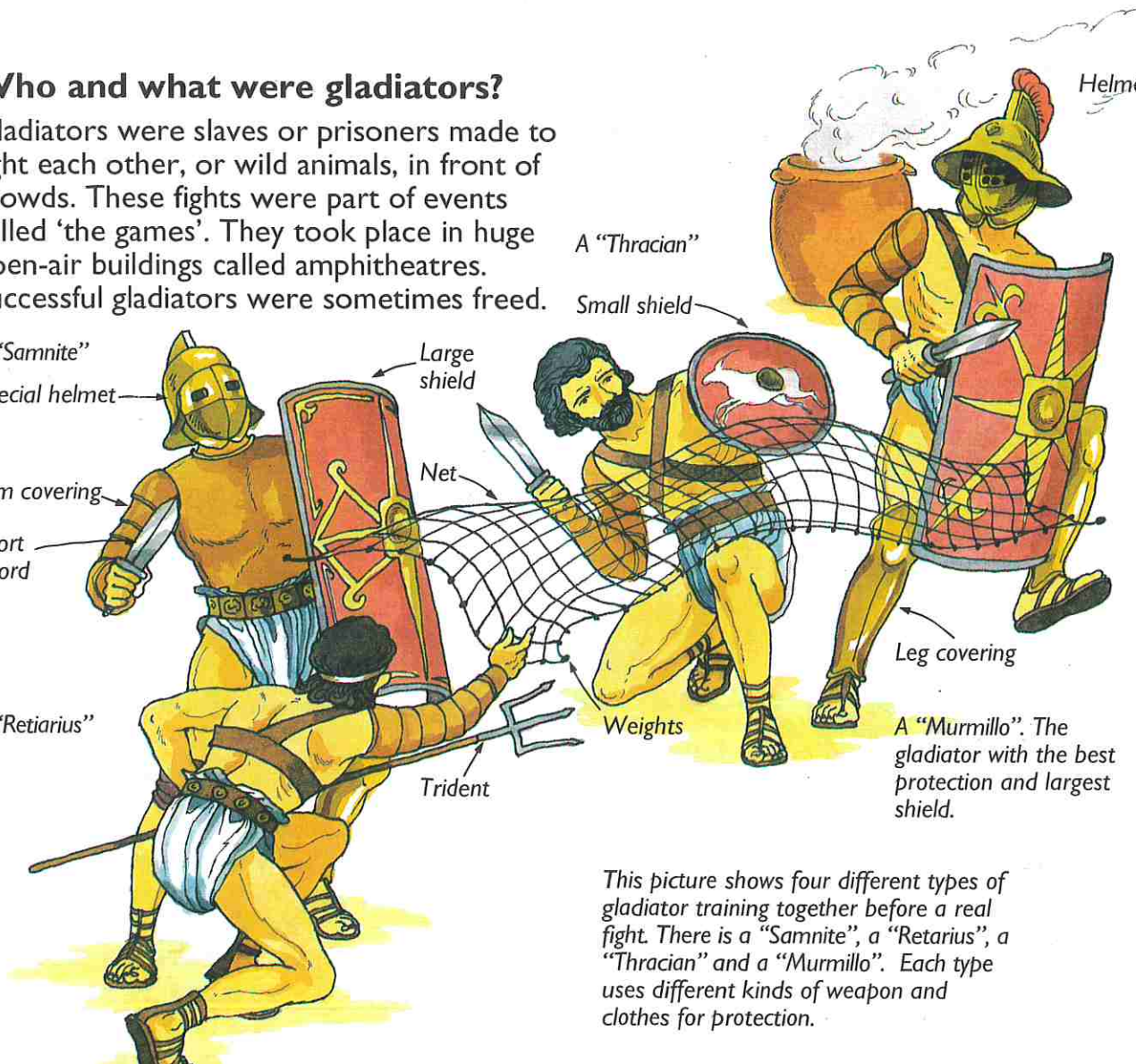
Small shield

Weights

Helmet

Leg covering

A "Murmillo". The gladiator with the best protection and largest shield.



This picture shows four different types of gladiator training together before a real fight. There is a "Samnite", a "Retarius", a "Thracian" and a "Murmillo". Each type uses different kinds of weapon and clothes for protection.

Did you know?

At the end of a gladiator fight, the emperor would often give a "thumbs up" or a "thumbs down" signal. This was to show whether he wanted the loser to live or to die.

An emperor

An emperor's thumb



We think that "thumbs up" meant "live". This is probably why the sign is still used today to mean that something is good, or is going well.



There's more on the next page.