

Grade 9 Informational/Expository Writing Prompt – “Gladiators”

Using evidence from the passages, write a 2-3 paragraph explanation for your social studies class explaining how recent archeological developments have changed the ways we understand how gladiators lived. Your explanation must be based on ideas, concepts, and information from the “Gladiators” text set.

Manage your time carefully so you can

- Plan your explanation
- Write your explanation
- Revise and edit your explanation

Be sure to

- Use evidence from multiple sources
- Do not over rely on one source
- Type your answer in a new Word document

Gladiator University?

Buried beneath the earth near Vienna, Austria, archaeologists have made a big discovery—the nearly complete remains of an ancient Roman gladiator school. The massive school, built during the 2nd century A.D, includes cellblocks, a training arena, and a bath complex. It is the first gladiator school, or *ludus* (plural: “*ludi*”), found outside Rome, Italy.

“Although some 100 *ludi* are thought to have existed in the Roman Empire, almost all have been destroyed or built over,” the team from Austria, Belgium, and Germany said in a statement.

The researchers discovered the school in 2011 at the site of the ancient city of Carnuntum. They found it not by digging, but by using noninvasive techniques such as aerial (taken from an aircraft) photography and ground-penetrating radar. They also attached an electromagnetic sensor to a four-wheel all-terrain vehicle that allowed them to locate hidden bricks underground. The researchers then re-created the site in virtual 3-D models. Their findings were reported last month in a scientific journal.

“The find at Carnuntum gives us a vivid impression of what it was like to live and train as a gladiator on the chilly northern border of the Roman Empire,” says gladiator expert Kathleen Coleman of Harvard University, who was not part of the study team.

Gladiator fights were wildly popular in the Roman Empire, which included most of Western Europe and lasted from 27 B.C. to 393 A.D. Huge crowds gathered to watch these warriors battle to the death in amphitheaters—sort of like a real-life Hunger Games. The gladiators used weapons such as swords, spears, and daggers.

Most gladiators were slaves or prisoners of war who were forced to fight. Some volunteered with hopes of winning fame and fortune. Successful gladiators were like movie stars during that time—they made a lot of money and became very famous. Many went on to become instructors at gladiator training schools, like the one at Carnuntum, after retirement.

The newly discovered school in Austria was two stories high. A courtyard in the center housed a practice arena. It had heated floors for winter training, plumbing, hospitals, and a graveyard nearby.

At least 80 gladiators lived and trained year-round at the school. They slept in 32-square-foot cells, with one or two people per cell. The cells were separate from a wing with bigger rooms, where their trainers slept.

“They were prisoners,” says archaeologist Wolfgang Neubauer, who led the study team. “They lived . . . in a fortress with only one gate out.”

Neubauer and his team plan to continue their aboveground mapping efforts at Carnuntum. They also hope to eventually analyze bones from the graveyard there to learn more about the gladiators’ diet and lives.



Russell Crowe, image from *Gladiator*, 2000.

Did Gladiators Always Fight to the Death?

Hollywood portrays Roman gladiatorial contests as brutal duels that ended when one of the combatants killed the other. But in reality, gladiators didn't always fight to the death. These ancient Roman athletes were highly trained professionals. They made their living fighting, not dying. Because gladiators were expensive to train, killing off large numbers of them would have been a bad business decision. Occasionally, sponsors would pay extra to stage a fight to the death, compensating the owners for any lost gladiators. Usually, gladiatorial bouts simply had to have a decisive outcome, when one of the contestants was wounded or his endurance gave out.

Successful gladiators could become major stars of the Roman world. Those who were slaves could sometimes be freed after winning a certain number of matches. Some surviving gladiators became trainers themselves after their fighting days were over. In 2007 scientists discovered an 1,800-year-old graveyard in Turkey. It contained thousands of bones and tombstones identifying the remains as those of gladiators. Some of the skeletons showed evidence of healed wounds, suggesting that gladiators received medical treatment. One skeleton seemed to belong to a retired fighter. Other skeletons showed signs of violent deaths, including blows from weapons such as tridents, hammers and foot-long swords. (Hammers were used to deliver offstage death blows to fighters who were too seriously injured to survive.) There is no question that gladiatorial combat was a dangerous business, but contrary to popular myth, it did not always end in death.

Grisly London Discovery May Be Proof of City's Gladiators

By Christopher Klein

In 1988, laborers working in a pit in the heart of London made a grisly discovery. They found 39 partial or complete human skulls. Archaeologists excavated the ancient remains the following year and stored them in a nearby museum. Now new forensic research reveals the severed heads may be the first evidence of gladiatorial combat in the Roman city of Londinium.

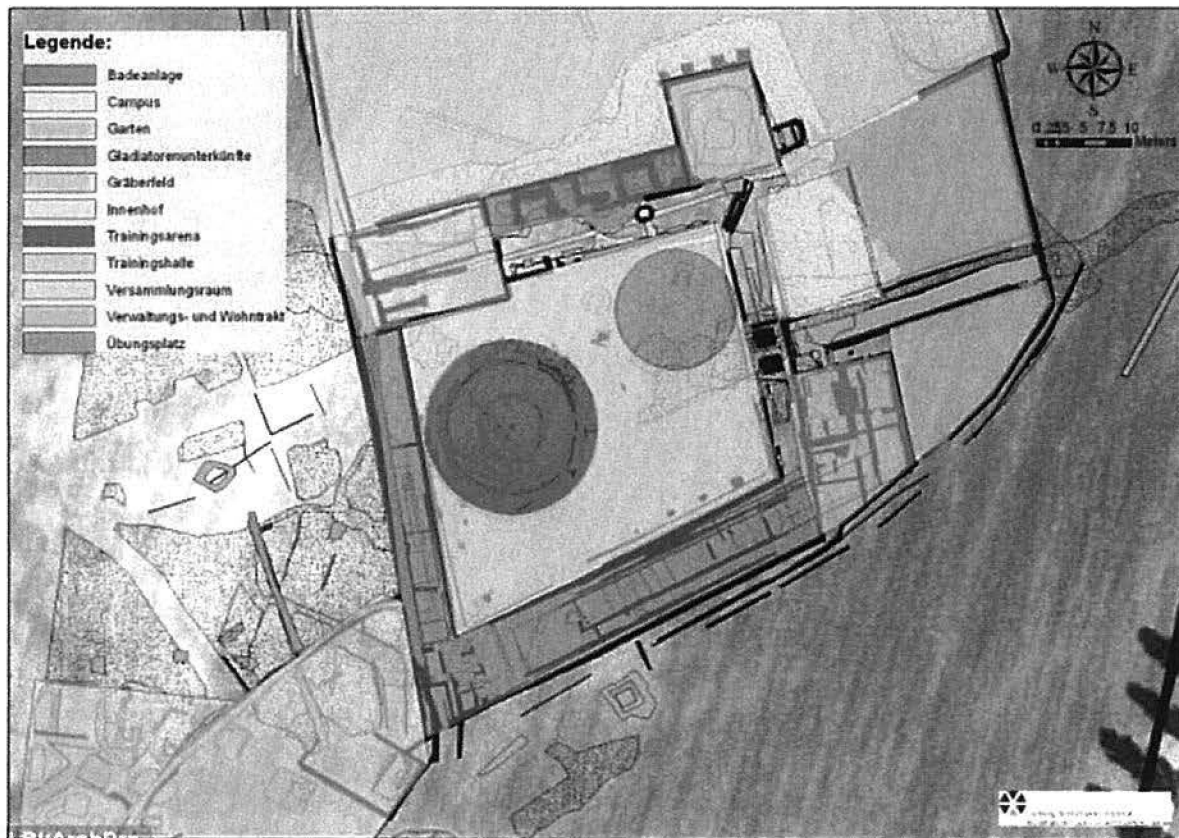
The findings of the testing done by Rebecca Redfern, at the Museum of London, and her colleague Heather Bonney from the Natural History Museum were published this week. The re-examination of the skulls discovered in 1988 revealed that they were unlike any found in the city ever before. They probably belonged to executed criminals, conquered enemies, and fallen gladiators.

The remains had not been buried in a cemetery, but had been displayed in open pits. Most Roman burial sites include the very young and old alike. But the remains found in the pit were determined to be from men between the ages of 18 and 35 years old. Also unusual is that most of the skulls show evidence of multiple healed injuries, suggesting that "violence was a common feature of their lives" according to the journal article.

Redfern and Bonney dated the remains to between 120 and 160 A.D. This was a time of peace and prosperity in Londinium when it was a powerful outpost of the Roman Empire. There is no evidence of social unrest, warfare, or organized violence during that time period. So how did these ancient Londoners come to such a brutal end?

The most likely theory is that at least some of the men were killed in the nearby amphitheater, either as executed criminals or defeated gladiators. The age of the victims fits the typical profile of gladiators. The blunt-force trauma in the bones along with the sharp-force weapon injuries are similar to those discovered in a gladiator cemetery in Turkey. If the theory is correct, it will be the first solid evidence of gladiatorial combat in London.

Klein, Christopher. "Grisly London Discovery May Be Proof of City's Gladiators." *History in the Headlines*. 15 January 2014. Web. Edited for classroom use, Sept. 2016.



WHAT THE MAP TELLS US ABOUT THE DAILY LIFE OF A GLADIATOR

- At least 80 gladiators lived at the training school, separated from the town of Carnuntum.
- They slept in 32-square-foot (3-square-metre) cells, usually in isolation, and sometimes with a roommate.
- They operated alone rather than in teams. The details contradict the popular view of gladiators as traveling around the country for fights, as seen in the movie *Gladiator*.
- The fighters were often convicted criminals, prisoners-of-war, and usually slaves.
- Researchers believe the training area was where the men's 'market value and in end effect their fate' was decided.
- If they were successful, they had a chance to advance to 'superstar' status - and maybe even achieve freedom.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2568517/A-brutal-life-isolation-Gladiator-school-discovered-AUSTRIA-reveals-harsh-reality-prisoners-fighting-lives.html#ixzz4MzmPoVXu>