

GLADIATORS






THEMED PROGRAMME



AIM

Gladiators, ready! Become fearsome gladiators and head into battle. Meet the Roman gladiators, put on your armour of God and take on some head-to-head battles. Are you ready to be a gladiator?

ACTIVITIES

-  **Meet the Gladiators**
-  **Gladiator Battles**
-  **Gladiator Mosaic**
-  **Armour of God**
-  **Emperors, Gladiators and Lions**

GLADIATORS

» INTRODUCTION

Gladiators were professional fighters in ancient Rome. Their fierce battles, sometimes to the death, thrilled stadium crowds.

The shows were held in huge arenas called amphitheatres, the most famous one was the 'Colosseum' which can still be found in Rome today.

A fight went on until one gladiator was wounded. The crowd then decided whether the loser had fought bravely enough to be allowed to live.

? DID YOU KNOW?


- Gladiators were usually slaves or criminals.
- They would train at special gladiator schools to improve their fighting and to make sure they put on a good show.
- Most gladiators only lived to their mid-twenties.
- Gladiators were Roman celebrities. The equivalent to our footballers today.
- Some gladiator fights involved animals such as lions, tigers and bears.



GET LEARNING: UNDERSTANDING CULTURE & TRADITION MEET THE GLADIATORS

There were many types of gladiators in ancient Rome. Gladiator games became more organised over time and fighters were given different training, armour and weapons depending on how well they fought and their fighting style.

This activity explores a few of those gladiator types and the differences between them.

- 1  Download and print a copy of the 'Meet the Gladiators' activity sheet. If working in small groups then you'll need a set for each group. Cut the sheets into their individual cards and mix them up.
- 2 Give the cards to the group(s) and challenge them to match the images of the gladiators to the gladiator names and descriptions. They should be able to do this by reading about the gladiators' armour and weapons and matching these up with the images. The correct answers are as per the order on the activity sheet (i.e. the top left box on each sheet match, the top right on each sheet match and so on).
- 3 After the group(s) have completed the activity, go through the answers and see how the group(s) got on. Spend some time thinking about the differences between the gladiators. Ask the children which gladiator they would have wanted to be? Which would they have not wanted to be and why?

Alternative Activity Idea: Complete this activity as a game.

This could be done by placing the images around the room and a leader reading out the descriptions. Children should go and stand by the picture they think best matches the description.





GET ACTIVE: PLAYING GAMES

GLADIATOR BATTLES

Enter the Colosseum and take on some head-to-head gladiator battles. Who will be crowned champion and who will be fed to the lions?

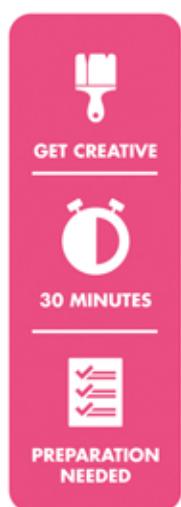
Below are a few ideas for some head-to-head gladiator style battles to run with your group. These could be run as standalone activities, or you could have a tournament with gladiators earning points for winning different battles. The gladiator at the end with the most points is the winner.

One Legged Battle: Two gladiators should stand facing each other balancing on one leg. When the battle starts, the aim of the challenge is to remain balancing on one leg and forcing your opponent to lose balance and place their second leg on the floor. This could be done by hitting each other with pool noodles, dodging soft balls being thrown at them and so on. Gladiators can hop around but are out of the battle the second they lose balance.

Arm Wrestling: A classic head-to-head contest to find the strongest gladiator. Run a mini knockout tournament with gladiators going against each other. Make sure gladiators are clear on what the rules are (i.e. elbow not leaving the table, second hand behind their back etc) before starting the game. Who will be crowned the strongest gladiator in the room?

Tug of War: Another classic game that tests a gladiator's strength, determination and teamwork. Create teams of gladiators and let them go head-to-head with each other in a game of tug of war. For this battle you'll need a good-sized rope (length and width/strength) to compete with. Mark a centre point on the rope and place a cone 1-2 metres away from either side of the centre. The team that can get the centre of the rope to pass their cone wins.


Create Your Own: The above are just a few simple ideas. You can create your own gladiator battles using equipment found in your cupboard or games your children are used to playing. The activity should ideally have some sort of head-to-head concept as part of the challenge, to allow one person to be victorious each time. You could challenge the group to come up with their own battle idea.



GET CREATIVE: ARTY & CRAFTY

GLADIATOR MOSAIC

Create a piece of gladiator art using an artistic method that was very popular in Roman times – Mosaic.

-  Download and print a copy of the 'Gladiator Mosaic' activity sheet. You'll need one for each child taking part. Alternatively, you could create your own template, such as a gladiator shield (rectangle / circle).
- Cut pieces of coloured paper/card into small squares. The smaller the squares, the more detailed the piece of art can be.
- Use glue to attach the squares of coloured paper/card to the gladiator's head and helmet on the activity sheet, to give the image a mosaic look.


What you'll need:

- Gladiator Mosaic Activity Sheet
- Coloured Paper / Card
- Glue
- Scissors





GET INTO THE BIBLE: DEVELOPING MY FAITH ARMOUR OF GOD

- 1 Ask the group 'If you were a gladiator going into battle, what would you like as armour and weapons to help you win the fight?'. Let the group talk about the different pieces of equipment they would want and remember their suggestions, ready for the rest of this activity.
- 2 Whilst we thankfully will never have to enter a gladiator arena and fight in brutal and bloody battles – each of us still do face 'battles' and challenges each day in order to be good people and fight against temptations. Can the group think of any examples? Always choosing to do the right thing, not getting into fights, not lying, being kind to annoying siblings etc.
- 3 To take on our daily battles and to be good Christians, God gives each one of us our own special armour. This is called the 'Armour of God'. Have the group heard of this before? What can they tell you about it?
- 4 Share  **Ephesians 6 v 11-17**. This tells us about the 'armour of God'. Briefly talk about each of the items and share with the group how this piece of armour helps us to live good lives. Try to have a piece of clothing that represents each item (suggested item in brackets), that a volunteer could put on as you talk to help show the armour coming together.

Belt of Truth (Belt): Helps to keep you grounded. God's word is the truth and we must follow it.

Breastplate of Righteousness (Vest): This protects your vital organs, including your heart. Living righteously means doing your best to do what is right and live as God wants you to. This is about living your life with a big heart full of Jesus' love.

Gospel Shoes of Peace (Boots): Designed to help us go and tell others about Jesus and his good news of peace. We need good shoes to continue to keep moving forwards!

Shield of Faith (Umbrella): Having full belief in God means we can withstand any attacks or challenges that come our way. Our faith in God is that shield. God puts himself in front of us to protect us.

Helmet of Salvation (Bike Helmet): The helmet protects our head and our brain. It is often our minds that battle against temptation as we decide what we should or shouldn't do in life. We use the helmet of salvation to help remind us that we have chosen God over temptation.

Sword of the Spirit (Plastic Sword): All the other pieces are defensive, but this one is offensive. This represents the Bible and the word of God that points us in the right direction in life.

- 5 When we put all these pieces of armour together, we are well protected from everything that might come our way. Finish in a prayer thanking God for giving us our armour and asking him to remind us every day how we use them to do good in our lives and the world around us.



GET ACTIVE: PLAYING GAMES EMPERORS, GLADIATORS AND LIONS

A twist on the classic game of 'Rock, Paper, Scissors'. In this version the three objects are now changed to 'Emperor', 'Gladiator' and 'Lion'. The rules are as follows.

Emperor – Thumb Down: In Roman times an emperor would decide the fate of a gladiator by giving a thumbs up or down. In this game **an emperor defeats a gladiator by showing a thumb down**.

Gladiator – Clenched Fist: Show a clenched fist to be a gladiator. Gladiators were trained fighters and would sometimes even take on lions. In our game, **the gladiator defeats the lion by showing clenched fist**.

Lion – Lion's Claw: Lions were made to battle gladiators, whilst emperors sat at a safe distance. But if the lion was to escape the emperor would stand no chance! **A lion defeats an emperor by showing a lion's claw**.

Give children a little while at the start of the game to get used to the new rules and then play some head-to-head games of 'Emperors, Gladiators and Lions' or even hold a mini tournament with the group.

MEET THE GLADIATORS



MEET THE GLADIATORS

SAMNITE GLADIATOR

Weapons: Shield & sword

Armour: Helmet, arm guards & shin guards (ocreas)

Strengths: All rounder

Weakness: Body (abdomen) unguarded

Fact: Samnite gladiators were one of the original types of gladiators in Rome.

MURMILLO GLADIATOR

Weapons: Large square/rectangle shield & sword

Armour: Helmet, arm guards & shin guards (ocreas)

Strengths: Large shield provides good protection

Weakness: The shield does weigh / slow the gladiator down

Fact: The murmillio's fighting style was suited for strong men due to the weight of the shield, sword and helmet. As a result they were usually tall and always very muscular.

RETIARIUS GLADIATOR

Weapons: Weighted net (Rete) and a trident or a dagger

Armour: Little to none

Strengths: Good agility & could attack at range.

Weakness: Next to no armour or shield to protect themselves

Fact: Due to their lack of armour, some wore nothing but a loincloth, many viewed them as the lowliest of classes.

SECUTOR GLADIATOR

Weapons: Curved rectangular shield and a sword

Armour: Helmet that covered the face also, armour over one arm and shin guards (ocreas)

Strengths: Heavily armoured, so was well protected against attack

Weakness: Due to heavy armour and shield, a secutor may not be as agile as other gladiators

Fact: A secutor had only two small eye-holes in their helmet, in order to prevent a retiarius' trident from being thrust through the face.

VELITES GLADIATOR

Weapons: A large spear

Armour: Little to none

Strengths: Speed & mobility. Could attack at range.

Weakness: Next to no armour or shield to protect themselves

Fact: Gladiators fighting as the Velites class were not seen as good prospects. They usually fought in groups against one or more chariots and didn't normally last long.

DIMACHAERUS GLADIATOR

Weapons: Two swords

Armour: Little to none

Strengths: Great at close range fighting.

Weakness: Lightly armoured

Fact: Fighting with two swords is really difficult, so it's highly likely that Dimachaerus gladiators were ambidextrous (able to use left and right hand equally well).



GLADIATOR MOSAIC

