

Gladiators and the Coliseum

- the word gladiator comes from *gladius*
 - “the one who wields a sword”

- most gladiators were usually criminals or slaves who had no choice but to fight
- some were free men who were gifted killers, and they chose to make a career of it
 - these men took oaths “to endure branding, chains, flogging, or death by the sword”
 - were devoted to the profession
- even some women fought, although very rarely

- a gladiator didn't have a great job, but there were perks if you could survive that long
 - they had the chance to make money with wins
 - they could buy their freedom
 - they were public celebrities
 - they were fed well, had training, and had medical attention
- the main letdown, of course, was death if you were defeated

- Emperors would decide whether to spare or kill a fallen opponent
 - thumbs down wasn't bad, but meant spare him
 - thumbs up meant death because it was felt that they didn't fight hard enough