

Leisure and entertainment in Roman time

Leisure and Entertainment in Ancient Rome

Much like you all like to do today, people in Ancient Roman times liked to relax and have fun. Board games which could be played in either groups or pairs were very popular. Archaeologists today have even found some counters from Roman games.

As well as games, Romans also hunted animals in their spare time. They didn't just kill animals for food; they killed them for fun too. They liked hunting deer; in fact, they enjoyed it so much that they brought deer to Britain just so that they could hunt them.

Have you ever been to a concert? Or maybe a theatre show? These are types of entertainment that people go to watch in their spare time. Well, in Ancient Roman times, there was a slightly more gruesome type of entertainment.

Have you ever heard of a gladiator?

Gladiators were men who were used for entertainment. Lots of people would gather at an amphitheatre to watch a gladiator fight. Sometimes gladiators would fight each other and other times, they fought animals, like lions or bears.

Gladiators often fought until one of them was killed. If, at the end of a fight, a gladiator was still alive, the audience would get to vote on whether or not he was to be killed or allowed to live.



The Ampitheatre

The amphitheatre is where the gladiators would fight. This is what it looked like:

An amphitheatre is what we now call a theatre - somewhere we go to watch a show or a concert. It was free to go to. There could be thousands of people in the audience at an amphitheatre show.

The Baths

Going to the baths is something else that Romans did in their spare time.

There are still some Baths left from Roman times in England. They are in a place called ... Bath!

Although visiting the baths was a relaxing activity for Romans, there was also another reason to go there. They went to the baths to get clean!

Whilst at the baths, Romans would do some exercises and some swimming. There were some rooms in the baths, with the temperature turned up very, very high. This was designed to help Romans sweat out dirt. Their skin was then scraped with a metal stick to remove all of the dirt. This stick was called a Strigil.

Reading comprehension text 2

What did Romans do in their spare time?

Most people in Roman times did not have much spare time, they were too busy working. They liked board games. We know this because archaeologists have found counters and dice in the ground.

The Romans enjoyed watching fights between gladiators, and fights between people and animals. These bloodthirsty shows were put on in front of crowds in large arenas called amphitheatres. Gladiators fought one another, usually in pairs. They also fought wild animals such as lions or bears. When a gladiator was beaten (but still alive), the audience would wave scarves or put their thumbs out if they wanted him killed. If he'd fought well, and they wanted him to live, they would close their thumbs onto their fingers. Different types of gladiators used different weapons. For example, a man with a sword and shield might fight a man with a three-pronged spear or trident, and a big net.

Romans enjoyed the theatre. Most plays were funny comedies, though there were serious tragedies as well. Actors often wore masks to show whether their character was happy or sad! They also wore wigs - an old man had a white wig, a slave had a red wig. Roman emperors put on free shows at theatres and amphitheatres as it was a good way to make themselves popular.

In Rome there was a huge stadium called the Circus Maximus, used for chariot races. Chariot races were held in Britain too, which were thrilling but very dangerous. Chariots were small two-wheeled carts, driven by one man and pulled by four galloping horses. They raced around an oval track. There were often smashes during the seven-lap races.