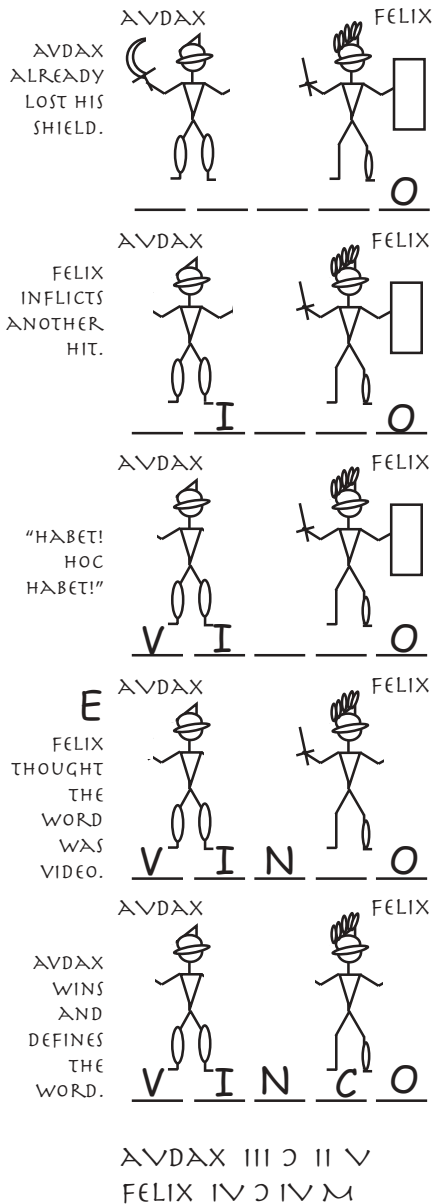


WHAT'S WITH GLADIATORS?



Some time ago a teacher mentioned playing hangman with her students to review vocabulary or mottoes. I like the idea of using games as a review; such competitions motivate students to study. But for me it's important to find a way to make any game I use directly relevant in every aspect possible to Latin class. So I was thinking, instead of drawing a hanged man, why not start with a gladiator and erase weapons, shields and, well, limbs until he is "dead"? This would be a reverse hangman, so to speak, since you start with a fully drawn character and work backwards.

But gladiators fought in pairs, I thought. Fine. Split the class into two teams, each backing a gladiator drawn on the chalkboard. Each team takes turns guessing letters. Each letter right is a "hit" by that team's gladiator on his opponent—that is, the opponent's gladiator loses a weapon. When a letter is missed, then the other team gets a chance.

This idea had possibilities. The teams could decide upon the fighting style of their gladiator. They could give it a name. They could keep track of its victories. Perhaps a gladiator that lost but wasn't "deprived of life" could be sent out to fight again another day. Indeed, students could incidentally learn all about gladiators while actually focusing on vocabulary, grammar, or whatever was being reviewed in the process of playing the game.

An article appearing in *Classical Outlook*, "Graffiti for Beginners", made me realize that we could actually make our own graffiti of our gladiators, just like die-hard Roman fans would and did. Yes, this all had possibilities.

But it occurred to me: I don't know enough about the different fighting styles to draw the gladiators appropriately. Stick figures are fine, but I'd want to make sure that I could tell a Thracian from a Secutor so that the students would learn something. The end result was the creation of my *Armaturae: Ego-Video Libellus Gladiatorum*. I included in it the major types of gladiators, important terms, information on how some graffiti were written, plus phrases heard in the arena.

Now with my stick figures ready in my libellus, I return to my original idea of a Gladiator hangman. The class could be divided into two teams, each with a gladiator or two (or three, depending upon the time and speed of play) ready to go, including name and any other distinguishing characteristic the students want. The teams flip a coin (*capita aut navia*) to see who goes first. The word or phrase (or practice sentence

from the text?) is put on the board as a series of blanks to be filled in. Each person on the team takes a turn guessing at letters without consultation of his or her other teammates. As I said before, a correct letter equals a hit on the opposing gladiator (erase weapon or body part). An incorrect letter allows the other team to guess. Conditions for being sent out can be up to the teacher who will be acting as the referee (and perhaps holding a *rudis*?). If the winning team gets the Latin phrase, should the other team, whose gladiator is not "dead", ask for a judgment? Perhaps. Then the editor of the games (also the teacher?!) can do thumbs up or thumbs down or take comments from the spectatores (everyone). Slay him or send him out. As for the winning team, their gladiator may be awarded a *corona* if they can in addition provide the correct meaning or identify grammatical form(s) of the word or phrase.

A healthy rivalry might develop that could encourage a team spirit and an atmosphere of cooperative learning (or at least a healthy bit of peer pressure).

Of course, now I see that one does not need a form of hangman to use gladiators in review games. Any sort of review game can be used—even with certamen style questions—as long as it is between two teams each backing a gladiator.

If records of such gladiatorial bouts are kept in the form of graffiti on the walls, other classes will see them. They may take on a life of their own. A famous gladiator could get killed and then, perhaps, one would have to compose funerary monuments to be placed outside the door of the classroom, in the hallway (along the road leading out of your room). Not bad advertisement for a Latin program....

There are many advantages to playing with gladiators, who compare in many ways to our modern wrestlers or boxers or other athletes. But one advantage to me is that if students absorb the basic information about gladiators in this form, then when the time comes to discuss gladiators in a serious way, one will have time to explore social and political consequences at greater depth.

I'm all for incorporating as much Roman culture into the classroom on a daily or weekly basis as possible instead of just doing specialty units. We can't take our kids to Ancient Rome to experience life there first hand, but perhaps we can bring a little bit of Ancient Rome to life in our classes.

Ginny Lindzey, September 2, 1999

How to Fold and Cut the Booklet

1. Fold the sheet of paper in half long ways (making a vertical fold down the middle) with the text facing out.
2. Fold in half across this time, and one more time until you have a small rectangle
3. Totally unfold it.
4. Use the fold that goes across horizontally to fold it in half.
5. Cut the length of one section along the fold (in the middle).
6. Open up and fold along the vertical fold again and slide/push in so that you now have four points sticking out. If you were looking down at the top your paper should resemble an X
7. Fold all the "pages" to one side to make your booklet.