

Name _____



Date _____

The Coliseum, Rome's Stadium

By Sharon Fabian

Have you ever been to a football game in a huge stadium? If you have, you were among thousands of fans. Everyone cheered for their side to win. Everyone had fun.

People in ancient times enjoyed stadium events, too. The Romans had a huge stadium. It was named the Flavian Amphitheatre, and it held 50,000 people. Today, people all over the world call it the Coliseum.

If you could look down on the top, you would see that it looks like a football stadium. It is oval-shaped. There is a big arena in the center and seats all around.

The Romans enjoyed watching many kinds of fights there. Today, many of them seem cruel. They would be illegal now, but in ancient Roman times, thousands of people enjoyed these contests.

Roman fighters, called gladiators, would fight to the death in the Coliseum. There were also events in which hunters hunted wild animals. Sometimes, the arena was even filled with water for a sea battle. Other shows acted out land battles and ancient myths.

Would you like to see the stadium where these contests took place? A large part of the Coliseum is still standing, and it is open for tours. If you visit Rome, you can see the stadium and imagine what it was like to be part of the crowd there.

Look at the outside of the Coliseum. You see three tiers of arches circling around the huge building. Above that, there is a fourth level. On that top story there were masts that held up a giant canopy. It shaded the fans and still let a breeze pass through.

Just like in a modern stadium, the seats for the fans circled around inside. The most important fans sat on the lower level close to the action. The everyday people sat higher up.

The seating was divided into many sections. That way, thousands of fans could enter and exit quickly. Modern stadiums are made that way, too.

The arena in the center used to have a wood floor. It was covered with sand, and this is where the shows took place. That floor is no longer there.

Below the arena floor there are two more levels. Since the floor is gone now, you can see into the rooms below. There were rooms for gladiators waiting to fight. There were rooms for wild animals. There were also rooms for everything else needed to put on the shows.

Special effects could be created from these rooms. Gladiators and animals could be raised up on platforms. They would appear suddenly through trapdoors in the floor. There were even hoists to raise an elephant up to the stage.

All of this was built by the ancient Romans in the first century A.D. Now it is a site enjoyed by tourists. Sports fans today enjoy games in modern stadiums of the same design.



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Questions

- _____ 1. The Roman Coliseum was like a _____.
A. school
B. museum
C. stadium
- _____ 2. The Coliseum had room for _____ fans.
A. many
B. no
C. few
- _____ 3. The Coliseum is _____.
A. oval
B. round
C. square
- _____ 4. Gladiators _____ in the Coliseum.
A. fought to the death
B. played football
C. played an ancient ball game
- _____ 5. The arena in the Coliseum was sometimes filled with water.
A. true
B. false
- _____ 6. Tourists today can stand on the main floor of the arena.
A. true
B. false
- _____ 7. On the outside of the Coliseum, you can see many _____.
A. gladiators
B. arches
C. flags
- _____ 8. The seating in the Coliseum was divided into sections because _____.
A. it made it easier to enter and exit
B. it was easier to build that way
C. it gave fans a better view

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Pretend that you are visiting Rome. You are writing in a journal about what you see each day. Write a journal entry for the day you visit the Coliseum.

In some ways, big sports events today are similar to events in the Roman Coliseum. In other ways, they are very different. Write a paragraph that compares and contrasts a modern sports event with an event in the Roman Coliseum.
