

GLADIATOR † SLAVE † REVOLUTIONARY

SPARTACUS

Rising from the depths of obscurity, this is the story of how one man defied the Roman Republic and led a social upheaval that still echoes through history

Written by Dom Reseigh-Lincoln

The amphitheatre is full to capacity, the crowd shouting excitedly with every clash of steel. Below the braying citizens, two men circle one another, each taking careful steps on the blood-splattered sand. One wears a grated mask fused to a curved helmet along with a pair of leather greaves, a gladius (short sword) twirling in each hand. Dimachaerus is their name for him. His opponent has a short sword in one hand and a parmula (small triangular shield) in the other. He's wearing a similarly shaped helmet, but his has a plume of dyed horse hair sticking from the top. Thracian is his chosen class, one famed for its lithe and versatile warriors. Both are licked with cuts and bruises, their chests heaving from ten minutes of well-matched combat.

Time slows as the gladiator of the dimachaerus class leaps forward, both blades swinging in wide circles above his head. The Thracian drops to one knee, spins on the ball of his foot and drags his gladius across the tendons behind the dimachaerus's left knee. The man grunts and drops to the dirt. The crowd is alive again, screaming for blood - this fight, unlike most gladiatorial encounters, would end in someone's death. The Thracian raises his gladius above his head and drives it down, plunging the blade into his opponent's heart. He steps away from the body and raises his arms to the crowd, giving them the fairy-tale vanquisher their imaginations crave. The arena begins to boom with the sound of a single name chanted in unison: Spartacus.

Night has fallen and a cool breeze flits through the sleeping quarters of the gladiatorial school in Capua. The man they sometimes call the Thracian sits atop his bunk and lets the breeze cool the beads of sweat on his skin. His body still aches from the duel and he's been stretching his muscles for over an hour now. Old military habits die hard, it seems. He'd been a soldier once, a long time ago. Had he deserted? Had he defied an order and been bound to slavery for insubordination? It has been so many years, so many duels and so many nights of hunger and uncertainty ago that even he can't remember any more. His days as a novicius (novice) were long behind him but, like all his fellow gladiators, every time he stepped into the arena he accepted the chance of damnati ad gladium - that he could be sentenced to execution by sword if he lost his match. As long as he can wield a blade he still has some control over his fate, but no matter how many he entertains he is still just a commodity, just a slave.

For 500 years the Roman Senate - the political hub of the Republic - had relied on the influx of new bodies from territories claimed in its name to serve as slaves, but as the state became divided with civil rivalries and political infighting, military expansion began to slow and Rome tightened its hold on its already dwindling servile population. Those slaves that chose to run were hunted down and punished severely to remind the rest that Rome did not look kindly on deserters of any kind. Crucifixions, in all their grisly theatre, were

SPARTACUS

Roman, 109-71 BCE

Brief Bio

So steeped in myth and legend is the famous slave that historians still argue over the particulars of his origins. However, most assume that he was born around 109 BCE in Thracia (modern-day Bulgaria). He enlisted in the Roman infantry as a teenager and eventually became a slave. He fought as a gladiator before inciting a slave rebellion that led to the Third Servile War. He died during the Battle of the Siler River.

The defiant gladiators escaped the school where they had been taught not just how to kill, but how to kill to ensure the Roman mob were entertained



SPARTACUS: HOW A SLAVE DEFIED A REPUBLIC



As a former soldier, Spartacus adapted well to the tactics and brutality of life in the gladiatorial arenas and became a popular warrior

a common sight and so by the year 73 BCE, the atmosphere among the serving class was growing tenser with every passing moment. They had gone to war with their masters twice before and failed, but with the Roman legions stretched thin across the Republic, if such an uprising were to rise again, the slaves might just have a chance to change the very face of the civilised world.

As the Roman summer draws to a close, a plot is forming within the cramped confines of the gladiatorial school in Capua, the main city of the Campania region in southern Italy. While its owner, Lentulus Batiatus, dreams of a contract that takes him to the capital, entertaining the political cream of the crop with his slave warriors, his most popular fighter is hatching a plan to escape. Over the many years he's fought and lived at the amphitheatre, Spartacus has grown close to two other slaves, Crixus and Oenomaus.

The three know that gladiators have escaped before, but their brands make their true nature undeniable - if they were to escape, it had to be part of a united force that couldn't be easily hunted down.

However, Spartacus's plan to escape had been compromised and the plan had leaked out. There was no time for planning; they had to act now.

Spartacus breaks free from his quarters, frees Crixus and Oenomaus and together they unlock as many of the cages as they can before the school's privately employed guards realise what's happening. Soon the arena is filled with screams and shouts and the familiar noises of men fighting to the death as Spartacus breaks into the eating quarters and uses the knives and forks in there as weapons. Some of the gladiators refuse to join the escape, too indoctrinated by their servitude to even contemplate such an act. In under half an hour the arena is theirs, a cart carrying new

gladiatorial weapons ripped apart and used to arm the uprising. Now armed with the blades, spears and tridents that had once been symbolic of their enslavement, the defiant gladiators escape the school where they had been taught not just how to kill, but how to kill to ensure the Roman mob were entertained.

As the uprising sweeps across the region, it swallows settlement after settlement. With more and more slaves joining their cause the numbers of the rebels swells from less than 100 to almost 5,000. Slaves from all over the region were suddenly upping and leaving their masters, buoyed by a confidence that they could seek a life free of servitude in Spartacus's defiant

"DRENCHED IN BLOOD ON THE FRONT LINE, SPARTACUS LEADS THE CHARGE INTO THE LEGIONNAIRES"

GLORIOUS GLADIATORS

Discover eight different classes of deadly fighters



THRACIAN

- » WEAPONS: SHORT SWORD, TRIANGULAR SHIELD
- » STRENGTHS: AGILE WARRIOR
- » WEAKNESSES: RANGED ATTACKS
- » MOST LIKELY TO WIN AGAINST: LAQUERIUS, VELITUS
- » WOULD STRUGGLE AGAINST: MURMILLO

Did you know?

The Thracian's sica was a smaller version of the falx. It would often be used to swing into an opponent's unprotected back, which would often end the contest there and then.



MURMILLO

- » WEAPONS: SWORD, SQUARE SHIELD
- » STRENGTHS: WELL EQUIPPED WITH A LARGE SWORD AND SHIELD
- » WEAKNESSES: SUSCEPTIBLE TO AGILE ATTACKS
- » MOST LIKELY TO WIN AGAINST: LAQUERIUS, VELITUS
- » WOULD STRUGGLE AGAINST: DIMACHAEUS

Did you know?

The Murmillo class was introduced to replace the similarly slow and powerful Gallus discipline. It favoured strong warriors.



RETIARIUS

- » WEAPONS: RETE (WEIGHTED NET), FUSCINA (TRIDENT)
- » STRENGTHS: AGILITY, RANGED ATTACKS
- » WEAKNESSES: LITTLE TO NO ARMOUR
- » MOST LIKELY TO WIN AGAINST: SECUTOR, MURMILLO
- » WOULD STRUGGLE AGAINST: SAMNITE, THRACIAN

Did you know?

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



SECUTOR

- » WEAPONS: GLADIUS, DAGGER
- » STRENGTHS: HEAVILY ARMoured
- » WEAKNESSES: SLOWER THAN MANY OTHER CLASSES
- » MOST LIKELY TO WIN AGAINST: SAMNITE
- » WOULD STRUGGLE AGAINST: RETIARIUS

Did you know?

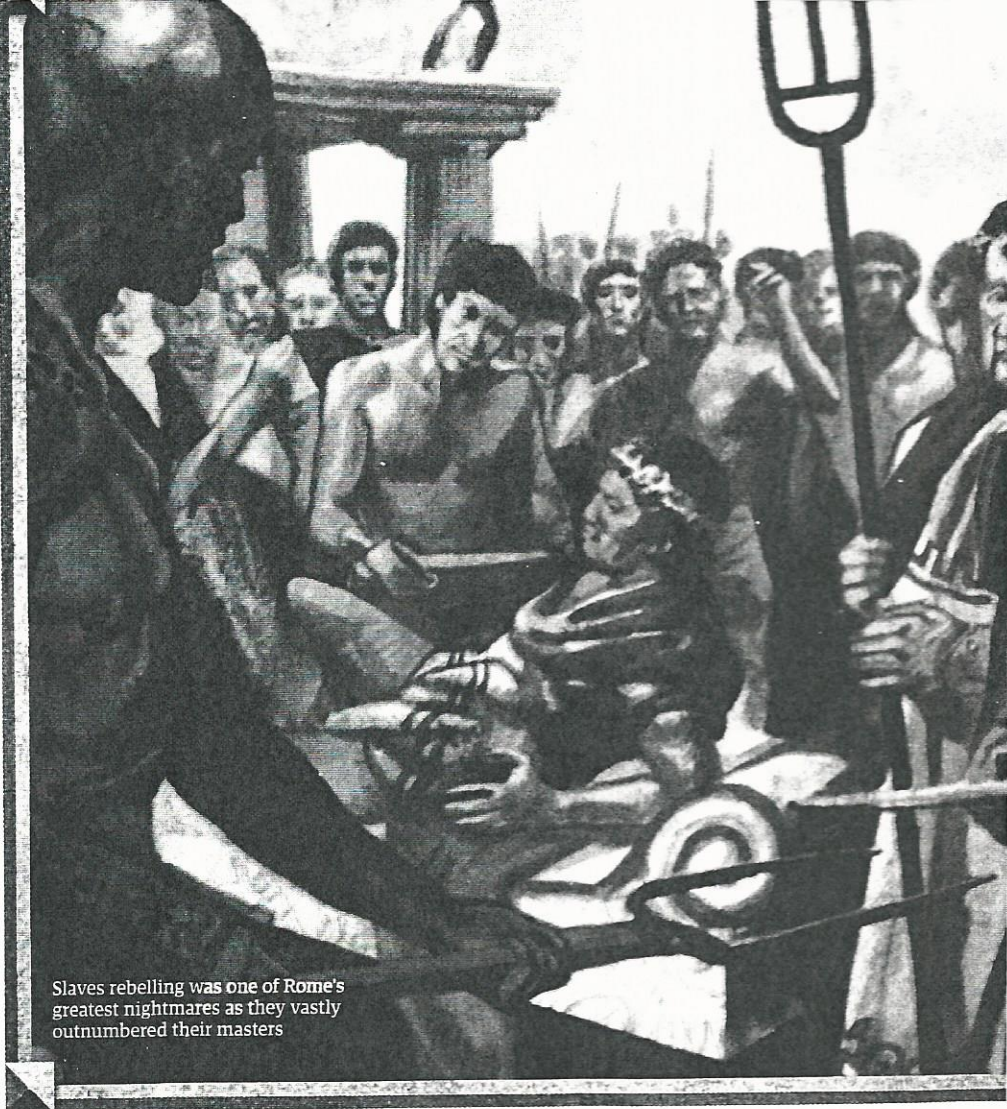
Secutor, with its anti-trident and anti-net armour, was a class designed to fight the more agile Retiarius class.

stand against the Republic. Spartacus, Crixus and Oenomaus decide to make camp in the safest place within marching distance, Mount Vesuvius.

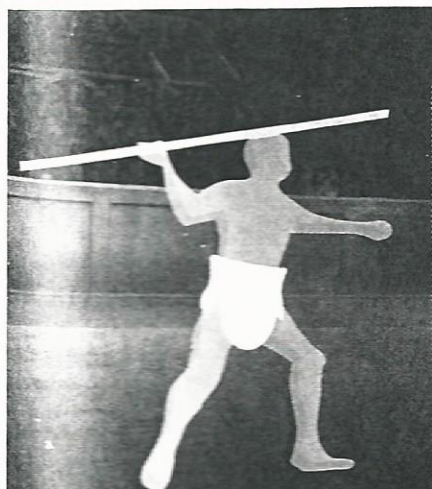
Back in Rome, the Senate was furious at this new rebellion taking place a mere 193 kilometres (120 miles) from the capital. At this point they aren't unduly worried through, and the Senate dispatches the praetor Gaius Claudius Glaber along with a contingent of 12,000 men with the task of putting down this insolent rebellion. Glaber and his forces arrive in a matter of days but choose not to attack, instead setting up a blockade and seal the rebel camps in. Gladius intends to starve them out. The rebels don't even try to attack, leading the Roman praetor to believe his task will be an easy one. Unbeknownst to Glaber, Spartacus and his troops use vines from the volcano's trees to rappel down the side of the mountain. Having crept through the cover of darkness, Spartacus and a contingent of around 500 warriors attack the Roman siege-makers in a flanking manoeuvre. In a matter of minutes most of Gladius's contingent is wiped out.

It isn't long before news of Gladius's humiliation reaches Rome. Without delay a second contingent, twice the size of Gladius's, is sent out under the command of fellow praetor Publius Varinius. The praetor chooses to split his forces before reaching Vesuvius, planning to besiege the camp from three sides. Spartacus's army is ready though; they know this land well and use guerrilla tactics to wear Varinius's forces down until a final attack by the Romans ends in another victory for the rebels.

By the winter of 72 BCE, Spartacus's forces are spreading far and wide across the Italian heartland, enveloping the towns of Thurii, Nola, Nuceria and



Slaves rebelling was one of Rome's greatest nightmares as they vastly outnumbered their masters

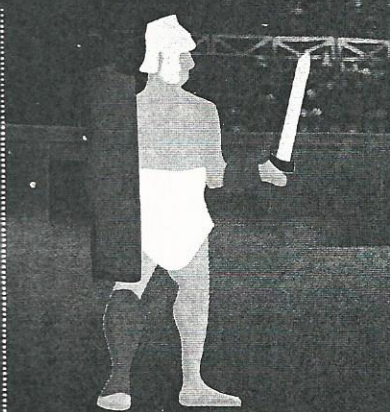


VELITUS

- » WEAPONS: SPEAR
- » STRENGTHS: SPEED, MOBILITY, RANGED ATTACKS
- » WEAKNESSES: LIGHTLY ARMoured
- » MOST LIKELY TO WIN AGAINST: DIMACHAERUS
- » WOULD STRUGGLE AGAINST: EVERYBODY

Did you know?

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

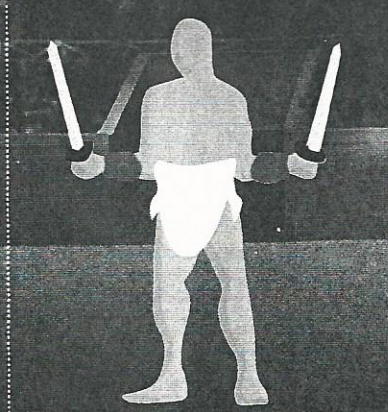


SAMNITE

- » WEAPONS: SHORT SWORD, SHIELD
- » STRENGTHS: ALL ROUNDER
- » WEAKNESSES: ABDOMEN AND LEGS (UNARMoured)
- » MOST LIKELY TO WIN AGAINST: THRACIAN, SECUTOR
- » WOULD STRUGGLE AGAINST: RETIARIUS

Did you know?

The Samnite class fell out of favour when Samnium (the previously defeated enemy who provided the inspiration for the class) returned as an ally to Rome.



DIMACHAERUS

- » WEAPONS: DUAL SWORDS
- » STRENGTHS: SKILLED IN CLOSE-QUARTERS COMBAT
- » WEAKNESSES: LIGHTLY ARMoured
- » MOST LIKELY TO WIN AGAINST: LAQUERIUS
- » WOULD STRUGGLE AGAINST: THRACIAN

Did you know?

In the *Spartacus* TV series, the producers chose to have Spartacus himself favour this particular gladiatorial style despite evidence suggesting he was a Thracian.



LAQUERIUS

- » WEAPONS: NOOSE, TRIDENT
- » STRENGTHS: ABLE TO DISARM OPPONENTS
- » WEAKNESSES: OPEN TO RUSH ATTACKS
- » MOST LIKELY TO WIN AGAINST: VELITUS
- » WOULD STRUGGLE AGAINST: SAMNITE

Did you know?

Some historians have speculated that the Laquerius class was actually a form of jester who came into the arena to mock great battles of old.

SPARTACUS'S REBELLION

Plotting and escape

73 BCE

01 While based at the Capuan gladiatorial training school owned by Gnaeus Cornelius Lentulus Batiatus, Spartacus hatched a plan to break free of the camp. Despite their attempts at secrecy the plot is betrayed, but Spartacus still manages to muster between 70 and 80 willing slaves - many of whom were former soldiers - to join his escape.

The military arrives

73 BCE

02 After breaking free, the group elects three individuals to lead them; two Gallic slaves, Crixus and Oenomaus and Spartacus. The group ransacks military equipment from the camp and takes on a small force sent to quash them. Spartacus's group easily defeats the soldiers, plunders the surrounding region and adds more slaves to its number before retiring to a defensive position on Mount Vesuvius.

Praetorian might

73 BCE

03 With news spreading of the revolt, Rome dispatches a militia of 3,000 men to stop the uprising. Praetor Gaius Claudius Glaber leads the reactionary force, blocking the revolt from escaping its base on Vesuvius. Spartacus's men use vines to rappel down the side of the mountain at night, sneaking up on the force and annihilating them.

Breaking the revolt

73-72 BCE

04 The uprising spreads across the nearby regions, freeing slaves and swelling its ranks to over 70,000 fighters. Alarmed at the size of the revolt, the Senate dispatches a consular army to engage the slaves. It's initially successful, with Crixus and around 30,000 slaves being defeated by General Lucius Gellius Publicola.

War under

Crassus

71 BCE

05 Despite the loss of Crixus and his forces, Spartacus has led the larger force into the south of Italy, which continued to sweep Roman forces. The Senate grants praetorship to Marcus Licinius Crassus and an army of around almost 50,000 infantrymen. Crassus and Spartacus's first clash ends in defeat for the slave, with a loss of 6,000 men. After being betrayed by pirates, Spartacus's force retreats to Rhegium.

The Battle of the Siler River

71 BCE

06 The legions of Pompey are returning home after the conquest of Hispania, so the Senate orders them to march directly to Crassus's position. With news of the reinforcements reaching Spartacus he attempts to negotiate a truce, but Crassus refuses and kills 12,300 fleeing rebels. Despite the insurmountable odds, Spartacus and his men charge into Crassus's forces. Spartacus dies on the battlefield with his rebel cohorts.

many more. With two military successes to its name and with news of the revolt spreading across the region, Spartacus's rebellion now totals over 150,000 slaves. Hundreds of camps litter the plains of Campania, their food reserves restocked from the towns and settlements they now control. By now, Spartacus's uprising has also bisected into two separate forces - one mainly consisting of Thracians and other slaves and the other commanded by Crixus and Oenomaus. The force under Spartacus's two allies is essentially a Celtic army, bolstered by Gaulish slaves and so it pushes further into the Appelines with many of its number hoping to find a new freedom in Gaul itself.

With a great deal of Rome's military might consigned to putting down another rebellion in Hispania (modern-day Spain), the Republic musters what forces it can from its disparate military. Finally realising the gravity of the situation, the Senate chooses to combine the forces of two its most revered generals, Lucius Gellius Publicola and Gnaeus Cornelius Lentulus Clodius to make an army of around 50,000 legionnaires. The uprising is now split into two groups with around 30,000 troops under the command of Crixus, but the bulk of the rebellion remains with Spartacus. Realising that this division can be used to their advantage,

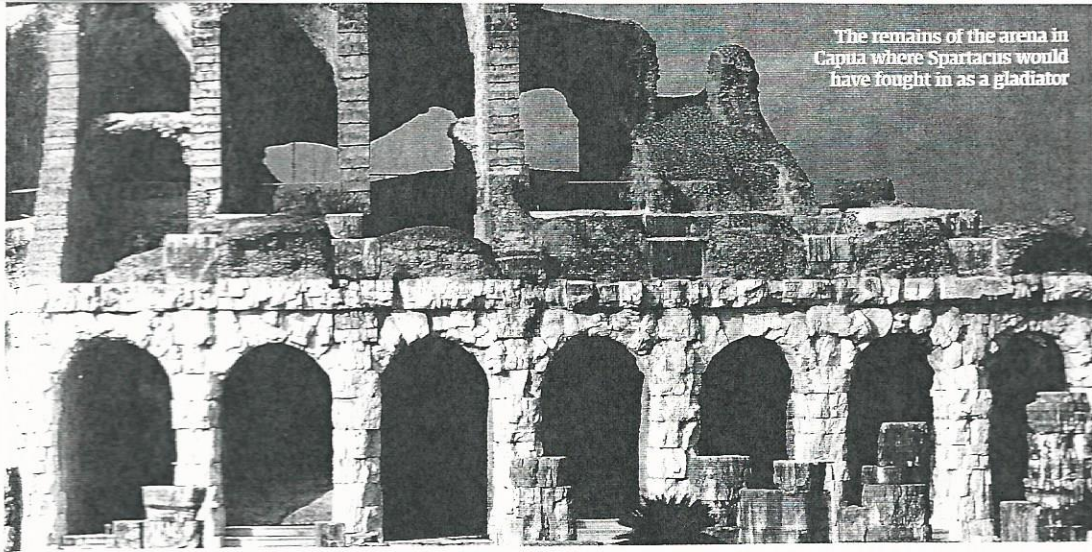
Lucius Gellius's legions ambush Crixus's legion in the foothills of Mount Garganus. The Gaulish slaves fight for their lives, but the discipline of Gellius's forces wins out and the smaller rebellion army is slaughtered, along with both Crixus and Oenomaus. It is the rebellion's first loss.

**"SPARTACUS SENDS
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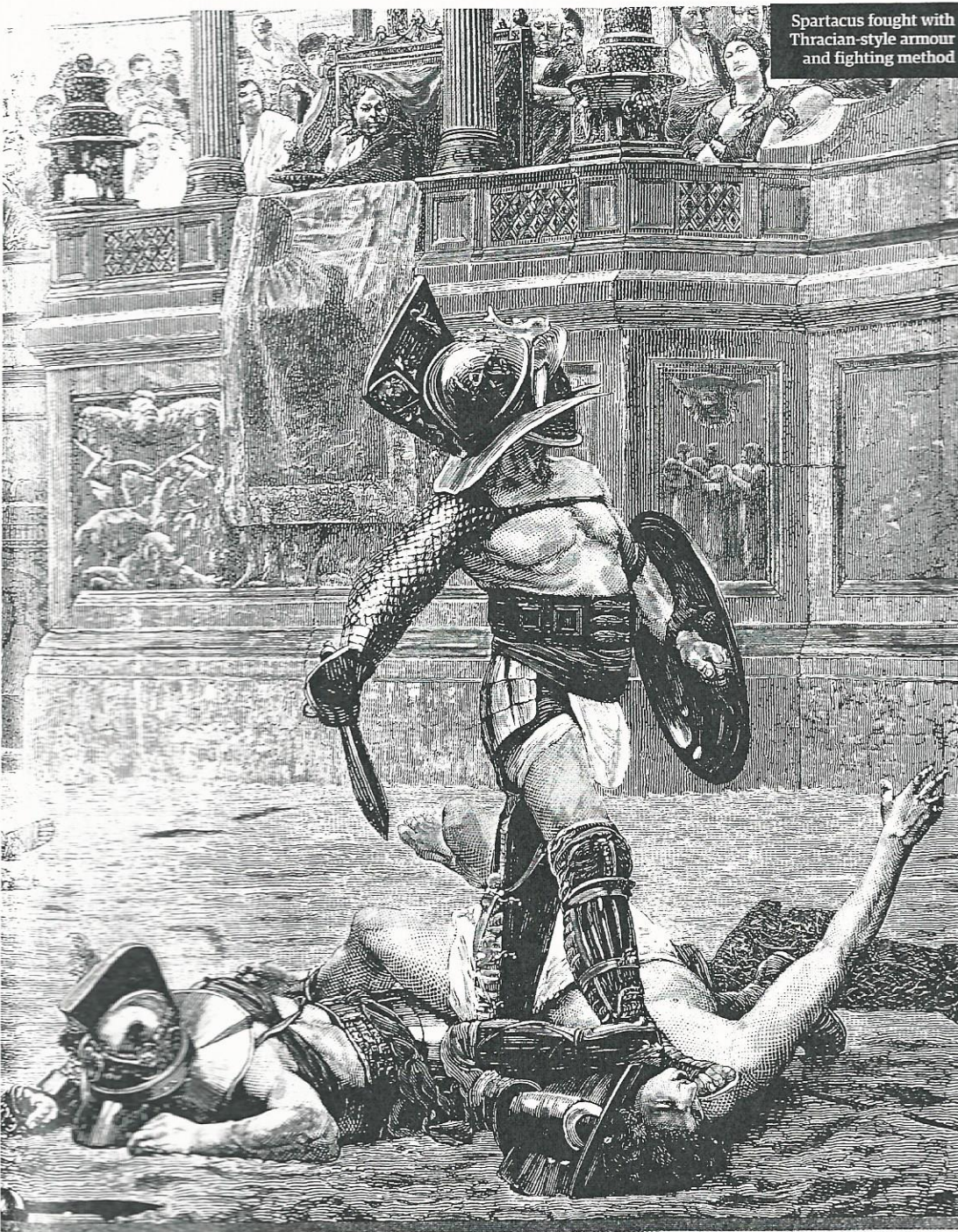
Gellius's legions now have a taste for blood. They turn their attentions to Spartacus's army as it heads toward Cisalpine Gaul. Before Gellius's forces can reach Spartacus, though, Lentulus's legions attempt to trap him in the narrow paths of the Appelines. However, Spartacus rushes into Lentulus's forces head-on and destroys them

outright. He even captures 300 legionnaires and has them executed as a message to Gellius and Rome itself. Gellius's 30,000-strong army arrives a few days later and clashes with Spartacus's larger force in the mountain range. Drenched in blood on the front line, Spartacus leads the charge into the legionnaires and inspires his fellow rebels to overcome the disciplined soldiers. When the brutal battle is done, the rebel army sends a wounded Gellius and a handful of survivors back to Rome as a reminder that these former slaves will not be brought to heel so easily.

By the spring of 71 BCE it seems the Senate needs a miracle to defeat Spartacus - it comes in the form of Marcus Licinius Crassus, one of the most successful and revered generals of the entire Republic. The Senate grants him full praetorship and a combined army of six legions. With an army of around 40,000 legionnaires, Crassus marches toward the remaining rebel forces. Crassus is a hardline general, a brutal leader who executes any rebels he finds and treats his own men with as much disdain, not hesitating to use decimation for his own troops following murmurs of tiredness or insubordination. Decimation involved a section of the army drawing lots in groups of ten; the other nine, usually by stoning or clubbing, would kill



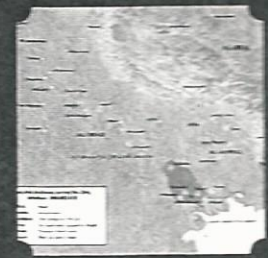
The remains of the arena in Capua where Spartacus would have fought in as a gladiator



Spartacus fought with Thracian-style armour and fighting method

THREE SLAVE REBELLIONS

Spartacus's uprising wasn't the only rebellion to rock the slave trade and 'civilised' society



Zanj Rebellion 869-883

At its height, the Abbasid Caliphate (one of three powerful Islamic states that controlled much of the Middle East and Asia

between 750 and 1517) had one of the biggest slave populations in the world. The Zanj Rebellion, which comprised a number of smaller uprisings that eventually solidified into a single national conflict, saw 500,000 captives rise up against their masters in a violent confrontation that eventually led to the formation of an independent state within Egypt. However, the Abbasid armies eventually regrouped and crushed what was left of the uprising soon after.



Haitian Rebellion 21 APRIL 1791 - 1 JANUARY 1804

Toward the end of the 1780s, Saint-Domingue was the most profitable possession controlled by France. It

produced a staggering 60 per cent of the world's coffee and around 40 per cent of all sugar reserves, but it did so by working its slaves into a mortality rate that far exceeded the island's birth rate. Inspired by the shock waves of the French Revolution, an uprising was concocted by freedom and military genius François-Dominique Toussaint Louverture. After almost 13 bloody years the French were driven off the island and the republic of Haiti was established.



Second Roman Servile War 104-100 BCE

Taking place over 30 years after the very first major servile conflict, the uprising led by slave

leader Tryphon grew to such a size that it took considerable military might on the part of the Republic to bring it to heel. The revolt broke out when most of the slave population on the island of Sicily walked out on their masters. Refusing to return to servitude, the slaves formed into a force of around 2,000 cavalry and 20,000 infantry. Despite its considerable presence, the consul general Manius Aquillius eventually put the rebellion down.

SPARTACUS: HOW A SLAVE DEFIED A REPUBLIC

The Senate was the political heart of the Roman Republic and where the decision was made to send troops to attack Spartacus's rebels



Spartacus and his uprising was finally defeated in 71 BCE, a battle that solidified Crassus's standing within Roman society



THE LIFE OF A SLAVE

A slave could live a good life in Ancient Rome, but the punishment for breaking the law led to some very severe punishments. Here are three of the worst...

Crucifixion

Up until the rule of Emperor Constantine - who eventually outlawed the cruel practice - a slave could be crucified for even the most menial of crimes, such as disrespecting a high-ranking member of society or even stealing food. Despite the fact that nails were driven through the feet and wrists, crucified slaves almost always died of asphyxiation as their joints began to separate.

Broken bones and branding

Those slaves who chose to run away from their servitude did not face death, but they did find themselves with a punishment that would remind them of their failed attempt at freedom: broken bones. It was common for legs, arms and feet to be broken, along with the branding of the word 'fug' (an abbreviation of 'fugivitus' or 'runaway'). Branding was also used for slaves who were sold into rural subjugation - these were usually individuals deemed too destructive and rebellious for life in the cities.

Execution of a household

Despite the considerable deficit in slaves toward the collapse of the Roman era, Roman citizens were terrified of uprisings among the serving class, so only the most severe of punishments were sought. If any slave assaulted or killed their master, the entire serving household would be murdered, one by one.

Kirk Douglas played Spartacus in the 1960 Oscar-winning film of the same name

POPULAR MEDIA & MYTH

Why has Spartacus's story endured throughout history?

While his uprising was ultimately defeated like the previous two servile wars, his actions as a general and a defier of authority has immortalised him as a symbol of universal rebellion. Embodied by future rebellion leaders (the Haitian Revolution's leader François-Dominique Toussaint Louverture was nicknamed the 'Black Spartacus' by his enemies), popular media (Kubrick's *Spartacus* film and the popular Starz TV series to name but two) and even a slew of sports teams. Bulgaria in particular, the modern-day site of Spartacus's supposed birthplace, openly celebrate him as a national hero. However, some theories suggest that Spartacus was not a single man at all, but in fact a cabal of individuals who knew that in order to defy the Republic they needed one figurehead that would both inspire the people and strike fear into the heart of authority. While such a theory does seem plausible considering the rebellion's scale, such a detail has been lost to the legacy of a single defiant man.



the soldier that loses. Crassus is unlike anyone Spartacus has ever faced.

Before Crassus and Spartacus meet for the first time, Spartacus defeats two of Crassus's allies in Picenum, tearing their legionnaires to shreds as they attempt to outflank the rebel army. As Crassus's forces approach, Spartacus attempts to show humility and barter a truce with the Romans. Crassus, sensing weakness, immediately attacks, his extremely disciplined soldiers carving into Spartacus's men. The rebels soon battle back but Crassus's forces are relentless - Spartacus realises this is not an enemy to be underestimated, so orders his troops to retreat. In a matter of minutes 6,000 rebels are dead with few major losses to Crassus's own legions.

Spartacus then decides to lead some of his forces over the Mediterranean Sea into Sicily. This large island had once seen a large slave uprising of its own decades before and Spartacus was counting on the considerable servile population to revolt and join his cause. He makes a deal with a band of local pirates to transport 2,000 of his men onto the island, but - if the ancient historian Plutarch is to be believed - the pirates instead take the payment and abandon the rebel forces to the Roman legions closing in behind them.

As the weeks roll by Crassus's forces relentlessly pursue Spartacus through Lucania, slowly

wearing the rebel army down in small battles and skirmishes. The tide is now turning in the favour of the praetor, and Spartacus knows it. The slave-turned-rebel-leader sends his forces into Rhegium, but Crassus builds fortifications on the border, cutting off the Thracian's supply lines. By the summer of 71 BCE the steam is fast dissipating

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from the rebellion, and with reinforcements arriving in the form of the legions of Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, the great Roman general and future consul, the end looms for Spartacus.

Hearing of the approach of the Pompey legions, Spartacus tries to broker another truce, but Crassus once again refuses to parlay with the rebel general. At the news that another attempt at

peaceful resolution has failed, a portion of the rebel army breaks away and flees into Petulia. A large consignment of Crassus's legions peels away and pursues them. With a lashing storm boiling on the horizon, the legionnaires catch the terrified former slaves, butchering over 12,000 of them.

Spartacus's own forces arrive to find the consignment of legionnaires standing in a field covered with their fallen brothers. The Thracian engages the soldiers, but Crassus's main army arrives soon after. Despite bringing the small military force to heel, Spartacus knows the real danger is behind him. He turns the full force of his army around and meets Crassus's men head on. They fight with all the fearlessness of true warriors and gladiators, but the larger force of the praetor begins to slowly wear Spartacus's men down. The battle is turning into a slaughter.

From across the battlefield the Thracian, exhausted from years of constant fighting and leadership, spies Crassus across the warzone. Sat atop his horse the general watches the rebel force fall apart from the safety of his personal guard. Spartacus never reaches Crassus though and his rebellion is routed by the general's military might. As the last breaths of life leave his body he witnesses his brothers cut down around him, the dream of freedom and defying the mighty Roman Republic finally over.