

villa	orator	Colosseum
toga	tunic	gladiator

## The Gladiator's Son

The gladiator took his son's hand in his own rough and calloused one. "Son, they want to send you to gladiator school to begin training soon, but this is not the life I want for you. I do not want you to ever stand in an arena and fight another gladiator or beast. So, tonight, you will run away. Go to school and learn math, Greek, and geography. Learn from Plato and Socrates. Rise above all of this."

Marco looked around the dark, dank cell at the scarred faces of the other gladiators. This was the only life he had ever known, and he did not want to leave. However, one by one, the gladiators nodded and told Marco to listen to his father's wise words.

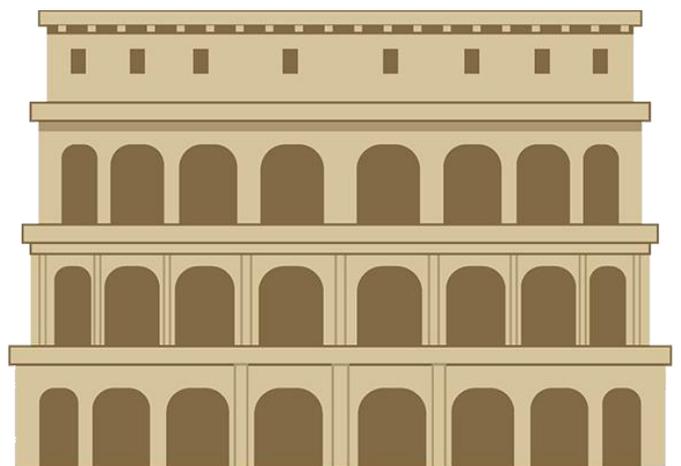


That night, Marco quietly slipped away. Wiping away a tear, he glanced back at the towering Colosseum, its smooth, white marble walls glistening in the moonlight. He had watched his father fight many times in that immense building in front of crowds of thousands of cheering people.

He fell asleep beneath a statue of Rome's founder, Romulus. According to legend, Romulus and his brother, Remus, had been raised by wolves until they were eventually found by shepherds. If Romulus could have such a difficult life but still be the founder of the great city of Rome, then Marco knew he, too, could overcome his difficulties.

In the morning, Marco awoke to a girl yelling at him. "Boy! You cannot sleep there! What are you doing inside my family's villa?"

Marco sprang to his feet. The girl was about his age, but intimidating. As Marco turned to run away, the girl grabbed his arm. "Wait! I have seen you before. You are from the Colosseum, are you not? Your father is a gladiator?"



Marco nodded and without knowing why, he began to tell her his story. When he finished, the girl squinted at him for a moment before saying, "Your father is wise. The gladiator fights are barbaric. My name is Cara, and I am going to help you start your new life. Wait here."

A few minutes later, Cara returned and handed him a tunic and a toga. "Put these on. You cannot go to school dressed as you are. These belonged to my older brother, but he will not miss them. I will turn away, so you do not need to be bashful, but please hurry!" She spun around and faced the garden wall.

Marco quickly removed his tattered wrap, slid the tunic over his head and then put on the toga. "Okay, I am ready."

Cara looked him over and then handed him a wax tablet. "This will be your school tablet. You write on it with this stylus, and then you can soften the wax to erase what you have written. Now, follow me. I have an idea for where you can live."



As they walked down the bumpy cobblestone street, merchants and tradesmen were selling their wares: fruits, vegetables, fish, handmade dishes and pottery, beautiful jewelry, and wool clothing. The aroma of garlic and herbs filled the air. Entertainers sang, danced and told stories. The streets were noisy with the bustle of the crowd. They passed by *insula* after *insula*, apartment buildings made of mudbricks and timbers. Finally, they reached their destination.

Cara pointed at a five-story *insula*. The courtyard was full of people cooking over small fires and cleaning their laundry in large wooden buckets of water. “There is an old woman here who makes pottery. She does not have much, but you will work for her and she will give you a place to live and help you go to school. With an education, you will never have to fight as a gladiator.



For the next 5 years, Marco spent his mornings in a small school, learning to read, write and give speeches with the other boys. In his afternoons, he worked for the lady making all types of clay bowls and containers. Because of Cara and a kind, elderly woman who took him in, he was able to complete his schooling and rise above his past.

Years later, Marco became one of the most well-known orators in Rome. He and other educated men spoke eloquently against the violence of arena battles. When the Emperor Honorius decreed the end to gladiator fights, Marco went to the Colosseum. As he rested his hand on the cold, stone wall, memories of his father and the sacrifices that his father had made for him, flooded his mind. He knew his father was proud of him, and he was proud to be a gladiator's son.



## The Gladiator's Son (exercises)

1. **Vocabulary: Use clues from the text to figure out what the underlined words mean.**

*"They want to send you to gladiator school to begin training next week, but this is not the life I want for you."* What does gladiator mean?

- a. someone who is happy all the time
- b. an older person
- c. someone who fought other people or beasts to make a living
- d. a person who cleaned the Coliseum

*"They passed by insula after insula, apartment buildings made from mudbricks and timbers."* What does insula mean?

- a. types of statues
- b. roads
- c. indoor kitchens
- d. ancient apartment buildings

“You write on it with this stylus and then you can soften the wax to erase what you’ve written.” What does stylus mean?

- a. something you could use to write with
- b. someone with good fashion sense
- c. a place where a pig lives
- d. someone with terrible fashion sense

“Marco quickly removed his tattered wrap and slid the tunic over his head and then put on the toga.” What does toga mean?

- a. a type of exercise
- b. clothing that was once worn in Ancient Rome
- c. a type of chariot
- d. a party game

“Years later, Marco became one of the most well-known orators in Rome.” What does orator mean?

- a. someone who rates things
- b. a type of gladiator
- c. a person who gives speeches
- d. someone who likes to eat

## 2. Compare/ Contrast

Mark wants to tell his classmates how schools in Ancient Rome were different from schools now. Use the Venn Diagram below. Re-write each statement in the correct place on the Venn Diagram. If a statement describes Ancient Rome schools, place the statement under "Ancient Rome". If it describes schools today, place the statement under "Schools Now". If it describes both schools in Ancient Rome and schools today, place the statement in the middle.

Students use wax tablets.

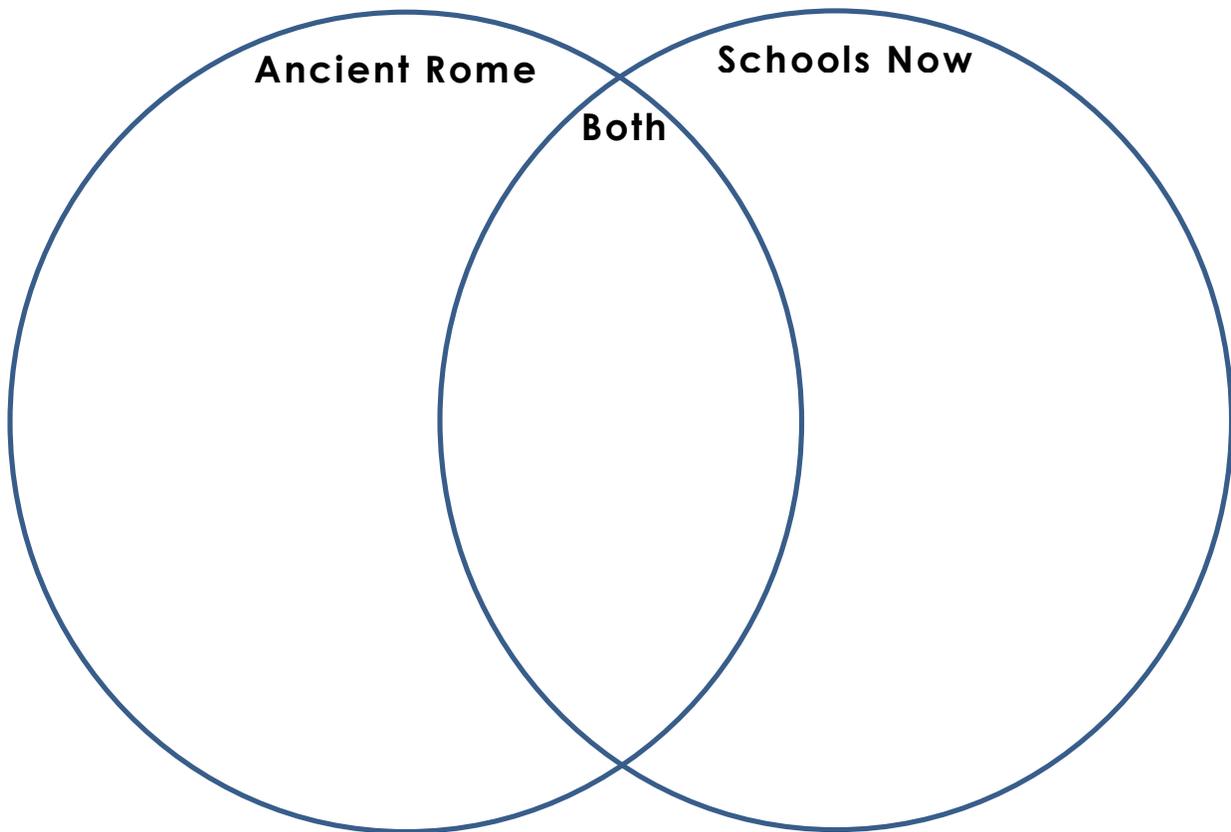
Students use paper, pencils, and computers.

Students learn new things from teachers.

Boys and girls go to school.

Generally, only boys go to school.

Students learn to read and write.



3. Pretend you had to give a speech to convince people that the gladiator fights should not be allowed. What would you say? Write a paragraph.

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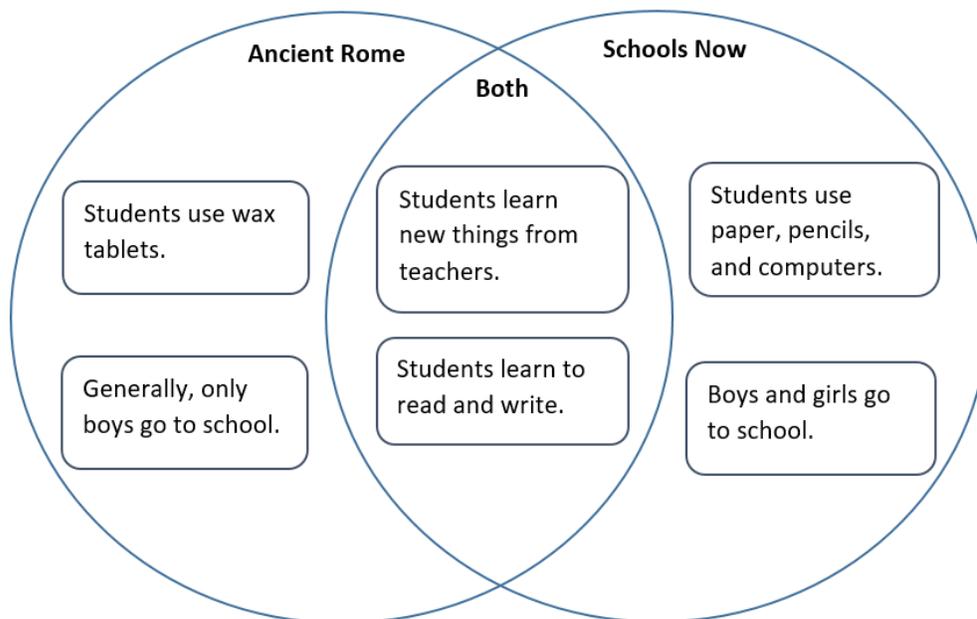
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# The Gladiator's Son (answers)

1. **Vocabulary:** Use clues from the text to figure out the words means.

- c. someone who fought other people or beasts to make a living
- d. ancient apartment buildings
- a. something you could use to write with
- b. clothing that was once worn in Ancient Rome
- c. a person who gives speeches

2. **Compare/ Contrast**



3. **Answers will vary.**