Name: _____

Date: _____

SPARTACUS

A gladiator named Spartacus terrified Rome with one of the greatest slave revolts in history. As Rome conquered new lands, it captured hundreds of thousands of prisoners. Many were sold into slavery and forced to work on farms, in mines, and on construction projects. Their labor helped make Rome rich, but it also created a growing population of enslaved people with nothing left to lose.

From Soldier to Gladiator

Spartacus was likely from Thrace, a land northeast of Greece, but we know very little about his early life. He may have been a soldier who was condemned to slavery before being forced to train as a gladiator.

Most gladiators did not choose that life. Many were prisoners of war, condemned criminals, or slaves sold to gladiator schools because they were young, strong, or skilled with weapons. Life in the arena was brutal, but successful gladiators could become famous. Crowds cheered their victories, children admired them, and a few earned prize money or even their freedom. A gladiator might hate being a slave, yet still take great pride in his courage, fighting skill, and reputation. Those same skills made escaped gladiators especially dangerous.

The Escape

In 73 BCE, Spartacus and about seventy other gladiators escaped from their training camp at Capua by seizing kitchen knives and fighting their way to freedom. At first, they had only the weapons they could steal. When the Romans sent a small force to capture them, the gladiators defeated the soldiers and seized their swords, shields, armor, and spears. The fugitives were no longer just runaway slaves. They had become a disciplined army of trained fighters.

A Slave Army

The Romans expected the escapees to scatter across the countryside. Instead, Spartacus organized a disciplined army. As word spread that the former slaves had defeated Roman soldiers, more people joined the revolt.

Roman slaves did not often run away. A lone runaway had little chance of surviving. He had no food, no money, and nowhere to hide. If captured, he faced brutal punishment or death. For most slaves, escape meant trading one desperate life for another. Spartacus changed everything. For the first time, thousands of slaves had somewhere to run. Every Roman defeat convinced more slaves that freedom might actually be possible.

Slaves on nearby farms abandoned their masters and joined Spartacus, bringing food, supplies, and information about the region. With each victory, more slaves flocked to his camp, and the small band of seventy gladiators soon grew into an army. By the time Rome realized the extent of the revolt, Spartacus led perhaps 60,000 to 100,000 followers.

The End of the Revolt

After two years of war, a general named Crassus trapped Spartacus in southern Italy. During the fighting, Spartacus saw the Roman lines beginning to break through. He charged into the thick of the battle to lead a counterattack. It was his last battle. The revolt was over.

With Spartacus dead, the rebellion collapsed. Thousands of survivors fled north, where a Roman general named Pompey and his army destroyed them.

Rome's Revenge

Rome captured about 6,000 rebels and crucified them along the Appian Way, one of Rome's busiest roads. The crosses stretched for nearly one hundred miles. Travelers passed thousands of rotting bodies for months, a gruesome reminder of what happened to anyone who challenged the power of Rome.

Crassus and Pompey returned to Rome as heroes and soon were elected consuls. But their greatest challenge still lay ahead. They would soon encounter the most famous Roman of them all, Julius Caesar.

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Name: _____

Date: _____

Fill in the Blanks

Spartacus was a g__a__i__t__r who led one of the greatest slave r__v__l__s in Roman history. As Rome c__n__u__r__d new lands, it c__p__u__ed hundreds of thousands of prisoners and forced many into s__a__e__y. Spartacus was likely a s__l__i__r from Thrace who was forced to fight as a g__a__i__t__r. In ____ BCE, he and about s__v__n__y gladiators e__c__p__d from a t__a__n__ng camp. Their *w__rr__or training allowed them to d__fe__t Roman soldiers and gain weapons. Instead of s__a__t__r__ng, Spartacus and his fellow slaves formed a d__s__i__l__n__d army. A word of the r__v__lt spread, more slaves joined the *reb__lli__n. The slave army grew to tens of t__o__s__n__s before the Roman general C__a__s__s defeated the insurrection. Spartacus died in battle, and Rome c__u__i__i__d thousands of c__p__u__ed rebels along one of Rome's b__s__e__t roads as a w__r__ing to anyone who c__a__l__n__ed Roman power.

Answer in Complete Sentence

1. Why did Rome have such a large slave population?

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*2. Why was Spartacus a greater danger to Rome than a typical slave?

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3. Why didn't Roman slaves run away?

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*4. Why did Rome choose such a brutal punishment after ending the slave revolt?

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*This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.

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