

Female Gladiators and Females in the household

Female gladiators in ancient Rome – referred to by modern-day scholars as *gladiatrix* – may have been uncommon but they did exist. Evidence suggests that a number of women participated in the public games of Rome even though this practice was often criticized by Roman writers and attempts were made to regulate it through legislation. Female gladiators are often referred to in ancient texts as *ludia* (female performers in a *ludi*, a festival or entertainment) or as *mulieres* (women) but not often as *feminae* (ladies) suggesting to some scholars that only lower-class women were drawn to the arena. There is a significant amount of evidence, however, that high-born women were as well. The term *gladiatrix* was never used in ancient times; it is a modern word first applied to female gladiators in the 1800's CE.

Household Whether upper or lower class, women were expected to adhere to traditional expectations of behavior. Women's status is made clear through the many works by male writers which deal with the subject in depth and well as various legislative decrees. It is not known how women felt about their position since almost all the extant literature from Rome is written by men. Harvey notes that "we have almost no literary source that reveals a woman's perspective on her own life or the role of women in general" (59). The one exception to this is the poetry of Sulpicia (1st century BCE). In her first poem, celebrating falling in love, she says how she does not want to hide her love in "sealed documents" but will express it in verse and writes, "It is nice to go against the grain, as it is tiresome for a woman to constantly force her appearance to fit her reputation" (Harvey, 77). This reputation, of course, was forced upon a woman by males; first her father and then her husband.

Male roles

Ancient Rome was a society where a man's role was far more important than that of a woman's. They had absolute authority over the family and in certain instances could even sell their children into slavery. The public life of ancient Rome was also largely but not exclusively reserved for men. Like other conventional societies, men in ancient Rome enjoyed the status of power. It was also men who mainly worked in agriculture, trade, and other professions. In urban centers, there were various places for mingling and socialization for men of ancient Rome.. The history of the men of ancient Rome can be traced back to the earliest settlements in Italy. In fact, two men of ancient Rome have central importance in the founding myth of Rome. According to this account, Rome was founded in 753 BC by two brothers named Romulus and Remus who were raised by a she-wolf. Subsequently, Rome went on to become a society where a man's role was always superior to that of a woman. The men in Rome played the central role in shaping the direction of Rome as a republic and then as an empire.. The role of Roman men in society was considerably higher than women and slaves. The society was composed of free men as well as slaves and there were thousands of slaves in the empire. These slaves were an important factor that sustained the economy of the empire. Free men married in their late teens and early twenties and choose their partners very carefully because divorce was rare in ancient Rome and was probably considered a taboo. Men of lower classes were usually farmers, shopkeepers, or craftsmen. In the afternoons, gatherings took place at public baths, theatres, and other places of socialization..



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