



[Home](#) > The Gladiators from Capua

The Gladiators from Capua

Books Reviewed:

[The Gladiators from Capua](#) [1]

Issue:

[148](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Nicholas Tucker](#) [3]

~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

This is the eighth title in Lawrence's Roman Mysteries series, with another ten still to go. Written at great speed and making full use of her encyclopedic knowledge of Ancient Rome, these very popular and successful books are already something of a publishing phenomena. Their amazingly energetic author also finds the time to make highly effective visits to schools, sometimes dressed in full Roman garb. Not surprisingly, she has an active fan club. As literature, the books are competently written although sometimes falling back on generally tired English. And while the historical details are painstakingly accurate, with a full glossary at the back, the 11-year-old characters around whom these stories revolve, as so often in historical writing for children, are utterly 21st-century in their emotions and attitudes. There is also a lot of violence and gore, which may help explain these books' huge popularity, but on the whole the child characters who witness it are sickened rather than enthused. The description of the fights between child gladiators in this story is particularly and properly horrible. So too are the accounts of those fiendish circus re-enactments of episodes from Roman mythology, where criminals are forced to act out the role of the God about to be slain. Once readers have waded through so many descriptions of pitiless and pointless human or animal slaughter, they too should feel nauseated by such excesses of human cruelty dressed up as public entertainment. This is obviously the author's intention, since her own young characters often want to look away from the horrors going on in front of them. The fact that they also sometime share in the barbaric excitement raised by such contests makes sense in terms of historical accuracy. But on the whole this book and the seven others that came before it steer away from celebrating any of the cruelties that once took place in times thankfully so different from our own, while still managing to get across some of the drama of the original horrific spectacle.

Running Order:

24

Source URL (retrieved on Mar '19): <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/148/childrens-books/reviews/the-gladiators-from-capua>

Links:

[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/the-gladiators-from-capua>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/148>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/nicholas-tucker>