Viktoryia Bartsevich, "Entry on: You Wouldn’t Want to Be a Roman Gladiator!: Gory Things You'd Rather Not Know by David Antram, John Malam, David Salariya", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/319. Entry version as of October 31, 2026.

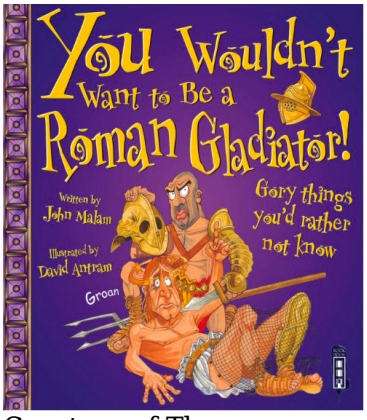
David Antram , John Malam , David Salariya

You Wouldn’t Want to Be a Roman Gladiator!: Gory Things You'd Rather Not Know

United Kingdom (2000)

TAGS: Ancient Slavery Charon Emperor Gladiator Games Gladiators Greeks Persians Rome





Courtesy of The Salariya Book Company.

General information	
Title of the work	You Wouldn’t Want to Be a Roman Gladiator!: Gory Things You'd Rather Not Know
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2000
First Edition Details	John Malam, ill. Dave Antram, *You Wouldn’t Want to Be a Roman Gladiator!: Gory Things You'd Rather Not Know*. London: Hodder Wayland, 2000, 32 pp.
ISBN	0750030666 / 9780750030663
Genre	Historical fiction, Humor, Illustrated works, Instructional and educational works, Picture books
Target Audience	Children
Author of the Entry	Viktoryia Bartsevich, University of Warsaw, v.bartsevich@student.uw.edu.pl
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children’s and Young Adults’ Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of “Artes Liberales” of the University of Warsaw.

Creators



David Antram , b. 1958
(Illustrator)

David Antram was born in 1958 in Brighton, England. He studied at Eastbourne College of Art. He has illustrated over 100 titles, mainly for children and young adults, including around 60 in the bestselling *You Wouldn't Want to Be* series. David Antram illustrated *You Wouldn’t Want to Live Without Toilets* by Fiona MacDonald and David Salariya, *You Wouldn’t Want to Live Without Antibiotics* by David Salariya, *How to Be an Ancient Greek Athlete* by Jacqueline Morley. All the aforementioned examples fall into the category of children's literature.

Sources:

The cover of *You Wouldn’t Want to be a Slave in Ancient Greece!: A Life You'd Rather Not Have*.

Profile at the jacketflap.com (accessed: July 4, 2017).

Bio prepared by Viktoryia Bartsevich, University of Warsaw, v.bartsevich@student.uw.edu.pl

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John Malam , b. 1957
(Author)

John Malam was born in 1957 in Wolverhampton, in England. He studied at the University of Birmingham, after which he worked as an archaeologist at the Ironbridge Gorge Museum, Shropshire. John Malam is a British author for children, as well as an editor and reviewer. He specializes in books for children. He wrote *Ancient Greeks at a Glance*, *Exploring Ancient Egypt*, *The Ancient Greeks*, *Gods and Goddesses*, *Myths and Civilization of the Ancient Romans*, *Greek Town* and others.

Sources:

Official website (accessed: June 4, 2017).

Profile on Brief Biographies (accessed: June 4, 2017).

Bio prepared by Viktoryia Bartsevich, University of Warsaw, v.bartsevich@student.uw.edu.pl

Questionnaire

1. What drew you to writing/working with Classical Antiquity and what challenges did you face in selecting, representing, or adapting particular myths or stories?

When I began writing for children, publishers "matched" me to their projects and commissioned me to write on subjects they knew I was familiar with. It is for this reason that I have been asked to retell Classical myths, and write about ancient civilisations. In every case, the publisher has already decided what the subject will be, and they then brief me about the age range, word count, and number of pages in the book.

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2. Why do you think classical / ancient myths, history, and literature continue to resonate with young audiences?

There is a requirement in the UK primary school curriculum (children aged 7—11) for them to learn about particular periods in history, eg Ancient Greece and Rome. As their myths are full of supernatural characters, heroes, and magical events, they can be retold in an exciting and appealing way for a modern audience.

3. Do you have a background in classical education (Latin or Greek at school or classes at the University?) What sources are you using? Scholarly work? Wikipedia? Are there any books that made an impact on you in this respect?

Yes – I have a degree in Ancient History & Archaeology. My sources are many and varied, and I have my own library of text books which I usually work from. I use some scholarly articles, but only occasionally, as my books don't need that level of research. I do use Wikipedia, but with caution, and like to cross-check information in verifiable sources.

4. Did you think about how Classical Antiquity would translate for young readers, esp. in (insert relevant country)?

A little. I became interested – fascinated – in antiquity (and prehistory) when I was a child, and read popular books about explorers and archaeologists finding "lost cities" or "buried treasure". I hope that some of my books might have inspired children to take an interest in the past.

5. How concerned were you with 'accuracy' or 'fidelity' to the original? (another way of saying that might be — that I think writers are often more 'faithful' to originals in adapting its spirit rather than being tied down at the level of detail — is this something you thought about?)

I try my best to be as accurate to the original source as possible – I feel this is important, and is my duty as a non-fiction writer. A fiction

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writer would be more likely to adapt the source material, and change it for their needs. Wherever I present a "fact", I want to be able to verify it with source material.

6. Are you planning any further forays into classical material?

I hope so! But, this will only happen if a publisher approaches me and commissions me to write for them.

Prepared by Viktoryia Bartsevich, University of Warsaw, v.bartsevich@student.uw.edu.pl



David Salariya , b. 1954
(Illustrator)

David Salariya was born in 1954 in Dundee, Scotland. He is the founder of Salariya Book Company. David Salariya is an illustrator. His first illustration was done for *Reader's Digest*.

Source:

Interview at the creativeinterviews.com (accessed: April 17, 2018).

Interview at the childrensillustrators.com (accessed: April 17, 2018).

Bio prepared by Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com and Viktoryia Bartsevich, University of Warsaw, v.bartsevich@student.uw.edu.pl

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Additional information

Translation

Polish: *Nie chciałbyś być rzymskim gladiatorem: przerażające rzeczy o których wolałbyś nie wiedzieć*, trans. Janusz Ochab, Warszawa: Firma Księgarska Jacek i Krzysztof Olesiejuk Inwestycje, 2005.

Summary

The book begins with the author asking the reader to play a role while reading, namely becoming a representative of the peoples over whom the Roman Empire wants to reign.

Each book in this series begins with an appeal to the reader to become a representative of the group featured in the book. The story begins with how Romans acquired slaves, conquered other nations, and the reader imagines him/herself to be one of these future slaves. The fate of a slave was grim, it usually began at a slave market where he could be sold to work in the mine or as a rower on a ship, to work as a farmer or in a quarry, and he could also become a gladiator. In all cases, a slave becomes the property of the man who pays for him the highest price at the market. The author describes the gladiator's lifetime, which begins with training and living in the barracks. The gladiator diet is also described: it consists of oatmeal, beans, barley groats and ash. If the gladiator is trying to escape, he will be punished and beaten. Once the gladiator training is over, the slave awaits to fight in the arena; the day before the fight he celebrates and rests. There are also different types of gladiator, weapons and costumes. After a game, when one gladiator wins, the public decides the other gladiator's fate: life or death. In addition to the traditional fight in the arena, there may also be a sea battle in which gladiators are divided into two camps: Greeks and Persians. The Maritime Battle is a kind of spectacle. Another variant of the show is a fight against wild animals. If the gladiator wins repeatedly, he may receive a wooden sword from the Emperor, which means he will no longer have to participate in combat, but will now be a trainer for new gladiators.

The text also contains many Latin terms that describe various aspects of life in the Roman Empire, and especially in the gladiator's life. It is a very useful part of the book, as it introduces the young reader to the Roman world and its ancient language.

The whole book is a kind of guide for a man expecting to become a

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	slave in Rome. There is a variety of tips on how to behave, what to do, where to look for medical help, what kind of weapons to use and how.
Analysis	The entire series "You wouldn't want to be..." created by David Salariya, consists of text and illustrations that complement it but play a more important role. They are colorful and pleasant, sometimes even funny. All content is explained in comments that appear on the margins. Each book in the series contains a glossary and a character index. This book provides also information about arms used by gladiators and various other historical facts. Illustrations serve as complement to the text. They are colorful and funny, often with the characters drawn like in a comic book.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Ancient Slavery Charon Emperor Gladiator Games Gladiators Greeks Persians Rome
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Animals Family Freedom History Past School Society Violence
Addenda	Entry based on: John Malam, *You Wouldn't Want To Be A Roman Gladiator!: Gory Things You'd Rather Not Know* (You Wouldn't Want To), ill. Dave Antram, created and designed by David Salariya. Brighton: Salariya Book Company Book House, rev. ed. 2016, 32 pp.

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