

Home Assignment 2

1. There are two elements of these games that Dio Cassius mentions that particularly stand out to me. First is the actual content of the games that Commodus put on. Dio Cassius mentions how the emperor killed a large variety of animals, and even entered the ring himself, "...he descended the arena from his place above and cut down all the domestic animals that approached him... ..he practiced and the armor that he used were those of the secutor..." (Dio Cassius 73. 18-21). The second element is the atmosphere around the games. This game was clearly different then most, as the general population rarely entered, fearing that Commodus would kill those in the crowd, "Of the populace in general, many did not enter the amphitheater at all, and others departed after merely glancing inside... ..partly also from fear." (Dio Cassius 73. 18-21).
2. From the text we can gather multiple aspects about the amphitheater's seating. First is that it had been divided into four sections by two walls, along with a gallery for people to view into these sections, "...the whole amphitheater had been divided up by means of two intersecting cross-walls which supported the gallery that ran its entire length..." (Dio Cassius 73. 18-21). This gallery was most likely for the general populace, as the senators and equestrians appear to have seating much closer to the actual floor of the amphitheater. I say this because the emperor was able to approach the seating area of the senators from the floor, "Having killed an ostrich and cut off its head... ..he came up to where we were sitting..." (Dio Cassius 73. 18-21).
3. No kissing can be done through a secutor helmet, as it only has small holes for eyes, and no gap for the mouth.
4. In the first section of this passage, it appears as if Commodus is acting as a normal Roman entertainer, "He also killed a tiger, a hippopotamus, and an elephant." (Dio Cassius 73. 18-21). This lines up almost perfectly with the actions of the average beast hunter in a Roman arena, "Few images are as evocative of Roman culture... ..of a lion approaching an assemblage of decorously attired Christians praying in the arena" (Potter & Mattingly, 327). Commodus even enters the arena as a gladiator, using the famous secutor attire, a sight uncommon for the arena, "...he practiced and the armor that he used were those of the secutor..." (Dio Cassius 73. 18-21). Where Commodus starts to differ is how he incorporated the spectators into his games. According to Dio Cassius, Commodus claimed he would kill those in the crowd, and even threatened attending senators, "partly also from fear... ..as a report spread abroad that he would want to shoot a few of the spectators... ..This fear was shared by all... ..Having killed an ostrich and cut off its head, he came up to where we were sitting... .. indicating he would treat us in the same way." (Dio Cassius 73 18-21). This differs greatly from the normal affairs in the

arena, as normally the spectators would be watching interactions between those on the floor, and would be outsiders. But here, Commodus threatened to kill the spectators, actively bringing them into the violence of the arena. Commodus being an outlier is stated perfectly here, "...the only 'public combatant'was the emperor Commodus-and he may well have been insane." (Potter & Mattingly, 328).

5. It is clear that Dio Cassius disapproves of Commodus actions, this is seen through the tone and word choice employed, "Others departed after merely glancing inside, partly from shame at what was going on, partly also from fear..." (Dio Cassius 73. 18-21). The way Dio Cassius describes Commodus is a far cry from other texts written about elite figures. While most emperors are usually glorified by those around them, Commodus is painted as a madman for what he did in the arena. This shows just how much Dio Cassius must have disliked him, "And many would indeed have perished by the sword on the spot, for laughing at him (for it was laughter rather than indignation that overcame us)." (Dio Cassius 73. 18-21).

Word Count: 693 (Including references)