

## World Prehistory

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**Interpreting the Weapons of War**

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**Introduction:** The expansion of the Roman Empire into Hispania, Britannia, and Germania ultimately introduced the accoutrements and luxuries of Roman civilization into Western Europe in the century preceding the first millennium of the Common Era. Until the imperial campaigns of Julius Caesar (55-54 BC), the Roman general Germanicus in Germania (AD 14-16), Plautius on behalf of Claudius (AD 43-46), and Hadrian (AD 122) in Britannia among the Britanni, much of Western Europe was dominated by tribal peoples and incipient agriculturalists who engaged in human sacrifice and intertribal warfare. The onslaught of Roman legions into each region was met with varying levels of resistance, depending on the extent to which the peoples so engaged were previously exposed to Roman and other Mediterranean military strategies and the weapons of war. Today's exercise will prevail upon you to identify those weapons and strategies of siege warfare available to the Roman legions and their targets of opportunity as portrayed in a recent major motion picture.

**Directions:** In order to complete with this Lab Deliverable, you will first need to view approximately 10 minutes of the motion picture Gladiator, starring Russell Crowe, and then draw on Internet resources to identify both weapons of war and siege tactics available to both the Roman legions and their Western European counterparts of that time extending from approximately 55 BC through the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD.

**Part 1: Video Review Content**

1. First, please review and prepare notes of any and all weapons of war and siege tactics or strategies depicted in the motion picture Gladiator (Dreamworks / Universal Studios, 1999).
2. Having reviewed the video, please gather into your regularly assigned teams or groups, and divide your efforts so that each team member addresses one or more of the following considerations pertaining to the period of the European expansion of the Roman Empire: (a) Roman weapons, (b) Roman warfare or siege tactics, and (c) Germanic or Britanni weapons and siege-craft.
3. Each team member is to select and research at least three specific weapons or types of armor, and at least two siege tactics, depicted in the motion picture.
4. Prepare to identify and discuss the origins, periods of use, and regions of deployment of each of the weapons and tactics identified where said information is available.

**Part 2: Questions and Considerations**

1. Given what you have learned from the Internet and your readings of Roman warfare, do you believe that the motion picture under consideration provides an accurate depiction of weapons and siege tactics identified with the Roman onslaught of "barbarian" or pre-Roman Europe? Why or why not?
2. Do you believe that this specific media depiction of both the peoples of Germania and Rome is accurate and relatively unbiased? Why or why not?
3. Given those material and social technologies in the film, what do you believe these examples of material culture have to say about the Roman people and their respective agendas regarding Western Europe and its occupation?