

Spartacus Study Guide

We are watching this movie for several reasons:

1. It is very accurate historically, and we are learning about the Roman Empire.
2. A movie engages your emotions and understanding in a way that history books might not.
3. We are examining the moral issues of slavery and rebellion, in order to write an essay.

As you watch the movie, answer the Study Guide questions, as a way of focusing your attention and noting important details. Complete sentences are not necessary, but specific details are. You will be writing an essay afterward, and this Study Guide is your main resource.

Cast of Characters:

Spartacus	slave gladiator in 73 BC
Batiatus	owner of the gladiator school in Capua, Italy
Marcellus	trainer in the gladiator school
Varinia	slave who marries Spartacus
Crixus	slave gladiator
Draba	slave gladiator
Crassus	Roman aristocrat, general, and later consul
Glaberus	Roman army commander
Helena & Claudia	Roman ladies
Gracchus	Roman senator
Antoninus	slave
Tigranes Levantes	Cilician pirate

Questions to Answer During the Movie

Preview these questions so you will see them coming.

1. As the movie begins, listen to the narrator's voice-over. The disease which plagues Rome in the first century BC is **h**_____ **s**_____.
2. In the first scene, we are in a salt quarry. Spartacus stops working and is punished. Why does he stop working? _____
What does this show about his character? _____
3. During Spartacus' first day in the gladiator school, the trainer Marcellus dares him to "kill me." How does Spartacus act? _____
What does this show about his tactics? _____

4. As a reward for good behavior, Spartacus is allowed the company of a woman. Notice his initial reaction, and the moment when he decides not to force her. What does Varinia say that makes him change his mind? _____
What does this show about his character? _____
5. What is Crassus' wedding present for Glaberus? _____
6. Carefully watch the faces of Spartacus and Draba as they await their turn in the arena. Imagine what they are thinking. After the scene is over, we will pause the movie. Then write what each one is thinking. Spartacus: _____
Draba: _____
7. List two destructive activities the slaves do in the days and months after they escape.
_____ and _____
Are they justified? ___ Give your reason. _____
8. What does the Senate do in response to the slave rebellion? _____
9. Notice the arrival of Antoninus. A few evenings later, Spartacus suggests how Antoninus can help: _____
10. Why is Glaberus defeated? _____
11. What deal does Spartacus make with Tigranes, the Cilician pirate? _____
12. What happens to that deal later? _____
What does Tigranes offer Spartacus? _____
What does Spartacus reply, and why? _____
13. In the final battle, compare the Roman and slave armies. _____

14. After the battle, why do many men shout, "I am Spartacus"? _____
15. Near the end of the movie, Antoninus asks, "Are you afraid to die, Spartacus?" Why is Spartacus not afraid? _____
16. When Spartacus and Antoninus are in the ring, what two alternatives does Spartacus face?

17. What do Gracchus and Batiatus do for Varinia and her baby? _____

18. At the end, to what extent would you say that Spartacus achieves his goals? _____

Use the space below to brainstorm ideas for your essay:

Look for moments of moral dilemma:

- ❖ When a character faces a decision of right or wrong (not smart or stupid)
- ❖ When both choices may lead to a result of someone getting hurt
- ❖ When the “right” choice is difficult

Start making notes about these, so you can choose one to write about.

Decision #1: (Character) _____ asks himself:

Should I _____

or _____

Setting/scene (time & place) _____

Decision #2: (Character) _____ asks himself:

Should I _____

or _____

Setting/scene (time & place) _____

Decision #3: (Character) _____ asks himself:

Should I _____

or _____

Setting/scene (time & place) _____

Critical Essay: Moral Issues in “Spartacus”

“Moral” or “ethical” is defined as the judgment of right and wrong, whether an action is good or bad behavior. In this story of struggle for freedom, the characters are faced with several moral choices, such as:

Is it right to kill this person under these circumstances?

Should I disobey an immoral command?

May I do something wrong, to prevent a greater wrong?

As you watch the film and take notes on your study guide, reflect about the difficult choices which the characters face. Choose one moral question from the story to analyze. **Write a five-paragraph essay according to the following directions. You will have the most success if you follow each step thoughtfully and precisely!**

The **first paragraph** is your introduction. Identify Spartacus and introduce the particular moral issue that you plan to analyze. When you give the background of the life and significance of Spartacus, write as if your reader does not know him. However, do not attempt to retell the plot or details of the movie. This introduction should be four to six sentences long.

In the **second paragraph**, set the scene so your reader can picture it: Describe the setting (time and place) of the decision that you are analyzing.

In the **third paragraph**, identify the moral choice that Spartacus faces. Why is it difficult? Specify the consequences of his alternative choices of action.

In the **fourth paragraph**, describe Spartacus' decision. How does he solve the problem? Analyze what you think goes through his mind as he evaluates what is right. This paragraph should be about four to six sentences long.

In the **concluding paragraph**, evaluate his decision. Explain why you agree or disagree with what Spartacus did. What would you have done if you were in his place? Reflect about the importance of the moral issue being decided. This paragraph should end with a conclusion sentence.

Formatting & Grading: The final draft of your essay may be written in ink or typed in 12-point font, and must be double-spaced. Hand in your essay attached to this packet. Your essay will be graded for logical organization, descriptive vocabulary, thoughtful reflection, and correct language, including spelling. A word about verbs: Use all present tense. Please refer to <<http://www.vhinkle.com/rome/spartacus.html>> and your study guide notes to help with details. I look forward to reading your thoughts about ethical issues.

Student Writing Rubric

Score		Message	Organization	Language
4	Exceeding standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Clearly and eloquently</i> addresses all parts of the task • Demonstrates <i>clear</i> understanding of purpose and audience • <i>Consistent</i> point of view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Clearly</i> focused central idea • Supports central idea with <i>relevant</i> details • <i>Clear</i> paragraph structure • <i>Effective</i> use of transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few, <i>if any</i>, errors in language: spelling, grammar, punctuation, capitalization • Any errors do <i>not</i> interfere with the reader's understanding • <i>Lively and creative</i> sentence variety
3	Meeting standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Understandably</i> addresses all parts of the task • Demonstrates <i>general</i> understanding of purpose and audience • <i>Mostly consistent</i> point of view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mostly consistent</i> focus • Supports central idea with <i>mostly relevant</i> details • <i>Provides</i> paragraph structure • <i>Some</i> effective transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Some</i> errors in language: spelling, grammar, punctuation, capitalization • Errors are distracting but do <i>not</i> prevent the reader's understanding • <i>Some</i> sentence variety
2	Approaching standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses <i>only parts</i> of the task • Demonstrates <i>little</i> understanding of purpose and audience • <i>Inconsistent</i> point of view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Inconsistent</i> focus • <i>Suggests</i> a central idea with <i>limited</i> details • <i>Inconsistent</i> paragraph structure • <i>Ineffective</i> transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Several</i> errors in language: spelling, grammar, punctuation, capitalization • Errors <i>may interfere</i> with the reader's understanding • <i>Little</i> sentence variety
1	Emerging skill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses <i>only one part</i> of the task • Demonstrates <i>no</i> understanding of purpose and audience • <i>Missing</i> a point of view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Missing</i> focus • <i>Missing</i> a central idea, but may contain <i>limited</i> or <i>marginally related</i> details • <i>Missing</i> paragraph structure • <i>Missing</i> or ineffective transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Serious basic</i> errors in language: spelling, grammar, punctuation, capitalization • Errors interfere with the reader's understanding • <i>Missing</i> sentence variety