

The Teenaged Emperor

Dear Diary

Diary. Should I call this a diary? *Diary* makes me think of some over-sensitive little boy who reads too much poetry and spends all day in his room and is scared to talk to any girls and loves his mummy. No. This is a historical record. A historical record for people to read and learn from and understand that I, Gaius Julius Caesar Germanicus, better known as Caligula, will be immortalised as the youngest Roman emperor in history at the age of sixteen, the greatest emperor, the most powerful, the most loved, the most feared, the most respected, the most--dare I say?--*worshipped*. More than an emperor-- a god.

Dear dia- - no dear historical record-- no that's too long-- I'll stick with diary-- I'll get someone to rewrite it later – anyway today I decided to organise the best games the city of Rome has ever seen. The plebs--sorry, the people--are most simple and stupid and nothing pleases them more than the sight of two gladiators chopping each other's heads off. The plebs--I mean the people--already adore me because of my father Germanicus, the bravest military general the world has ever seen. Once they see the games they will love me even more. *Worship* me even.

The games were brilliant. First of all, the ple--I mean peo--no it's no good I have to call them plebs-anyway they all knelt down before me and chanted 'CA-LIG-U-LA! CA-LIG-U-LA!' and if they didn't my guards gave them a jolly good whack with the flats of their swords to encourage them to do so. Next I had a load of slaves pushed into the arena and had the guards give them swords. I then sent in the two best gladiators from Rome and the two best from Campania. It was absolutely savage! There were twenty unskilled little slaves waving their swords about against the four best swordsmen in the Empire! The slaves did their very best (I had promised to free them if they survived) and even managed to kill one of the gladiators, but in the end their lack of training showed. After defeating them the gladiators chopped off their heads and booted them into the crowd, who then used them to play catch!

I saved my big surprise for the end of the games though. I gave a speech to the crowd telling them to remember that I, Caligula, was responsible for giving them the gift of the games,

and what they were about to see was something they would remember for the rest of their lives, and for that they should be eternally grateful. To me. So after my speech and a few more 'CA-LIG-U-LA!'s I gave the signal to open the huge gate to the east of the arena. And then they saw it. The largest, most magnificent beast the plebs or anyone for that matter had ever seen: the majestic Indian elephant, large as a temple, tusks the size of chariots. No one had dreamed such a beast possible, but as soon as I became emperor I sent a special team overseas to find and capture the most astonishing creatures on earth and bring them to Rome at any cost. The crowd stood in awe of the elephant, their mouths and eyes wide open in astonishment. I then gave the signal for the gate to be opened to the west of the arena. And then they saw it: a enormous African hippopotamus! It stomped into the centre, looked up and round at the crowd, and opened its colossal jaws to show off its mountainous teeth and emit the most terrifying roar and screech known to man. The plebs all jumped back and screamed in fear, it was hilarious! Some of them wet themselves they were so scared! Then the fight began...

The hippo was the aggressor. It was angry, really angry. (I suppose the guards jabbing it with spears had made it grumpy). As soon as it saw the elephant it charged towards it and the ground shook. The elephant was not in the mood for fighting. It turned away from the hippo and tried to shuffle off away and out of trouble, but the hippo was not in the mood for *not* fighting. It bit and bit and bit, the elephant winced in pain but still ignored the attacks and did not retaliate; it was like some wise old pacifist. The hippo bit some more, blood stained the sand, it butted the elephant repeatedly and eventually wore itself out. The elephant made its way over to the corner and sat down facing the hippo. The crowd shouted insults at the elephant telling it get up and fight as if it was some cowardly boxer (they really are a stupid lot). The hippo was panting heavily, and making all sorts of awful noises and disgusting smells. The elephant sat there looking all sad with blood leaking out of its leathery grey skin. After a time the hippo regained its energy and stalked its opponent. It stood directly in front of it and stared. It roared a hellish sound which rather bothered my ear-drums. It then charged towards the stationary elephant which was still sat down like a sulky child. The elephant looked done for, but just as the hippo was about to attack it stood up and thrust its tusks deep into the hippo's chest. The hippo recoiled and tried to flee but the prey had turned predator. It charged at the hippo again and again, its tusks piercing the

chest, back and belly. The elephant then rammed the hippo into the wall, making the plebs jump back in terror and cause a stampede. One fellow lost his footing in the commotion and fell from the stands into the arena! The elephant stood back and looked at the defeated hippo lying on its side, bones broken and skin shredded. I'll never forget the look on the elephant's face; it seemed to smile a sort of smug grin, and arrogantly flounced off to the other side of the arena towards the gate. The guards opened the gate and the elephant exited the stage to rapturous applause.

In the days leading up to the games my dim-witted uncle Claudius kept droning on about the need to stop spending so much money on gold statues of myself, massive parties, new mansions, hundreds more slaves blah blah blah-oh and he warned me not to spend so much on the elephant and hippo-shows how much he knows because they were a roaring success! My silly old uncle is just not as bright as me; when I found out we needed to save some money, I did some enquiries-it turned out we had to actually *pay* to keep prisoners in prison, we had to *pay* for their food, and we had to *pay* the guards to watch over them and stuff like that. Well I thought paying to keep prisoners was just absurd! So as a final treat for the plebs at the games, I released about fifty prisoners (without any weapons or armour) into the arena and five minutes later released a load of starving animals! You can imagine what happened next, and the crowd absolutely loved it, loads more CA-LI-GU-LA!s at the end. Not to mention we saved an absolute fortune on prison costs!

After the games I must admit I got a little grumpy with a lot of the rich oldies that were always hanging around the senate and the palace, and my uncle kept shoving pieces of paper in front of me saying we had spent all the money in Rome, all the money in Egypt was gone, etc etc. Well there was no way I was going to start living like a monk-I'm an emperor for goodness' sake! So I had to come up with another superb plan to raise some gold. There were all these old gentlemen who hung round, telling me how much they adored me, telling me I was the father of Rome, telling me that I should be made a god and many other things- so then I thought they should put their money where their mouths were. For that reason I insisted they rewrite their wills, in front of me, stating that when they died all their money and land and property should belong to me instead of their wives and children. Well after all, if I truly am the father of Rome and a god-as they say-I should be the one to keep hold of the money and decide how best to spend it to protect my children! As it turned out, a life of

luxury and never having to do anything meant these oldies lived to an annoyingly old age- until unfortunately, completely out of the blue of the course, many of them died due to old age, or sudden bouts of illness, or accidents, or...

As I write this today I am sitting in the theatre, having just written and arranged and witnessed the most splendid play this city has ever seen. I appear to be alone though which is unusual. My guards have gone and there are no servants to pour my wine. How odd, and annoying! Anyway to get to back to my play it was just brilliant , it all starts in a forest when a young hero finds a-hang on, as I write there are some guards approaching me who don't look familiar-are they new? Who gave the go-ahead for new guards? They seem rather angry and are slowly edging towards me holding swords and... oh.

THE END

Comprehension Questions

1. How old was Caligula?
2. Who was Caligula's father and what was he famous for?
3. What happened to the people who didn't chant 'Ca-lig-u-la!'?
4. What did the gladiators do to the slaves?
5. Which animal survived?
6. What happened to the prisoners?
7. How did Caligula raise money after the games?
8. What do you think happens to Caligula at the end?
9. This is written as a diary extract in first-person narrative-why has the author made these choices?
10. The author uses many dashes in this extract-what effect do they create?