

The Colosseum

Week 11 • Thursday • Rome's Giant Stadium — Then and Now

Reading Time

The most famous Roman building of all is the **Colosseum** — a giant oval stadium in the middle of Rome, finished in the year 80 AD. It could hold about 50,000 people, close to a modern football stadium! Its walls are rings of arches stacked four levels high.

Romans came to watch shows: gladiator contests, animal parades, and acted-out battles. There were 80 entrances so huge crowds could get in and out quickly, and a giant cloth roof called the **velarium** could be pulled over the top for shade. Under the floor were tunnels and even elevators worked by ropes!

Sound familiar? Modern stadiums copy the Colosseum: oval shape, numbered gates, ringed seating, and pull-over roofs. Today millions of visitors travel to Rome just to see it. When you watch a big game in a stadium, you're seeing a Roman idea!

Reading Questions

1. About how many people could the Colosseum hold?

2. What was the velarium for?

3. Why did the Colosseum have 80 entrances?

Then and Now

Write B if BOTH the Colosseum and modern stadiums have it, or C if only the Colosseum did.

Feature	B or C?
Oval shape with ringed seats	
Gladiator fights	
Lots of numbered entrances	
A roof that can cover the top	
Rope-powered elevators under the floor	
Huge cheering crowds	

Fill in the Blanks

Colosseum arches velarium gladiators 50,000

1. Rome's giant stadium is called the _____.

2. It could hold about _____ people.

3. Its walls are stacked rings of _____.

4. Fighters called _____ competed there.

5. The cloth roof was called the _____.

Think About It

1. How is the Colosseum like a stadium you've seen today? Name two ways.

2. Would you have liked to visit the Colosseum in Roman times? Why or why not?

Draw It!

Draw the Colosseum with its rings of arches — and a huge crowd inside watching a show.

