



Spartacus and the Slave War 73–71 BC: A gladiator rebels against Rome (Campaign)

By Nic Fields

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This Osprey Campaign title brings to life the story of Rome's most famous revolt, the Slave War (73-71 BC), and the ex-gladiator who led it. In the year 73 BC, the Thracian Spartacus broke out of the gladiatorial training school at Capua in Campania. A charismatic leader, Spartacus formed an army of runaway slaves and people with little to lose, and defeated the Roman troops under the praetor C. Claudius Glaber. With this minor victory, Spartacus' army swelled to 70,000 and rampaged throughout Campania assaulting a number of cities and defeating two consular armies.

Terrified lest the revolt spread across the republic, the government assigned M. Licinius Crassus the task of crushing the revolt. Crassus' first attempt to capture Spartacus failed, and the Roman senate called upon Pompey to help him. Together, they cornered Spartacus and brought him to battle near the source of the river Silarus. During the battle, Spartacus was killed and his army defeated. Crassus crucified 6,000 prisoners as an example to others who might think of revolt.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Dr. Nic Fields started his career as a biochemist before joining the Royal Marines. Having left the military, he went back to University and completed a BA and PhD in Ancient History at the University of Newcastle. He was Assistant Director at the British School at Athens, Greece, and then a lecturer in Ancient History at the University of Edinburgh. Nic is now a freelance author and researcher based in south-west France.

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