

## CIRCUS MAXIMUS

# Race to the Death

ANNELISE GRAY  
TEACHING RESOURCES



## THE BEGINNING

Before reading the book, look at the cover. What is the Circus Maximus? Why do you think the author has given her book a subtitle? What might 'race to the death' refer to?

### Cast of Characters

Why might an author have written a cast of characters for the beginning of the book? What do you notice about the places?

**RESEARCH:** How far did the Roman Empire stretch during the reign of Emperor Caligula? Find a map and label the places. Why do you think the Romans wanted to conquer different lands? How did they travel between them?

**ACTIVITY:** Now look at the names of the horses. Do any of them have a symbolic name? Take one name and research the story behind it.

### Read the first chapter

**DISCUSS:** When is the novel set? What clues are there in the opening? Why has the author chosen to start with a race? What sort of race is it? What does Dido's father do for a living? Look at the action words when describing this first race. The author has used powerful verbs, including 'steered', 'tore', 'flexed', 'shaking', 'spun'. Make a list of the verbs used in the first two pages. Can you find some synonyms for these verbs?

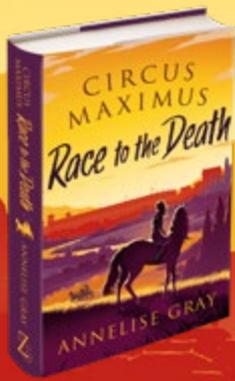
**ACTIVITY:** Write your own race scene. What sort of race is it? Can you use as many powerful verbs as possible to make the action fast and immediate?

### Writing Style

The chapters are numbered in Roman Numerals.

**ACTIVITY:** Can you write your age in Roman numerals? How about today's date? And your birth date?





CIRCUS MAXIMUS

# Race to the Death

ANNELISE GRAY  
TEACHING RESOURCES



## Structure

Look carefully at the structure of the novel.

**DISCUSS:** What is the inciting incident that kickstarts the plot? How does the author pace the action? Now look at the way the novel is punctuated by races, both practice and real. Where do they appear? What effect does this have on the reader?

**ACTIVITY:** Plot the action of the novel on a story mountain. Where is the climax of the story? What is the resolution?

**DISCUSS:** Look at the last line of chapter XX. Why do you think the author starts the next chapter eighteen months later?

## Dialogue

As the reader moves through the novel, much of the plot away from the races is told in dialogue.

*'A lot of them have been playing up today. They're like cats on hot embers.'*

*There was a rumble of laughter behind us.*

*'Who cares? They're winning, aren't they?'* (Page 16)

**DISCUSS:** How does the author show character and create strands of relationships through the dialogue? Read Chapter II and look at the banter between characters. How does Gray move the plot forwards?

**ACTIVITY:** Choose two characters from the book and create fresh dialogue between them. How can you tell part of the story only through what the characters say, or what they don't say? Intersperse the dialogue with physical gestures. Now create your own characters and story and do the same.

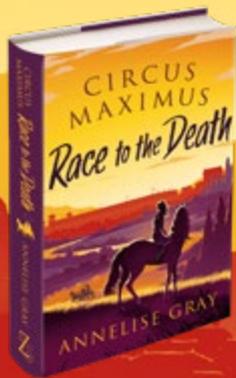
## Metaphor

*'I snapped the reins so that they rippled like waves over Hannibal and Mago's wide yellow backs.'* (Page 151)

*'Out of the corner of my eye, I could see a line of horses surging forward like the crest of a wave about to crash on to the shore.'* (Page 182)

*'A team of four black horses had burst into the arena like a stormy wave across a calm surf.'* (Page 191)





## CIRCUS MAXIMUS

# Race to the Death

ANNELISE GRAY  
TEACHING RESOURCES



*'But you don't survive being shipwrecked in the Circus as many times as I did without knowing how to slip a rope.'* (Page 238)

*'Helix had visited me there and told me the story of when he was first shipwrecked. "It's all good practice for the next time. You're not a charioteer until you've been wrecked a few times."'* (Page 258)

**DISCUSS:** Why do the charioteers use the expression of being 'shipwrecked' when a race goes wrong? Do you think the sea metaphors fit with charioteering? Explain your answer. Are there any other metaphors you could use to describe chariot-racing?

**ACTIVITY:** Watch the video of the famous 'surfer' advertisement from Guinness (1999). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9znA\\_dwjHw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9znA_dwjHw)

Search online and look at the painting *Neptune's Horses* by Walter Crane (1892). Research the metaphor of the white horse, and the Roman god Neptune. Are the horses and the sea linked?

What impression does this metaphor make? Look at the video and the painting and see what is portrayed. Compare these horses with those in the painting *The Chariot Race* by Alexander Von Wagner from 1873.

**ACTIVITY:** Write a descriptive passage of a chariot race, using the Von Wagner painting as inspiration.

## SETTING & PLACE

The book is historical fiction, set during the time of Emperor Caligula in Ancient Rome. Read the note from the author at the end of book titled *'Did any of this really happen?'* (Page 343)

**RESEARCH:** Find out more about the time of Emperor Caligula. You may wish to present information about him in a family tree, or a timeline of his reign.

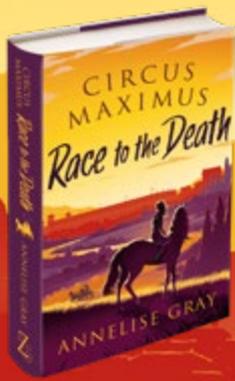
Find a picture of Caligula on his favourite horse, Incitatus. How is the emperor portrayed? What does the name Incitatus mean?

**DISCUSS:** What is the risk of using real historical people in fiction? What limitations are placed on the author?

**ACTIVITY:** Write your own short story with a real historical person as a character. Explain in an author's note at the end why you have chosen that figure. Which details have you kept real and which have you fictionalised?

There are many ways that an author can show when their novel is set, usually using historical detail.





## CIRCUS MAXIMUS

# Race to the Death

ANNELISE GRAY  
TEACHING RESOURCES



### Place

*'An avenue stretched ahead, lined with billowing cloths like a fleet of sails.'* (Page 49)

**DISCUSS:** How is Rome made distinct from Utica and Carthage? Give examples from the text as to where Gray depicts this. Look particularly at page 58.

**ACTIVITY:** Refer back to the map you found of the Roman Empire during the time of Caligula. Where is Utica? Where is Carthage? Name the modern countries in which these ancient cities are situated.

### Food

*'Give me honest fare like this over all the roasted peacock and jellied sea-urchins that my rich friends serve back in Rome.'* (Page 89)

*'We ate in the dining room, an enormous spread of roast meats, vegetables and sauces laid across a vast table. Otho and Helvia lay on couches...'* (Page 289)

Gray writes about food throughout the novel.

**DISCUSS:** Can you find other examples? How do they compare with modern foods? Which foods are eaten when?

**ACTIVITY:** Make a list of foods that the Romans had which are the same as today, and a list of those that are different. Which is the longer list?

**ACTIVITY:** Find a Roman recipe online and attempt to make the food. Can you find all the ingredients? Is it delicious?

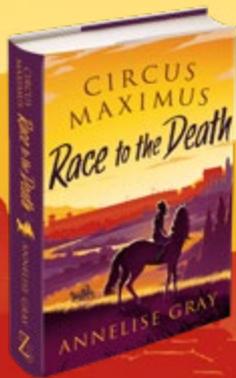
**ACTIVITY:** Draw up a menu plan for a feast for an emperor. You might wish to design this so that the Emperor Caligula would approve!

Note that the guests at a Roman feast recline. Can you find an illustration of this?

**ACTIVITY:** Research different cultures to see how they eat their food. Do they eat round a table or on the floor? Do any not sit at all? Do any modern cultures still recline?

Outside the Circus Maximus, food is sold for the spectators: *'hot sausages, fried oysters, salted peas.'* (Page 18)





CIRCUS MAXIMUS

# Race to the Death

ANNELISE GRAY  
TEACHING RESOURCES



**DISCUSS:** Is this Roman 'fast food?' How does it differ from today's food sold at sporting events? Does the food differ depending on the sport? Why do you think this is?

## Belief and culture

The characters in *Circus Maximus* make many references to their religion, their gods:

*'May the gods be with you.'* (Page 165)

*'The life given us by the gods is short.'* (Page 166)

*'...his smiling face waiting for me on the other side of the river as the ferryman's boat drew nearer.'* (Page 223)

*'I felt as if I was running away from a pack of Furies.'* (Page 245)

**RESEARCH:** What did the Romans believe? Make a PowerPoint or a poster with your findings. Remember to include what the Romans believed about the afterlife, household shrines and their different gods. Explain who the Furies are.

## Medicine and Remedy

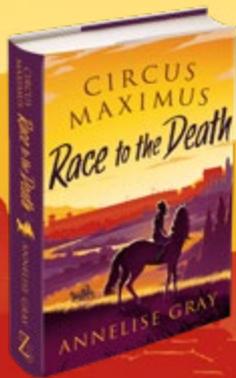
*'This is vinegar with rue flowers and thyme.'* (Page 107)

**DISCUSS:** How does modern medicine differ from that of Roman times?

**ACTIVITY:** Research which natural remedies the Romans used for ailments. Create a poster showing which plants are helpful and which poisonous. Check that you have used plants and flowers found in the lands of the Ancient Roman Empire.

To write historical fiction, the author would need to research the period. Gray would have used primary and secondary sources. What is the difference between these? Can you find a primary source of the Roman period? What is it and what does it tell you about life in Roman times?





CIRCUS MAXIMUS

# Race to the Death

ANNELISE GRAY  
TEACHING RESOURCES



## CHARACTERS

### Dido

**DISCUSS:** What is the origin of the name Dido? Why do you think the author has chosen this name for her protagonist?

Re-read the first chapter.

*'I was known at the stables for the neatness of my plaiting.'* (Page 11)

**DISCUSS:** How does the author introduce Dido's strengths in the first chapter? What are her skills? Other than plaiting, what else is Dido known for in the novel?

*'Oh. Pretty, isn't she. All that golden hair with that bronze skin...like a little lioness...'* (Page 20)

**DISCUSS:** Is this said as a compliment? What are the different ways you could interpret the description of 'lioness'?

*'All I had to do was keep to a good line and control the pace.'* (Page 4)

*'controlling their acceleration with just a touch of my whip.'* (Page 288)

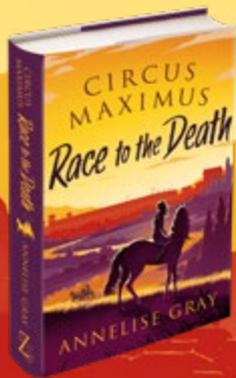
**DISCUSS:** How does Dido develop as a charioteer over the course of the book? Look at her many different races. You might particularly focus on the races in chapters I, XXIII, XXVII, XXXIX, and XLIX. Read Chapter XVIII again.

**DISCUSS:** How does the author build the tension in this chapter? How does she show which skills Dido needs?

**ACTIVITY:** Write Dido's diary entry after the practice, or write your own diary entry about a nerve-racking event, or one in which you needed to prove yourself. Perhaps this was a play you were in, or your own sporting event. What are your feelings before the event, and after? Was it successful? Think about the relationship between Dido and her father:

*'What I saw there made my heart almost burst with love for him.'* (Page 9).





CIRCUS MAXIMUS

# Race to the Death

ANNELISE GRAY  
TEACHING RESOURCES



**DISCUSS:** How does Dido view her father? Is Antonius proud of Dido? How does the author show this? In the novel, Dido disguises herself first as a boy, and then as a princess:

*'There can't be a Dido any more. We need to make you disappear.'* (Page 138)

**DISCUSS:** In what other literature does a girl disguise herself as a boy?

Read page 144 to page 145.

**DISCUSS:** Why does Dido think of her reflection as a stranger?

*'Sometimes I wonder who the real me is.'* (Page 281)

**DISCUSS:** Why does she say this? Who do you think is the real Dido? Can hairstyles, clothes and accessories make people appear different? Think about whether outside appearances can change who a person is inside?

**ACTIVITY:** Invent a character by listing their clothes and accessories. Use makeup and hair style too. What can this show you about your character? Give the list to a classmate and see how they discern the personality from this 'outwards appearance' list.

*'Strands of my hair were being wrapped around a metal cylinder that glowed hot. I could see the tight ringlets as they were unwound and draped over my shoulder.'* (Page 293)

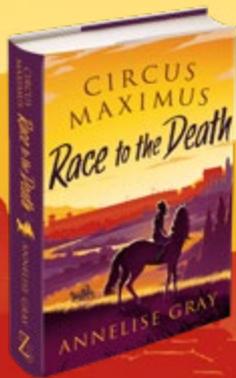
**DISCUSS:** Read the next two pages – how does this dressing up conform to our modern idea of womanhood. Dido says she doesn't feel like herself. Have you ever had an occasion in which you've dressed up but not felt like yourself? Describe your feelings.

One of the objects Dido uses to dress up as a princess is a diadem.

**DISCUSS:** What is a diadem?

**ACTIVITY:** Design a diadem for Dido. What would the pattern be, which gemstones would it have?





CIRCUS MAXIMUS

# Race to the Death

ANNELISE GRAY  
TEACHING RESOURCES



## Dido and Scorpis

Look at the relationship between Dido and Scorpis over the course of the novel. Re-read Chapter XXIV.

*'One of Scorpis's hands, warm and rough with old blisters, covered mine.'* (Page 99)

*'Will you trust me now? You can you know.'* (Page 101)

**DISCUSS:** How does the author gradually reveal that Scorpis is a man Dido can trust?

**ACTIVITY:** After you have finished reading the whole book, write a passage from Scorpis' point of view in which he first meets Dido (end of Chapter IX, beginning of Chapter X). Remember that Scorpis knows more about his relationship with Dido than she does at this point.

## Charioteers

List the various charioteers named in the novel.

**ACTIVITY:** Can you rank the charioteers in order according to their successes?

*'When I was little, I had seen the body of a charioteer who had died like this, strips of skin peeling from his raw flesh, his body like a broken doll.'* (Page 30)

*'Scorpis had instincts Fabius won't ever have. He was completely ruthless...He raced without fear, something I could never do.'* (Page 34)

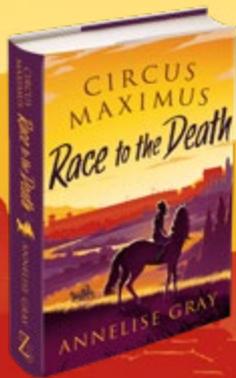
**DISCUSS:** Which characteristics make a successful charioteer?

Read Nicias' reaction to Dido's run in Chapter XIX.

**DISCUSS:** Why is Nicias jealous? Does jealousy jeopardise his career? How? Are there characteristics a charioteer shouldn't have?

**ACTIVITY:** Look at the annotated illustration of the charioteer at the beginning of the book. Where would they need to build muscle strength? Can you think of any modern sports that demand similar physicality? Which forces are acting on the charioteer? Can you label a copy of the illustration with these?





CIRCUS MAXIMUS

# Race to the Death

ANNELISE GRAY  
TEACHING RESOURCES



## Caligula

*'Caligula was on his feet, doubled over and shaking with enjoyment, seemingly oblivious to the puzzled stares from the spectators around him.'* (Page 30)

**DISCUSS:** Why does the author depict this as one of the first impressions the reader has of Caligula? Gray characterises Caligula before the reader and Dido meet him. How and why does she do this?

*'A tyrant with the mind of an infant and the appetite of a cannibal.'* (Page 224)

Cassius speaks these words about Caligula.

**DISCUSS:** What does he mean by this? Is he correct? Use evidence from the text to back up your answers. Why is it dangerous for a powerful man to be this way? Can you think of any contemporary leaders who behave badly like this?

**ACTIVITY:** Write an interview with Caligula for a magazine or newspaper. Think about the ways he humiliates other people and the way he is described in the book. Make up his answers based on this knowledge.

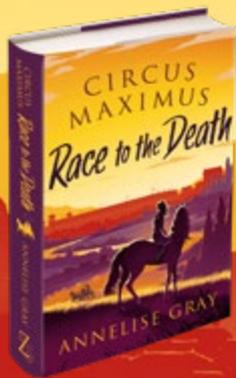
Read Chapter XLVII.

*'Caligula lay on the couch like a loosely coiled snake.'* (Page 299)

**DISCUSS:** What impression is created when the reader meets Caligula? Is it different from the impression given by others? How does he humiliate people around him?

**ACTIVITY:** Draw a comic book sketch of the banquet. How are you storyboarding it? Or write the film directions as if you were making a television programme of the scene. Think about where to zoom in and out. Which characters are you focussing the camera on?





## CIRCUS MAXIMUS

# Race to the Death

ANNELISE GRAY  
TEACHING RESOURCES



### Cassius

*'I recognised the voice and turned to see the blue-eyed pedestrian who'd asked for a ride in our wagon earlier.'*  
(Page 82)

**DISCUSS:** When the reader first meets Cassius, does he seem good or bad? Is he on Dido's side? Use evidence from the text to back up your arguments.

By Chapter XX, on page 128, he has revealed himself to be threatening.

**DISCUSS:** Look at the way he uses language. How is it threatening. How does his language show his character? Despite being threatening, is Cassius impressed with Dido?

*'Why would Macro go to such lengths to find a twelve-year-old girl and silence her?'* (Page 130).

**DISCUSS:** Why do you think?

## THEMES

### Chariot-Racing

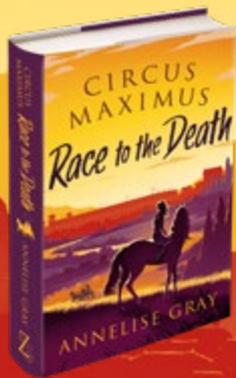
Chapter IV describes the Circus Maximus.

**ACTIVITY:** Can you draw a picture of the Circus Maximus from the details given? How does it differ from a modern racecourse or stadium?

*'The turn is the most important part of the race.'* (Page 2)

**DISCUSS:** The author has put this in italics. Does it bear out during the rest of the book? What do you think is the most important part of the race? Does chariot-racing sound exciting?





CIRCUS MAXIMUS

# Race to the Death

ANNELISE GRAY  
TEACHING RESOURCES



**ACTIVITY:** If you are in a classroom, divide into teams or colours, and research Roman charioteers, chariots and races. You may wish to use the following weblinks:

<http://flavias.blogspot.com/2010/01/fun-chariot-facts.html>

[www.unrv.com/culture/chariot-races.php](http://www.unrv.com/culture/chariot-races.php)

[www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/romans/leisure](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/romans/leisure)

**ACTIVITY:** Create your own chariot-racing team. What are the names of the charioteers and the horses? What colour is your team? Compose a chant for your team.

Now design a poster for race day. How much are tickets? What year is it? You may wish to use Roman numerals. Will the Emperor be attending? How can you make the race appealing?

**ACTIVITY:** Write a race report for Dido's final race, (Chapter XLIX), as if you are reporting for a national newspaper. Look at reports of football matches or horse racing in the newspaper to see which vocabulary you need. Set it out in columns like a newspaper.

Or, write a description of the atmosphere during a race day, using the resources above, and descriptions from the novel.

*'With the possible exception of Fabius, I'd never seen anyone who handled the reins with such aggressive brilliance as Nicias. Watching his quartet of spotted ponies glide around each corner in a curl of dust, his agile brown body flexing like a bow string.'* (Page 84)

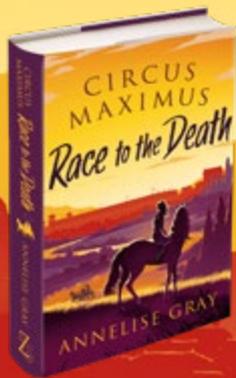
*'The aim was to drive a single chariot cleaning between ten pairs of flimsy wooden pyramids which had been laid out in a narrow twisting pattern. Not only did you have to complete the course without knocking over a pyramid, you had to do it before all the water ran out of the hole in the earthenware pot which Hanno was holding.'* (Page 104)

*'Papa used to say the difference between a good charioteer and a great one is that a great charioteer can win even when he doesn't have the best horses.'* (Page 108)

**ACTIVITY:** Draw up a manual for being a good charioteer. Use information from the text. List the skills you would need and the equipment. You might wish to detail a training regime. You may wish to illustrate your manual.

**ACTIVITY:** Contrast the sport of chariot-racing with a modern-day equivalent. Which sport have you chosen? Which skills are needed by the athlete? How do they compare? And how does modern technology aid the equipment of your chosen sport?





## CIRCUS MAXIMUS

# Race to the Death

ANNELISE GRAY  
TEACHING RESOURCES



### Teamwork

*'They were the worst-matched four I'd ever seen. The two yoke horses were a dusty brown and at least a hand shorter than the inside horse, a skewbald whose plaits were already coming undone. The outside horse was a tall, fine-boned grey with sleepy eyes.'* (Page 177)

*'Their black noses darting in rhythm like four striking cobras.'* (Page 193)

*'Their movements mirroring each other's as if they were thinking the same thoughts at the same time.'* (Page 278).

A charioteer's horses were as important as their own skill, and the best were those horses that worked as a team.

**DISCUSS:** Is charioteering a team sport? In which other sports is teamwork essential?

**ACTIVITY:** Write a recipe for teamwork. Think about a project you have done with other people. Which ingredients do you need to make a team, e.g. communication

### Treatment of/Care of Horses

*'I left the brutal curb-bit with its sharp edges – like a wolf's teeth – off the bridle as I put the harness on.'* (Page 72)

Look at the description of the horses on page 73. Dido says that:

*'It didn't seem to me that Scorpus had much affection for the horses he trained and sold.'*

*'Now here's a young lady who knows her horses.'* (Page 84)

**DISCUSS:** Do you agree with Dido's opinion of Scorpus? How does the author show Dido's affection for horses? If you care more for the animals, do they perform better in a race?

*'Picked up a length of harness and began polishing it with some of the olive oil in the pot'* (Page 143)

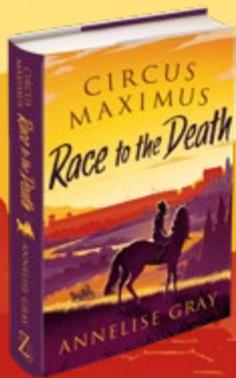
*'not much difference between a battlefield and the Circus Maximus'* (Page 285)

Read pages 172-173.

**DISCUSS:** What were the different uses for horses in Roman times? How were they treated?

**ACTIVITY:** Write a description of a chariot race from the point of view of a horse. Include details about





CIRCUS MAXIMUS

Race to the Death

ANNELISE GRAY  
TEACHING RESOURCES



your fellow animals, how you feel about being whipped, or wearing the harness. Do you feel in danger or exhilarated?

**ACTIVITY:** Have you read any other books about horses, such as *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell. Write a persuasive essay about whether horses should be used for human work, human sport, or left to be wild.

Factions/Fans

*'The steep tiers of seating were splashed with red and white and larger bands of blue where supporters of those factions were seated together, their clothing uniting them in their tribes.'* (Page 21)

*'Rocks and tablets scrawled with violent curses were being flung on to the track from sections of the crowd.'* (Page 25)

*'I think he thought it [chariot-racing] brought out the worst in people. You know – caring so much about whichever faction wins that they'll start a fight over it.'* (Page 38)

*'Instead of dark wings and beaks, the birds' bodies had all been coloured bright green.'* (Page 162)

**DISCUSS:** Look at the different ways in which the fans show their support for their team. Compare with today's sports fans. Is there rivalry? Superstition?

*'I find it such a childish passion in many ways. If it were the swiftness of the horses or the skill of the drivers that the supporters really cared about, I could understand it. But it's a piece of cloth that captivates them. A piece of cloth on whose colour their entire happiness depends.'* (Page 233).

**DISCUSS:** Do you think this is true? Do the fans in the book only care about their team's colour? What about today's sports fans?

**ACTIVITY:** Design a piece of merchandise for one of the charioteering teams in the novel. Think about the colours and whether the Roman supporters would buy it?

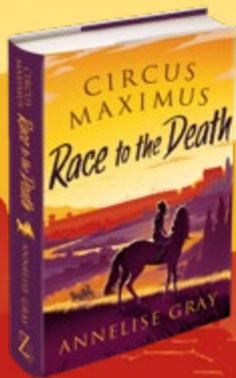
Gray depicts how there is other entertainment during the chariot-races:

*'A group of acrobats who did riding tricks to entertain the crowd between races.'* (Page 38)

*'A Blues supporter returned from a cookshop outside, his hands full of snacks and drinks.'* (Page 210)

*'Musicians and dancers entertained the crowd between races.'* (Page 210)





CIRCUS MAXIMUS

# Race to the Death

ANNELISE GRAY  
TEACHING RESOURCES



**DISCUSS:** Which sports today also have entertainment during sport. Is it a good thing?

**ACTIVITY:** Design a programme of events for a race day. Which entertainment would you lay on? Which food and when? Is the race on a particular religious holiday?

## Celebrity

Charioteers in *Circus Maximus: Race to the Death* are celebrities of their time.

*'Faction supporters milling around, hoping to run into one of their racing heroes.'* (Page 37)

*'A boy sitting on his father's shoulders at the back of the watching crowd was waving, trying to catch my attention. I smiled and gave him a little salute, which made him wobble with joy.'* (Page 235)

**DISCUSS:** Does a celebrity sportsperson have a responsibility to behave well towards their fans? Should they set an example? How does Dido behave towards her fans in the book? How do modern sports celebrities behave? Can you find an example of somebody who has used their fame for good? How?

*'I scratched another name at the bottom of the wall, in such tiny letters that no one would see it.'* (Page 166)

*'Just one time in my life, I'd like to hear that crowd shouting my name. You know?'* (Page 339)

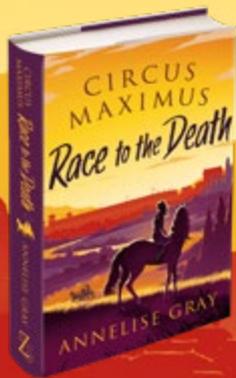
**DISCUSS:** Is fame important to the charioteers? Is it their main motivation for taking part?

**ACTIVITY:** Create a 'pretend' Instagram profile on paper as if you were a famous charioteer. Which images are you showing? And why?

*'They all follow the money. What happened to loyalty?'* (Page 268)

**DISCUSS:** The same could be said about today's footballers. What do you think? Is it about loyalty to a team, or money, or glory?





CIRCUS MAXIMUS

# Race to the Death

ANNELISE GRAY  
TEACHING RESOURCES



## Ethics in Sport

Not only does the plot of the novel hinge around cheating in sport, but there are numerous examples of where duping or lying has occurred:

*'His hooves are weak. They've been oiled to make them look stronger, but they'll never last beyond a couple of seasons.'* (Page 62)

Ephedron is described as:

*'not something you find growing on trees around the Field of Mars. More like from an apothecary in Thieves Street...The brew from the stems does something strange to horses, opens up the lungs, makes them run faster. Can kill them if you give them too much.'* (Page 101)

*'Someone put wax pins in your axle. That's why the wheels came away so easily. Anything could have happened out there on the track.'* (Page 255)

**DISCUSS:** Does cheating in sport make the sport unfair/unenjoyable? Compare the use of ephedron in horses in Ancient Rome to modern day performance-enhancing drugs. What do you know about the latter? Think about other ways athletes improve their performance. Are some legal? Are they ethical? When does improving equipment tip over into cheating?

**ACTIVITY:** Write a list of things that aren't illegal but raise issues of fairness, such as access to superior training facilities and technologically advanced equipment.

**ACTIVITY:** Write a persuasive essay exploring whether performance-enhancing drugs should ever be allowed in sport.

**DISCUSS:** Is some cheating inevitable in sports?

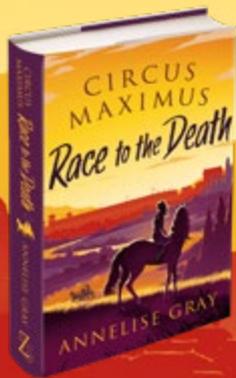
**DISCUSS:** Are whips performance-enhancing equipment or are they cruelty to animals?

**ACTIVITY:** Research other sports in Ancient Rome. Why have some of these been discontinued? Which sports do we deem acceptable today and which do we not? Why?

*'Ruga stole my best drivers,' Otho continued. 'Offered them more money than I could ever afford.'* (Page 140)

**DISCUSS:** Does it make a sport unfair if one team has vastly more money than the next?





CIRCUS MAXIMUS

# Race to the Death

ANNELISE GRAY  
TEACHING RESOURCES



## Women in Society

*'You lost to a girl.'* (Page 4)

*'I could tell he wasn't really offended by my ordering him about. Most boys would be...'* (Page 11)

*'A girl's place is inside the house.'* (Page 76)

*'Little man-girl, trying to do a boy's work. Scopus should send you back to the kitchen where you belong.'* (Page 106)

*'She fought against learning a woman's work.'* (Page 263)

**DISCUSS:** What does it mean by woman's work?

**ACTIVITY:** Re-read *'Did any of this really happen?'* (Page 343). Research the role of women in Ancient Rome. What could women do and what couldn't they? What were the expectations for women?

*'You'll be the first girl to race at the Circus Maximus someday, won't you, Dido?'* (Page 16)

*'When was the last time you saw a girl driving in the Circus?'* (Page 109)

*'I'm not going to risk their sale price by letting a girl spoil them.'* (Page 109)

*'it's a man's game. A girl just wouldn't be strong enough to handle a team.'* (Page 109)

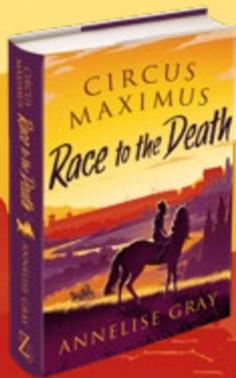
Not only does Dido want to defy her designated 'woman's place,' but she wants to be a sportswoman and ride horses in the Circus Maximus.

**DISCUSS:** Why do you think Gray chose to make her protagonist a girl? Can you think of any modern jobs which are only for 'men,' like chariotteering was deemed?

**DISCUSS:** Are women as strong as men? Can women do the same sports? Think about today's sports – are they divided by gender? Are there any sports women can't do?

**ACTIVITY:** Decide on a sport and research the history of the gender divide. When did the sport start? When were women allowed to play? Do professional women get paid less? Create a poster or a timeline to explore the history of the sport in terms of gender.





CIRCUS MAXIMUS

# Race to the Death

ANNELISE GRAY  
TEACHING RESOURCES



## Betrayal and Vengeance

*'Voices hissed in my ear, whispering of betrayal and vengeance.'* (Page 212)

*'Revenge will eat you from the inside, Dido.'* (Page 266)

**DISCUSS:** Is it ever right to take revenge? Is Dido consumed by vengeance in the novel? Give evidence for your answer. Who else takes revenge in the novel? Why is revenge a good background for a story?

*'The best revenge is always conjured by a woman.'* (Page 279)

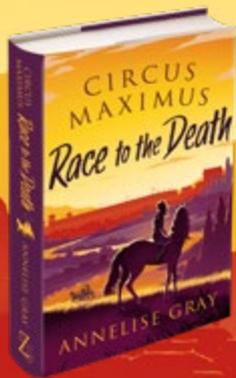
**DISCUSS:** What does Helvia mean by this?

**ACTIVITY:** Research revenge tragedies.

**DISCUSS:** Is *Circus Maximus* a revenge tragedy? Or is it about fulfilling dreams? Is Dido more intent on avenging her father's death, or winning races? Do these two ambitions have the same outcome?

**ACTIVITY:** Dido's dream is to become a winning charioteer in the Circus Maximus. What's your ambition? Write your ambition and seal it in an envelope and put it somewhere safe. You may wish to open the envelope each year and see if your ambition has changed.





CIRCUS MAXIMUS

# Race to the Death

ANNELISE GRAY  
TEACHING RESOURCES



## FURTHER READING

### Fiction

*Roman Mysteries* and *The Roman Quests* by Caroline Lawrence

*The Eagle of the Ninth* by Rosemary Sutcliffe

*One Dollar Horse* by Lauren St John

*Romans on the Rampage* by Jeremy Strong

*Roman Diary* by Richard Platt

*Gladiator* Series by Simon Scarrow

*Defenders: Dark Arena* by Tom Palmer

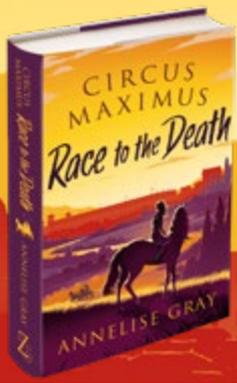
*The History Keepers: Circus Maximus* by Damian Dibben

### Non-Fiction

*Empire's End: A Roman Story* by Leila Rasheed

*So You Think You've Got it Bad: A Kid's Life in Ancient Rome* by Chae Strathie and Marisa Morea





CIRCUS MAXIMUS

# Race to the Death

ANNELISE GRAY  
TEACHING RESOURCES

