

The Eagle of the Ninth by Rosemary Sutcliffe

Marcus, a young Roman soldier posted to Calleva in England, saw Esca fighting as a gladiator. He has been given Esca as his new slave.

Marcus pulled the folds of fine wool over his head and reached for his belt. "So Esca also is a charioteer," he said, fastening it.

"I was my father's charioteer," Esca said. "But that was a long time ago." ...

"Esca, how did your father's charioteer come to be a gladiator in the Calleva arena?"

Esca was buckling his own belt; he finished the task very deliberately, and then, locking his hands round one updrawn knee, sat silent for a moment, staring down at them. "My father was a Clan Chieftain of the Brigantes, lord of five hundred spears," he said at last. "I was his armour-bearer until such time as I became a warrior in my own right – with the men of my tribe that happens after the sixteenth summer. When I had been a year or more a man among men and my father's charioteer, the Clan rose against our overlords, for the lust for freedom that was in us. We have been a thorn in the flesh of the Legions since first they marched north; we, the bearers of the blue war-shield. We rose, and we were beaten back. We made our last stand in our strong place, and we were overwhelmed. Those of the men's side who were left – there were not many – were sold as slaves." He broke off, jerking up his head to look at Marcus. "But I swear before the gods of my people, before Lugh the Light of the Sun, that I was lying for dead in a ditch when they took me. They would not have taken me, else. They sold me to a trader from the South, who sold me to Beppo, here in Calleva; and you know the rest."



Name:	Class:	Date:
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1 Look at the first paragraph.
 What was Marcus doing when he asked about Esca’s experiences?
 Choose **one**.

- eating a meal
- getting dressed
- driving a chariot
- fighting a battle

2b

 1 mark

2 (a) How old was Esca at the time of the battle?

(b) Explain how you know.

2b

 2 marks

3 Look at the paragraph beginning “*Esca was buckling his own belt.*”
Find and copy one word that tells you the Romans were stronger than Esca’s people in the last battle.

2a

 1 mark

4 How can you tell Esca is proud of having been a warrior?
 Explain **two** ways, using evidence from the text to support your answer.

2d

 3 marks

5 **Find and copy three** different words or phrases that Esca uses to refer to his people.

2b

 1 mark

6 Using information from the text, show when in Esca’s life each event happened. Write before **(B)** if it happened before Esca was captured or after **(A)** if it happened after he was captured.

He was a charioteer.

He was a gladiator.

He was a warrior.

He was a slave.