**Y4 Fiction Model Text: The Trials Begin**

“Now, let’s get you all moving!” growled the toothless jailer, unlocking the cell doors. Cautiously, sixty-four slaves entered the vast arena. As the hot sand of the arena floor burnt through the soles of their sandals, the slaves waited.

A short distance away, three Trial Masters jumped down from the lowest row of stalls and began to march across the sand towards them. They were all very different in appearance: one was short and immensely fat, one was tall and practically stick thin, and the other was considerably older than his companions and covered in a network of scars.

“You are not yet worthy of an audience,” yelled the fat one. “You must first prove yourselves! The first test is one of endurance,” he continued, “You will run around the edge of the arena – BAREFOOT!”

Decimus immediately reached down to unclasp his sandals, trying to ignore the worried whimpers Gladius was making. “Just take your time and don’t set off too quickly,” Decimus whispered to him. “You’ll run out of energy and the heat will bring you down faster than a hail of spears. Trust me – save your strength.”

“You currently number sixty-four boys,” the fat one yelled again. “You will run until fifty remain. Those who fail will be eliminated. Ready, steady, GO!”

The line of slaves began to move, slowly at first… and then with increasing speed. The first test of endurance had begun.