

GLOBAL HISTORY I
HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS
DUE FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2008

I. Cleopatra

Cleopatra, queen of Egypt in the first century B.C., is one of the most famous women in world history. Playwrights and novelists have told many stories about her, but she is more than a romantic figure. Cleopatra's ambitions involved three of the most powerful men in Rome, influencing the civil wars that followed the death of Julius Caesar. ♦ *As you read, think about the actions people take to follow their ambitions. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.*

Cleopatra VII

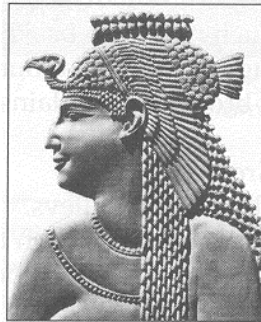
Cleopatra was born in Alexandria in 69 B.C. and became ruler (with her brother Ptolemy XIII) when she was 17. She was ambitious, charming, and eager for power. She was the first of her Greek family to learn to speak Egyptian (and several other languages). For political reasons, she also declared herself the daughter of the sun god Re.

Cleopatra wanted to win back lands that Egypt had once held in Syria and Palestine. She also was at war with her brother. Since Rome was the strongest power in the Mediterranean, she needed its help. Rome in turn wanted influence in Egypt, which was rich and independent.

The Roman conqueror Julius Caesar came to Egypt in 48 B.C., and Cleopatra won his support in the civil war with her brother. When Caesar went back to Rome as its ruler, he invited Cleopatra there as a royal guest. After Caesar was murdered, she quickly returned to Egypt.

Civil wars broke out in Rome after Caesar's death. To stay in power, Cleopatra still needed Roman help. She became romantically involved with Mark Antony, a Roman general who had been Caesar's friend. Antony at first was an ally of Caesar's heir, Octavian, but the two men later became rivals. Totally

charmed by Cleopatra, Antony moved to Alexandria with her. They married (although he was still married to Octavian's sister in Rome) and had three children—twins Alexander and Selene, and a son, Ptolemy.



Cleopatra VII

Egyptian gold paid for several of Antony's military campaigns. Although the campaigns failed, Antony and Cleopatra held a victory celebration in Alexandria, declaring themselves and their children rulers of both Egypt and Rome. Inevitably, in 32 B.C., Rome declared war on Antony and Cleopatra. Both sides sent fleets to a disastrous battle at Actium, which

Octavian and the Romans won.

Hearing a rumor that Cleopatra was dead, Antony stabbed himself. In fact, Octavian had captured the city of Alexandria and planned to take Cleopatra prisoner. To avoid that shame, Cleopatra took her own life—legend says with the bite of a poisonous snake. She and Antony were buried together.

Historians of the time—especially in Rome—were hostile to Cleopatra. But for many people, her courage and personality made her fascinating. The Greek writer Plutarch described her attraction and the "charm of her conversation" as "something bewitching."

Questions to Think About

1. What were Cleopatra's goals for Egypt?
2. Why did Cleopatra seek help from Julius Caesar?
3. What happened to Antony and Cleopatra after their war with Rome?
4. **Distinguish False From Accurate Images**
Many accounts concentrate only on the romance between Cleopatra and Antony. What actions can you point out that show Cleopatra was serious about being a good ruler in Egypt?

II. Nero Sings While Rome Burns

The Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus (about A.D. 56–120) was also a public official and orator. He wrote fascinating observations of the people in distant parts of the empire, as well as histories of Rome. Below is Tacitus's description of the fire that swept Rome in A.D. 64, during the reign of Nero, who was probably insane. ♦ *As you read, think about what everyday life was like in Rome during this period. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.*

Nero Sings While Rome Burns

Breaking out in shops selling inflammable goods, and fanned by the wind, the [fire] instantly grew and swept the whole length of the Circus. . . . First, the fire swept violently over the level spaces. Then it climbed the hills—but returned to ravage the lower ground again. . . . The ancient city's narrow winding streets and irregular blocks encouraged its progress.

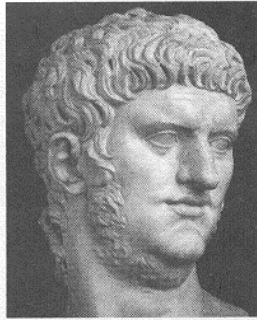
Terrified, shrieking women, helpless old and young, people intent on their own safety, people unselfishly supporting invalids or waiting for them, fugitives and lingerers alike—all heightened the confusion. When people looked back, menacing flames sprang up before them or outflanked them. . . . Nobody dared fight the flames. Attempts to do so were prevented by menacing gangs. Torches, too were openly thrown in, by men crying that they acted under orders. Perhaps they had received orders. Or they may just have wanted to plunder unhampered.

Nero was at Antium. He returned to the city only when the fire was approaching the

mansion he had built. . . . Nevertheless, for the relief of the homeless, fugitive masses he threw open the Field of Mars . . . and even his own Gardens. Nero also constructed emergency accommodation for the destitute multi-

tude. Food was brought from Ostia and neighboring towns, and the price of corn was cut to less than 1 sesterce [a small coin] a pound. Yet these measures, for all their popular character, earned no gratitude. For a rumor had spread that, while the city was burning, Nero had gone on his private stage and, comparing modern calamities with ancient, had sung [about] the destruction of Troy.

By the sixth day enormous demolitions had confronted the raging flames with bare ground and open sky, and the fire was finally stamped out. . . . Of Rome's fourteen districts only four remained intact. Three were leveled to the ground. The other seven were reduced to a few scorched and mangled ruins.



Nero

Source: *Annals of Imperial Rome*, 6th rev. ed. trans. Michael Grant (Penguin Classics, 1956; 1989).

Questions to Think About

1. What were some reasons that the fire spread so rapidly?
2. Describe the effect of the fire on the ordinary people of Rome and on the city as a whole.
3. **Summarize** What actions did Nero take to help the people after the fire? Do these actions seem consistent with the other stories about this emperor?
4. **Activity** You are an eyewitness to events in Rome on the day that the fire is finally put out. Write a journal entry that records what you saw and the rumors being spread around the city about the causes and consequences of the fire.

