

Name: _____

Date: _____

Cleopatra

The life of Cleopatra is a story of love, greed, and romance. Cleopatra was born in 69BCE, long after the era of the pharaohs had passed, but she was worshipped by many Egyptian people. Cleopatra was born in Egypt but her ancestry was **Greek**. She was part of a ruling family that had controlled the ancient kingdom for hundreds of years.

Alexander the Great was a military genius from Macedonia, a mountainous land north of Greece. Alexander led his army into Egypt and freed the Egyptian people from **Persian** rule. The grateful Egyptian people worshipped Alexander as a **pharaoh**. When Alexander died in 336BCE, his empire was divided among his top generals. Ptolemy became the ruler of Egypt and the first ruler of the Ptolemaic dynasty.

Ptolemy XII was Cleopatra's father. When Ptolemy XII died in 51BCE, his will decreed that seventeen-year-old Cleopatra and her twelve-year-old brother, Ptolemy XIII, were to marry and rule Egypt. Cleopatra was a very different ruler than the Ptolemies who came before her. She learned the Egyptian language; the other Ptolemies spoke only Greek. Cleopatra also practiced the religious customs of Egypt, and many of the Egyptians viewed her as a pharaoh. In 48BCE, Cleopatra's generals found they could not control her, so they ousted Cleopatra and made her brother the sole monarch of Egypt.

A few months later, a Roman army led by **Julius Caesar** arrived in Egypt. Caesar was pursuing another Roman army that tried to keep Caesar from returning to Rome. Caesar's army was much larger than the Egyptian forces, so Cleopatra concluded that Caesar could return her to power. Cleopatra arranged to have a huge carpet delivered to the 54-year-old Caesar. When Caesar unrolled the carpet, he found the 22-year-old former queen wrapped inside. Caesar and Cleopatra became lovers, and the Roman general led his army to capture and kill the people who removed Cleopatra from power. Ptolemy XIII

Assignment

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drowned in the **Nile** while trying to flee Caesar's army.

Egyptian law did not allow a queen to rule without a king, so Cleopatra married another brother, Ptolemy XIV, but she was in love with Caesar. Caesar and Cleopatra spent the next several months traveling along the Nile, where Caesar saw how the Egyptian people worshipped Cleopatra. Caesar was a very powerful general who conquered many lands, but he knew that becoming a pharaoh was something he could never achieve.

Caesar returned to Rome in 46BCE with Cleopatra and their newborn son, Caesarion. Caesar was very popular with the Roman people. They named him dictator. A dictator is a ruler with complete power. Cleopatra was less popular with the Romans. She had enraged the Roman people by calling herself the "new **Isis**." Many Romans were unhappy that Caesar was planning to marry a foreigner. Caesar was murdered in 44BCE, so Cleopatra left Rome to return to Egypt. Cleopatra apparently poisoned Ptolemy XIV and named her four-year-old son as the new Egyptian king.

Rome was in turmoil after Caesar's murder. Several armies competed for control. The two greatest Roman armies were those of Marc Antony and Octavian. Octavian was the adopted son of Julius Caesar, but Marc Antony was believed to have led a larger army. When Antony asked Cleopatra to meet with him, Cleopatra decided that she had another opportunity to return to power both in Egypt and in Rome. A legend says that when Cleopatra met Antony, the Egyptian queen adorned her ship with so many rose petals that the Romans knew of her fragrance before they could see her ship. She walked off the ship dressed as Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. Antony was immediately love-struck with the Egyptian queen. Antony was already married to Octavian's sister, but he took Cleopatra as his wife, and the couple had two children.

Octavian's army defeated Marc Antony's forces and led an invasion of Egypt in 30BCE. Antony committed suicide by falling on his sword. Fearing that she would be forced to live as a slave in the land she once ruled, Cleopatra decided it would be better to end her life. According to legend, the former queen asked that an asp, an Egyptian cobra, be delivered to her in a basket of figs. The asp was a symbol of royalty to the Egyptians, so by allowing the asp to bite her, Cleopatra is said to have become immortal.

*This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.

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