

Name: _____

Date: _____

Cleopatra and Rome

The death of Julius Caesar led to thirteen years of war and ultimately to the end of the Roman Republic. By 33BCE, both Caesar's most trusted lieutenant and the last queen of Egypt would be dead, and a young man Caesar apparently met only once would become his adopted son and the most powerful man in Rome for over forty years. The story begins in Egypt.

By the time of Caesar's death, the Greek speaking Ptolemy family had ruled Egypt for more than 275 years. Ptolemy was a general who took control of the ancient land upon the death of Alexander the Great.

Julius Caesar arrived in Egypt in pursuit of a rival general named Pompey. Caesar chased Pompey first to Spain, then to Greece and finally in 47BCE to Egypt. In Egypt, the ten-year-old Ptolemy XIII presented Caesar with the decapitated head of Pompey. While in Egypt, Caesar found himself in the middle of a family feud. King Ptolemy XII had willed his throne both to his ten-year-old son, Ptolemy XIII, and his eighteen-year-old daughter, Cleopatra. The pair were to rule Egypt together both as brother and sister and as husband and wife, but Ptolemy XIII seized total power and forced his older sister from the throne.

When Cleopatra learned Caesar was in Egypt, she saw an opportunity to return to power. Cleopatra arranged to smuggle herself into Caesar's suite wrapped in an ornamental carpet. When Caesar unraveled his gift, he found the former queen.

Cleopatra convinced Caesar to remove Ptolemy XIII and return her to power. Caesar's army defeated Ptolemy XIII's forces in battle; the Roman army was in pursuit of the young Egyptian king when he drowned in the Nile River. Cleopatra returned to power and following the custom of Egypt at that time, she married an even younger brother, Ptolemy XIV. The couple ruled as both husband and wife and as brother and sister.

The 54-year-old Caesar began a love affair with the much younger Cleopatra. The pair traveled the Nile together where Caesar witnessed Cleopatra's luxurious lifestyle. Caesar was the most powerful general in the world, but the Egyptians worshipped Cleopatra as a goddess. Soon after their voyage, Cleopatra gave birth to Caesar's only son, Caesarion.

Shortly after Caesar returned to Rome, Cleopatra and Caesarion came to visit, staying in one of Caesar's country homes. Caesar was popular with the Roman people, but the presence of a foreign woman in Rome was a scandal. Further, both Caesar and Cleopatra were married to other people.

Caesar's murder in 44BCE plunged Rome back into civil war. Caesar's most trusted general—Marc

Antony—took control of Rome, but Caesar had a surprise for everyone. The dictator's will named Octavian, his eighteen-year-old grandnephew, as his heir. An heir is someone who inherits a title or possessions. Despite having met only once, Caesar's will decreed that Octavian be treated as his son. Octavian instantly became one of the wealthiest men in Rome, but even more important, Roman law allowed Octavian to call himself Caesar.

Octavian came to Rome to claim his inheritance, but Marc Antony dismissed the young heir. Octavian raised an army of soldiers who were loyal to Julius Caesar, plunging Rome into months of turmoil. As a result, Octavian and Marc Antony agreed to an uneasy truce; Marc Antony married Octavian's sister to seal the alliance.



Claudette Colbert as Cleopatra (1934)

Octavian and Marc Antony formed the Second Triumvirate with a third general named Lepidus. Octavian remained in Rome while Antony took control of the empire's eastern provinces. In 41BCE, Antony summoned Cleopatra to answer questions about her loyalty. The Egyptian queen so charmed Antony that he moved to Alexandria to be with her.

Cleopatra regained sole control of Egypt after the mysterious poisoning of Ptolemy XIV. Antony and Cleopatra fell in love and had three children together. Antony hoped to oust Octavian and rule both Rome and Egypt with Cleopatra, but Octavian used their relationship to his advantage. Octavian told the Roman people that Cleopatra cast a spell on Antony and argued that Antony was willing to give away the Roman world to a foreign woman. Octavian declared war on Cleopatra, forcing Marc Antony to choose between Cleopatra and Rome. Antony chose Cleopatra.

Octavian's forces defeated Antony and Cleopatra's ships in the Battle of Actium on the Mediterranean Sea in 31BCE. Antony and Cleopatra managed to escape the encounter, but Marc Antony committed suicide as Octavian's army approached. When Cleopatra learned of Antony's death, she realized that Octavian's army would kill her. The Egyptian queen chose to end her life on her own terms. According to legend, Cleopatra wrapped an asp around her arm. The asp is a venomous snake that was the symbol for Egyptian royalty. The asp's bite ended Cleopatra's life and the rule of the Ptolemys.

Name: _____

Date: _____



Fill in the Blanks

Cleopatra VII was an E__y__t__n queen whose relationships with two Roman g__n__r__ls changed the course of history. Cleopatra was the last of the P__o__e__ys, a Greek dynasty that ruled Egypt for 275 years.

The *t__e__f__h Egyptian ruler named Ptolemy ignited a family feud when he w__l__ed his t__r__ne jointly to his eighteen-year old d__u__h__er, Cleopatra, and his ten year old son, P__o__e__y XIII. Ptolemy XIII seized control of Egypt, but Cleopatra was able to r__t__rn to p__w__r with the help of a powerful R__m__n general named J__l__us C__e__ar. Caesar and Cleopatra began a love affair that *sca__d__l__zed many Romans.

After Caesar was *s__a__b__d to death in 44BC, Cleopatra fell in love with another Roman g__n__r__l named M____ A____. Antony and Cleopatra planned to rule R____ and E____ together, but their plans were thwarted by O__t__v__an, the g__a__dn__p__ew of Julius Caesar. Octavian defeated A__t__ny and C__e__p__t__a's navy in 31BCE. Antony and Cleopatra managed to e__c__pe, but when Antony learned that O_____'s army had reached Egypt, he s__a__b__d himself to death. Cleopatra realized that Octavian would soon capture and humiliate her, so she decided to end her life and the rule of the Ptolemys in Egypt by allowing a v__n__m__us snake to b____ her.

Answer in complete sentences

*1. Why do you think Cleopatra was attracted to Caesar?

*2. What is an heir? Who would be your heir?

*3. Caesar's selection of Octavian as heir was a surprise. Based on your reading of the text, who would you have expected Caesar to have chosen to take his name? Explain your reasoning.

4. Why do you think Cleopatra committed suicide?

*5. Cleopatra has been the subject of many books and films. William Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* is considered one of the best plays of all time. A 1963 film starring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton is the most famous of more than a dozen films about the Egyptian Queen. Why do you think Cleopatra has been the subject of so many stories?

*This is a higher order learning question. You will earn credit for any reasonable answer.