

# History



## Year 7 – The Romans

Knowledge and Assessment Organiser

Student name: .....



# What was life like in Roman Britain?

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Did you know...?  
Sometimes the Romans would flood the whole Colosseum or Circus Maximus for a boat battle.

# What's the Story?



My name is Maximus Meridius and I am a legionnaire in the Roman Army. I am just one in a 450,000 strong army; we are the biggest military force in the world. Life as a soldier is tough though, if we aren't marching from one part of the Empire to the other then we are kept busy with other things such as construction and repairs.

Us soldiers have to erect forts, build aqueducts, act as bodyguards, police local civilians, manage quarries and prisons, and collect taxes. We are away from our families for months or even years! I haven't seen my wife in 8 months, and our newborn son Claudius was born last week, and I won't see him until after his first birthday.

It is dangerous to be a Roman soldier. I have lost many friends to disease, enemy ambushes and accidents transporting heavy equipment. However, through all this hardship we march on. Our reputation is our greatest strength, and we are known for our staggering ability to cope with adversity. We are also very

adaptable, which means we are organised and flexible. We are also well equipped with my trusty *gladius Hispaniensis* (Spanish sword).

I miss my life in Rome, but I am happy to be part of the ever-expanding Roman Empire. Everywhere we go we improve the conditions there. We build aqueducts which provide clean water into the towns and cities, we build sewers to get rid of smelly waste from the latrines and we build bath houses that help people stay clean and socialise. Everywhere we go we improve the life of the people that live there. All benefit from the glorious Roman Empire!

**We Romans have the best Public Health systems in the world. Will they last?**

## Why does this matter?

- We are studying one of the most famous empires in history.
- It is vital that we know how advanced Roman Public Health actually was.
- We must be able to understand that progress throughout history is not linear.

## Sounds familiar?

You might have studied the Romans at primary school. You may have heard of Pompeii and the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. You may have heard of Roman Gods such as Mars, Mercury and Venus. You may have encountered references or depictions of Roman life in film and television.

Key word	Definition
Public Health	Health care for people that is paid for by the government
Sewers	An underground pipe or passage that carries sewage
Aqueduct	A structure like a bridge that takes water across a valley
Chronology	The order in which a series of events happened or will happen
Senate	The more senior part of a law-making institution that has two parts
Province	One of many areas into which some countries are divided
Conquered	Invading a country and taking it by force
Latrines	A toilet outside, for example in a military camp

Did you know...?

Romans used to eat dormice and other weird foods like flamingo.



# What was life like in Roman Britain?

Small  
Question

1. What skills do I need to be able to study history effectively?

Small  
Question

2. How was Rome founded?

Small  
Question

3. What was the Roman empire?

Small  
Question

4. Why was the Roman army important?

Small  
Question

5. How were Roman roads designed?

Small  
Question

6. What did the Romans do to improve people's health?

# Curricular Concepts

*Have you ever noticed how some of the things you study in one subject appear in another subject too?*

Students are able to understand their work more and remember more if there are clear links between subjects. Throughout your learning at Colton Hills, we will be asking you to think about some of the most important ideas in the world to enable you learning to be deeper than ever before. Look for these 'curricular concepts' in your learning.



**SOCIAL  
JUSTICE**



**CULTURAL  
DIVERSITY**



**CIVIC  
RESPONSIBILITY**



**TECHNOLOGICAL  
PROGRESS**



**PRECIOUS  
PLANET**



**HEALTHY  
LIVING**



**ETHICAL  
ENTERPRISE**

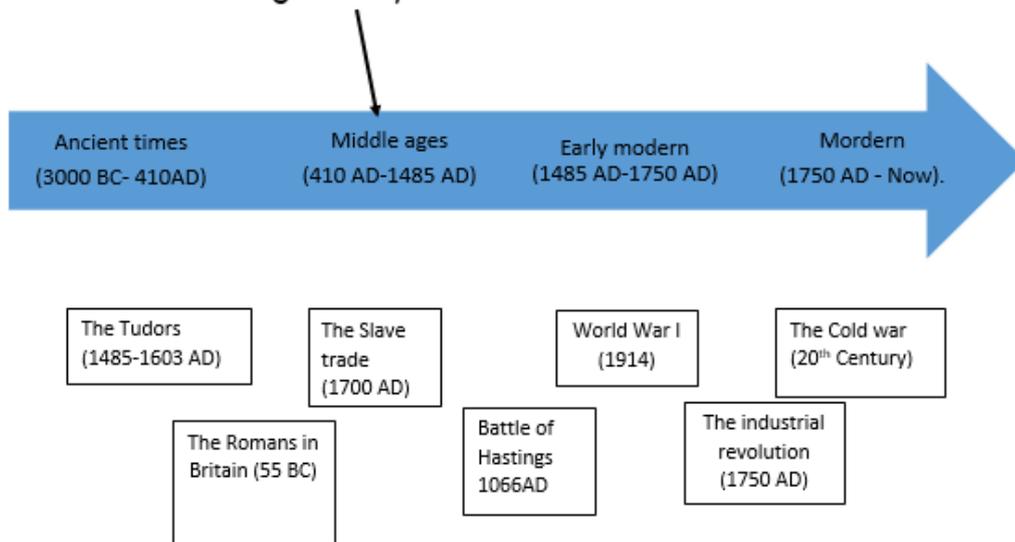


**CREATIVE  
ARTISTRY**

# Essential Knowledge: What skills do I need to be able to study history effectively?

## How is history split up?

History is split up into different time periods. The largest of which are called eras. The four main eras are shown on the arrow below. Every topic you study in history here at Colton Hills will fit into one of these eras. (for example the 'Battle of Hastings' of 1066 AD would go here).



Did you know...?  
Romans used to eat their dinner lying down on couches. How lazy!

All the years between:	Century (AD)
1-100	1 <sup>st</sup>
101-200	2 <sup>nd</sup>
201-300	3 <sup>rd</sup>
301-400	4 <sup>th</sup>
401-500	5 <sup>th</sup>
501-600	6 <sup>th</sup>
601-700	7 <sup>th</sup>
701-800	8 <sup>th</sup>
801-900	9 <sup>th</sup>
901-1000	10 <sup>th</sup>
1001-1100	11 <sup>th</sup>
1101-1200	12 <sup>th</sup>
1201-1300	13 <sup>th</sup>
1301-1400	14 <sup>th</sup>
1401-1500	15 <sup>th</sup>
1501-1600	16 <sup>th</sup>
1601-1700	17 <sup>th</sup>
1701-1800	18 <sup>th</sup>
1801-1900	19 <sup>th</sup>
1901-2000	20 <sup>th</sup>
2001-2100	21 <sup>st</sup>

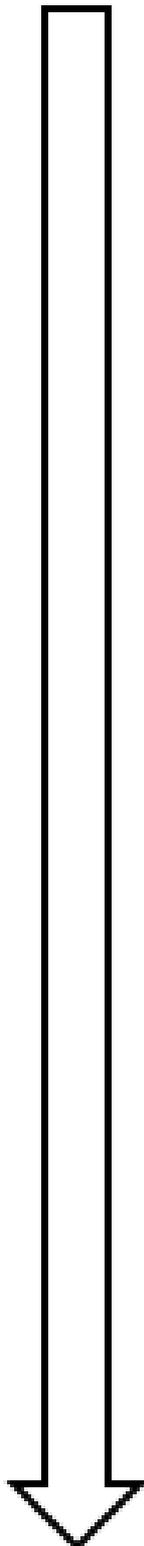
All the years between:	Century BC
1-100 BC	1 <sup>st</sup> BC
101-200 BC	2 <sup>nd</sup> BC
201-300 BC	3 <sup>rd</sup> BC
301-400 BC	4 <sup>th</sup> BC
401-500 BC	5 <sup>th</sup> BC
501-600 BC	6 <sup>th</sup> BC

**Remember!**

If the year has no letters by the side of it then it is AD. Only when you see the letters BC next to the year do you count them as Before Christ.

# Chronological order

Earliest



55BC

1066

1066

1085

1215

1588

1605

1666

1837

*Putting things in chronological order helps historians to find out why events happen.*

Events and dates:

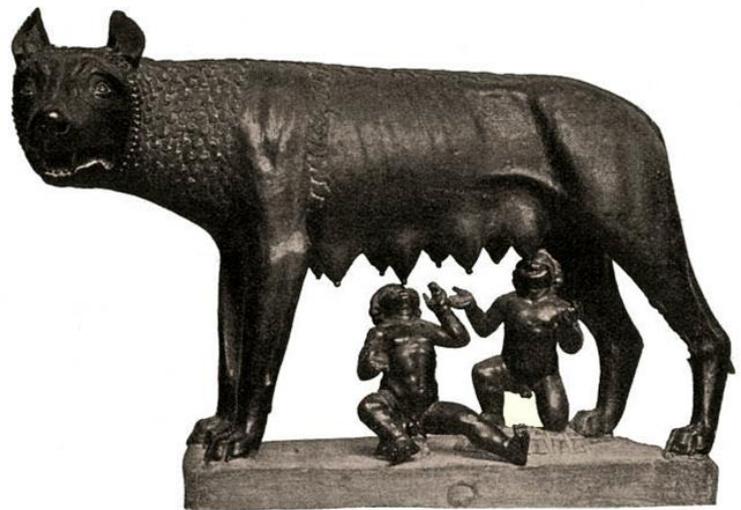
- The great fire of London (1666)
- The Spanish Armada (1588)
- Victoria become Queen of England (1837)
- The Romans try to invade Britain (55BC)
- Harold Godwinson become king of England (1066)
- The Domesday Book is written (1085)
- King John signs the Magna Carta (1215)
- Some women are allowed to vote (1918)
- The Gunpowder Plot is revealed (1605)
- William becomes king after killing Godwinson (1066)

## Essential Knowledge: What is the legend of Rome?

1 A story dating back to about the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC holds that twin  
2 brothers named Romulus and Remus founded the city of Rome.  
3 According to the legend, Romulus and Remus were sons of Mars, the  
4 god of war. Their mother was Rhea Silvia, the daughter of a king. Her  
5 father was removed from the throne by her uncle, Amulius.

6 Rhea was forced to swear that she would not have children, because  
7 Amulius did not want her to give birth to anyone who might try to  
8 make a claim for the throne.

9 Rhea went against her  
10 uncle's wishes and had the  
11 twin boys. She was sent to  
12 prison and the babies were  
13 set adrift on the River  
14 Tiber. High waters carried  
15 the boys to the riverbank  
16 and they landed safely  
17 under a fig tree. They were  
18 found by a she-wolf who  
19 took care of the boys.



20 A herdsman named Faustulus found the twins. He and his wife raised  
21 them until they become adults. The boys killed Amulius and founded a  
22 city on the site where they had been saved by the she-wolf. The city  
23 was called ROME.

24 They both wanted to be the only king. They quarrelled. In a fit of  
25 rage, Romulus picked up a rock, killed his brother, and made himself  
26 king. One day Romulus mysteriously disappeared in a storm. Believing  
27 that he had been changed into a god, the Romans worshipped him  
28 under the name of Quirinus.

## Essential Knowledge: What was the Roman empire and how was it governed?



### Who was in control of the Empire?

In theory, **the Emperor** was the absolute ruler (this means no-one could question his decisions):

- he was head of the Senate, and therefore controlled the government
- he was head of the Army – all soldiers swore an oath of loyalty to him
- he was also the Pontifex Maximus, which means 'great priest', and therefore head of the Roman religion

In practice, a bad Emperor could 'push people too far' – some emperors struggled to control the Empire, and there were many rebellions and plots.

### Who help the Emperor to govern?

**Senators** were supposed to be elected, but they always came from the same aristocratic families. Senators also held all the most important government jobs. In theory, the Senate was a kind of parliament. In practice, all it did was agree to the Emperor's laws.

### How were the regions governed?

**Provinces** within the Roman Empire were run by a governor, who was usually a Senator. However, provinces on the Empire's borders – such as Britain – where the Legions were stationed and the wars took place – were always run by an army general.



# Essential Knowledge: The Roman Army

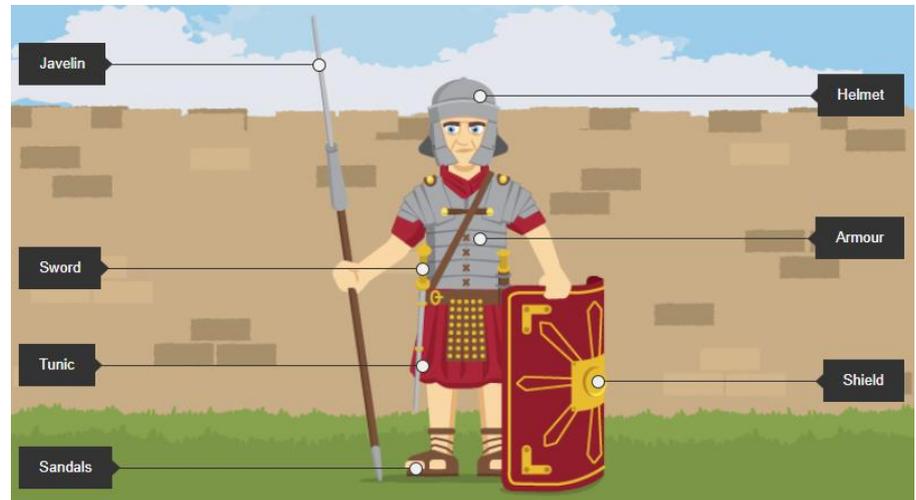


The Roman army was the largest fighting force in the ancient world.

One of the main reasons Rome became so powerful was because of the strength of its army. It conquered a vast empire that stretched from Britain all the way to the Middle East. The army was very advanced for its time. The soldiers were the best trained, they had the best weapons and the best armour. Being a soldier was a serious business.

## Who was in the Roman army?

Only men could be in the Roman Army, no women were allowed. There were two main types of Roman soldiers: **legionaries** and **auxiliaries**.



The legionaries were the elite (very best) soldiers. A legionary had to be over 17 years old and a Roman citizen. Every new recruit had to be fighting fit - anyone who was weak or too short was rejected.

Legionaries signed up for at least 25 years' service. But if they survived their time, they were rewarded with a gift of land they could farm. Old soldiers often retired together in military towns, called 'colonia'.

An auxiliary was a soldier who was not a Roman citizen. He was only paid a third of a legionary's wage. Auxiliaries guarded forts and frontiers but also fought in battles, often in the front lines where it was the most dangerous.

How did the Roman army fight?

At its largest, there might have been around half a million soldiers in the Roman army! To keep such a large number of men in order, it was divided up into groups called 'legions'. Each legion had between 4,000 and 6,000 soldiers.

A legion was further divided into groups of 80 men called 'centuries'. The man in charge of a century was known as a 'centurion'. He carried a short rod, to show his importance. He would also use it to beat any soldier who disobeyed him.

Some soldiers had special skills. They shot bows and arrows, flung stones from slingshots, or could swim rivers to surprise an enemy.

Roman soldiers usually lined up for battle in a tight formation. After a terrifying burst of arrows and artillery, the Roman soldiers marched at a slow steady pace towards the enemy. At the last minute, they hurled their javelins and drew their swords, before charging into the enemy. Then they used cavalry (soldiers riding horses) to chase anyone who tried to run away.

## How well trained were Roman soldiers?

A Roman soldier was a well-trained fighting machine. He could march 20 miles a day, wearing all his armour and equipment. He could swim or cross rivers in boats, build bridges and smash his way into forts.

After a long day's march, Roman soldiers had to build a camp, complete with a ditch and a wall of wooden stakes. The next day, they had to do it all again!

A Roman soldier almost always followed orders. Anyone who didn't faced tough punishments. If you fell asleep on duty, you could be sentenced to death.

Roman soldiers weren't always at war - they spent most of their time training for battle. They practised fighting in formation and man-to-man. Legionaries also patrolled their conquered territories and built roads, forts and aqueducts (a bridge which carried water).

Did you know...?  
Romans used to wash their  
clothing in urine! Urine contains  
ammonia, a powerful bleaching  
agent...

## Roman Road Information



Within four years of invading Britain in AD 47, the Romans had built over 1,000 miles of roads!

When they first arrived, the Roman Army had to use the old grass and mud track ways which the Britons had used. These track ways were sometimes thousands of years old and often went up and down hills for reasons that nobody could remember. They were very difficult to travel along.

The Roman Army needed better roads because it had to be able to move quickly to areas of trouble to keep the Britons under control. The Roman generals needed good roads so that they could send orders to the Roman soldiers who might be stationed in forts as far away as Hadrian's Wall. The roads were also important for moving supplies of food and weapons to the soldiers. In times of peace, good safe roads meant more trade and more trade meant more taxes for the Emperor.

The army was given the important task of planning and building roads. These roads did not always run perfectly straight, they sometimes zigzagged up hills and often avoided obstacles. However, long stretches of Roman roads did run straight and this is what Roman roads are remembered for.

Keeping roads straight:

### **So how did the Romans manage to build such straight roads?**

Roman engineers used an instrument called a Groma.

This was a pair of boards fastened together into a cross shape. Lines with weights were hung from each corner so that they could get a straight line by lining up the weights with a pole a hundred metres or so away. In forest areas they built fires in a straight line and used the smoke as markers for the Groma.

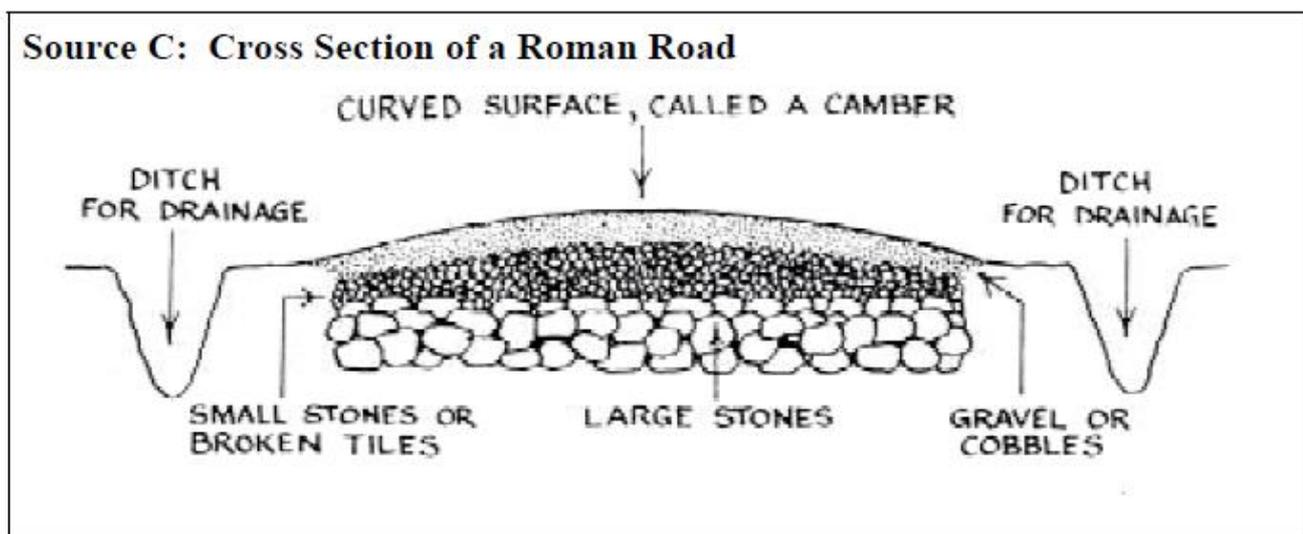
### **How Roman roads were constructed:**

Once the road had been planned the Roman soldiers dug two ditches on either side of the road to act as drains. The earth from these ditches was piled into the

centre and rammed down. Stones were then gathered from the local area and laid down in different layers until they formed a hard surface that could take the weight of heavy carts. The surface of a Roman road was shaped into a camber so that rain water would run off into the ditches.

Roman roads were very quick and safe to travel large distances. The Roman soldiers were not the only people to use them. Merchants used them to carry goods all over the Roman Empire. The Romans built Britain's first proper roads. After the Romans left they were allowed to decay because people forgot how to rebuild and repair them.

People continued to use the roads the Roman Army had built until 1745. Many modern roads are built along the original routes planned out by the Romans.



Did you know...?  
The Romans built 55,000 miles  
of road in the U.K alone. We still  
use these roads today!





## Essential Knowledge: Roman Public Health



1 Public health was developed by the Romans as they believed that cleanliness would lead  
2 to good health. The Romans made links between causes of disease and methods of  
3 prevention. As a consequence Roman Public Health works were distributed around their  
4 empire.

### 5 Aqueducts

6 How did the ancient Romans deal with plumbing? They built huge and extensive  
7 aqueducts, which is Latin for waterway. These under- and aboveground channels,  
8 typically made of stone, brick, and volcanic cement, brought fresh water for drinking and  
9 bathing as much as 50 to 60 miles from springs or rivers. Aqueducts helped keep Romans  
10 healthy by carrying away used water and waste, and they also took water to farms for  
11 irrigation.

12 So how did aqueducts work? The engineers who designed them used gravity to keep the  
13 water moving. If the channel was too steep, water would run too quickly and wear out the  
14 surface. Too shallow, and water would stagnate and become undrinkable. The Romans  
15 built tunnels to get water through ridges, and bridges to cross valleys.

16 Once it reached a city, the water flowed into a main tank called a castellum. Smaller  
17 pipes took the water to the secondary castella, and from those the water flowed through  
18 lead pipes to public fountains and baths, and even to some private homes. It took 500  
19 years to build Rome's massive system, which was fed by 11 separate aqueducts. To this  
20 day, Rome's public fountains run constantly, as do smaller faucets that provide fresh  
21 water to anyone who stops for a drink.

22 The empire stretched across an  
23 immense part of the world, and  
24 wherever the Romans went  
25 they built aqueducts — in as  
26 many as 200 cities around the  
27 empire. Their arched bridges  
28 are among the best preserved  
29 relics of that empire, in part  
30 because many aqueducts kept  
31 working for centuries, long  
32 after the Romans had retreated.  
33 You can still see their arches in  
34 Bulgaria, Croatia, France,  
35 Germany, Greece, Israel, Lebanon, Spain,  
36 Tunisia, and other former Roman colonies.

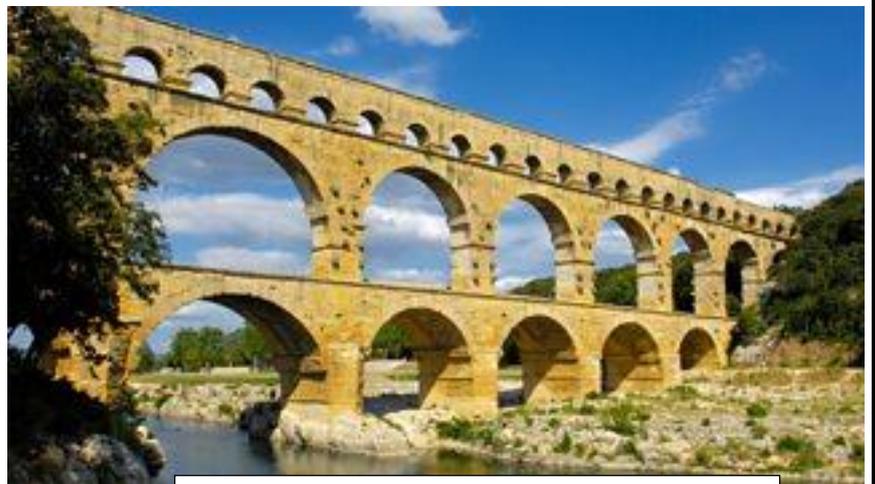


Photo of a Roman aqueduct in  
Provence, France

## Baths



1 Roman houses had water supplied via lead pipes. However, these pipes were  
2 taxed according to their size, so many houses had just a basic supply and  
3 could not hope to rival a bath complex. Therefore, for personal hygiene,  
4 people went to the local baths. However, the local bath complex was also a  
5 gathering point and served a very useful community and social function. Here  
6 people could relax, keep clean and keep up with the latest news.  
7 Taking a bath was not a simple chore. There was not just one bath to use in a  
8 large complex such as the one at Bath. A visitor could use a cold bath  
9 (the **frigidarium**), a warm bath (the **tepidarium**) and a hot bath  
10 (the **caldarium**). A visitor would spend some of his time in each one before  
11 leaving. A large complex would also contain an exercise area (the **palaestra**),  
12 a swimming pool and a gymnasium. One of the public baths at Pompeii  
13 contains two tepidariums and caldariums along with a plunge pool and a  
14 large exercise area.

15  
16 It was very cheap to use  
17 a Roman bath. A visitor,  
18 after paying his entrance  
19 fee, would strip naked  
20 and hand his clothes to  
21 an attendant. He could  
22 then do some exercising  
23 to work up a sweat  
24 before moving into the  
25 tepidarium which would  
26 prepare him for the  
27 caldarium which was  
28 more or less like a  
29 modern sauna. The idea,  
30 as with a sauna, was for the sweat to get rid of the body's dirt. After this a  
31 slave would rub olive oil into the visitor's skin and then scrap it off with a  
32 strigil. The more luxurious establishments would have professional masseurs to  
33 do this. After this, the visitor would return to the tepidarium and then to  
34 frigidarium to cool down. Finally, he could use the main pool for a swim or to  
35 generally socialise. Bathing was very important to the Ancient Romans as it  
36 served many functions.



## Latrines

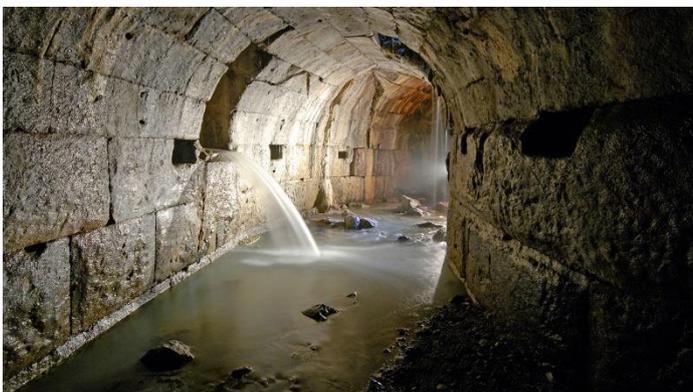
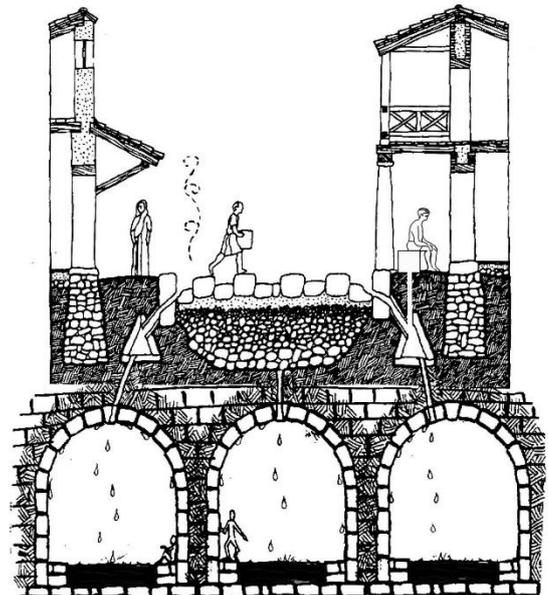


When out on patrol, Roman soldiers would just go to the toilet wherever they were. Back at the fort, they shared communal toilet spaces, such as can be found at Hadrian's Wall. The toilets had their own plumbing and sewers, sometimes using water from bath houses to flush them. The Romans did not have toilet paper. Instead they used a sponge on a stick to clean themselves.

The Romans built public and private toilets and these are found all over the empire. These toilets had well designed

drainage systems to carry away the sewage. In Rome itself there were miles of sewers that carried the waste to the river Tiber where it flowed out to sea.

Water pipes, drains and toilets all go together. In Roman towns there were drains laid along all of the streets and joined together with sewers to carry off the rain water and sewage. The many public toilets all had neat stone seats and even a hand basin. Although the way they were laid out meant you were sat side by side with up to twenty other people!! In Rome itself the sewers were massive (think of the “waste” that 1 000000 people can produce!) and flowed out through the Cloaca Maxia into the river Tiber.



Did you know:

The Romans had their own goddess of sewers! Her name was Venus Cloacina.

- **The Baths** – The baths kept people clean and healthy and were a social place where Romans could hang out with friends!
- **Latrines (toilets)** – Only the rich Romans could afford an inside toilet so many Romans used latrines – public outdoor lavatory with rows of stone seats. The latrines were flushed out with water from the public supply.
- **Fountains** – Provided Romans with a source of drinking water.
- **Sewers** – All dirty water from latrines, fountains, baths ect ran through drains into a large underground sewer system to separate the clean water from the dirty.
- **Aqueducts** –water channels to carry water from rivers and lakes into the towns.

Romans to believe that ill health could be associated with, bad air, bad water, swamps, sewage, debris and lack of personal cleanliness. In some places, Rome concluded that it was impossible to avoid all of these unless something was physically done to alter the environment. The Romans decided to provide clean water through aqueducts, to remove the bulk of sewage through the building of sewers and to develop a system of public toilets throughout their towns and city's. Personal hygiene was encouraged through the building of large public baths (The City of Bath being an obvious British example of these).



### **Adding**

and  
also  
as well as  
moreover  
too  
furthermore  
besides  
in addition

### **Cause and Effect**

because  
so  
therefore  
thus  
consequently  
as a result of

### **Comparing**

equally  
in the same way  
similarly  
likewise  
as with  
like  
compared with

### **Illustrating**

for example  
such as  
for instance  
as revealed by  
in the case of  
as shown by

## **How can I improve my writing?**

### **Qualifying**

however  
although  
unless  
except  
if  
as long as  
apart from  
yet  
despite

### **Emphasising**

above all  
in particular  
especially  
significantly  
indeed  
notably  
most of all

### **Contrasting**

whereas  
instead of  
alternatively  
otherwise  
unlike  
on the other hand  
in contrast

### **Sequencing**

next  
then  
first, second, third  
finally  
meanwhile  
after

# Writing in different genres in History throughout Year 7

Genre	Recount	Describe	Explain	Persuade
Definition	This requires you to recall key information	This is where you highlight in detail key events, reasons or consequences	Give reasons for causes, events and consequences.	Explain why one point is more significant than others
Useful tips	Use lots of key words and make sure it is written in chronological order	Include a number of examples using detailed evidence to support points	Use the word 'because' to provide reasons for the points made	Provide a range of key factors. Provide justifications why one factor is more significant than others.

# Autumn One

## Writing Genre: Recount

### What is it?

A piece of writing where the events from the past are re-told accurately and sometimes this may include sequencing events. For example recalling the main events of your life.

### Purpose:

To retell events with the purpose of informing the reader by highlighting the details

### What makes a good Recount in History?

- Must be in chronological order where appropriate
- Must be factually accurate
- Must use correct historical terms and key words.

Did you know...?  
The Romans invented lots of things that we use every day such as concrete, newspapers, books, calendars, and central heating.

For example...



## Recount the key features of Roman public health

1. Set the scene – opening statement possible stating what is meant by the term ‘Public Health’
2. Recount of the key features of Public health.
3. Closing statement

### Sequencing

next  
then  
first, second, third  
finally  
meanwhile  
after

### Adding

and  
also  
as well as  
moreover  
too  
furthermore  
besides  
in addition

Use these two boxes  
to improve the  
quality of your  
writing

### Success Criteria:

- I have a good list of accurate points
- I have an effective opening and closing statement
- I have use some interesting words or phrases from the two boxes.

# Revision Cycle

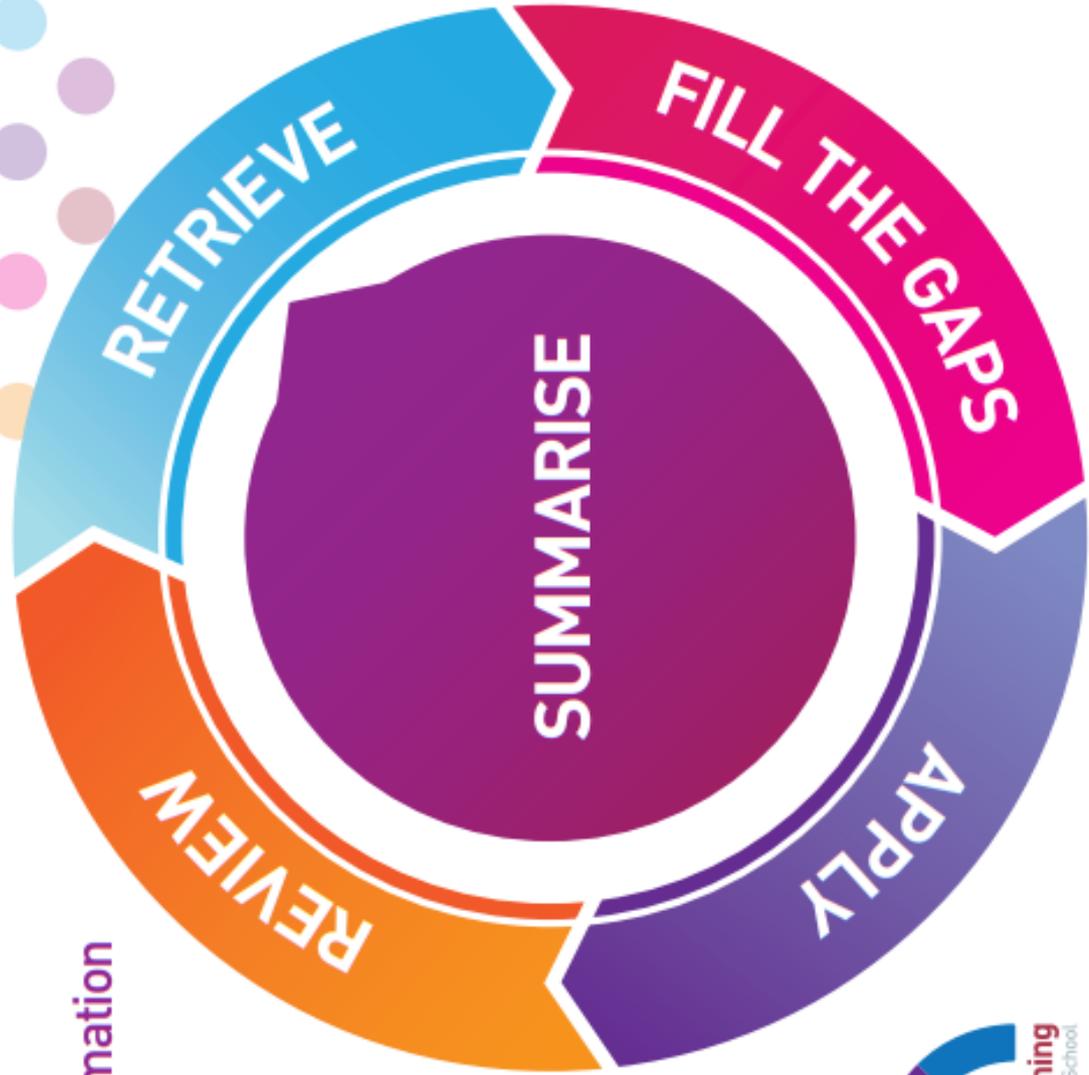
**1. SUMMARISE:** shorten information

**2. RETRIEVE:** find out what you know

**3. FILL THE GAPS:** look at what you don't remember

**4. APPLY:** practice using the information

**5. REVIEW:** reflect on how you have done and repeat



**Model recount answer for, 'what Roman public health was like'.**

**The Romans believed that keeping its people healthy was very important; this is known as public health. It is important to understand the different things that the Romans did in order to protect people from illness and disease.**

The first thing that the Romans did was to make sure that everyone had clean fresh water to drink and wash with. They did this by building aqueducts. Aqueducts carried fresh water from rivers and lakes all the way into the city centres where it could be used by the people.

The fresh water was used in two main ways. Firstly, drinking fountains were put into the streets. These could be used by anyone and were free of charge. The second way this water was used was in supplying public baths. Public baths were introduced by the Romans to make sure that the people kept clean. There were sometimes sports facilities attached to the baths so people could also exercise. The baths normally had three parts; a cold bath, a warm bath and a hot bath.

In addition to supplying fresh water the Romans believed that getting rid of waste was also important... **(this section has been missed out to save time but you could talk about latrines and sewers here)**.

The Romans took public health very seriously by making sure that everyone had clean fresh water; they also made sure people's waste was removed. All this helped the Romans to stay fit and healthy.

# Retrieval Quiz

When you can answer all the questions on this page without looking at any notes, you are ready for the exam!

## Roman Civilisation

- 1) Who, according to the myth, founded Rome?
- 2) Who is the Roman God of war?
- 3) What mountain erupted in 79AD burying Pompeii in a thick layer of ash?
- 4) Who was the first Roman Emperor?
- 5) What were Roman public toilets called?
- 6) What did Romans invent to keep themselves warm?
- 7) What is the modern name of the Roman Empire state of Gaul?
- 8) What did Romans build miles of everywhere they went?

## Roman Public Health?

- 1) What did an aqueduct provide?
- 2) Who could visit the Roman baths?
- 3) Where did the sewers deposit waste?
- 4) What rules did the Romans have for burying the dead?
- 5) How was clean water shared out?
- 6) How did the aqueducts work?
- 7) Where did Romans build toilets?
- 8) What functions, other than cleaning, did the bath houses provide?

All answers on the next pages

# Retrieval Quiz – Answers

The answers over the next two pages are basic knowledge points. You would need to be able to go into more detail for any exam answers.

## Roman Civilisation

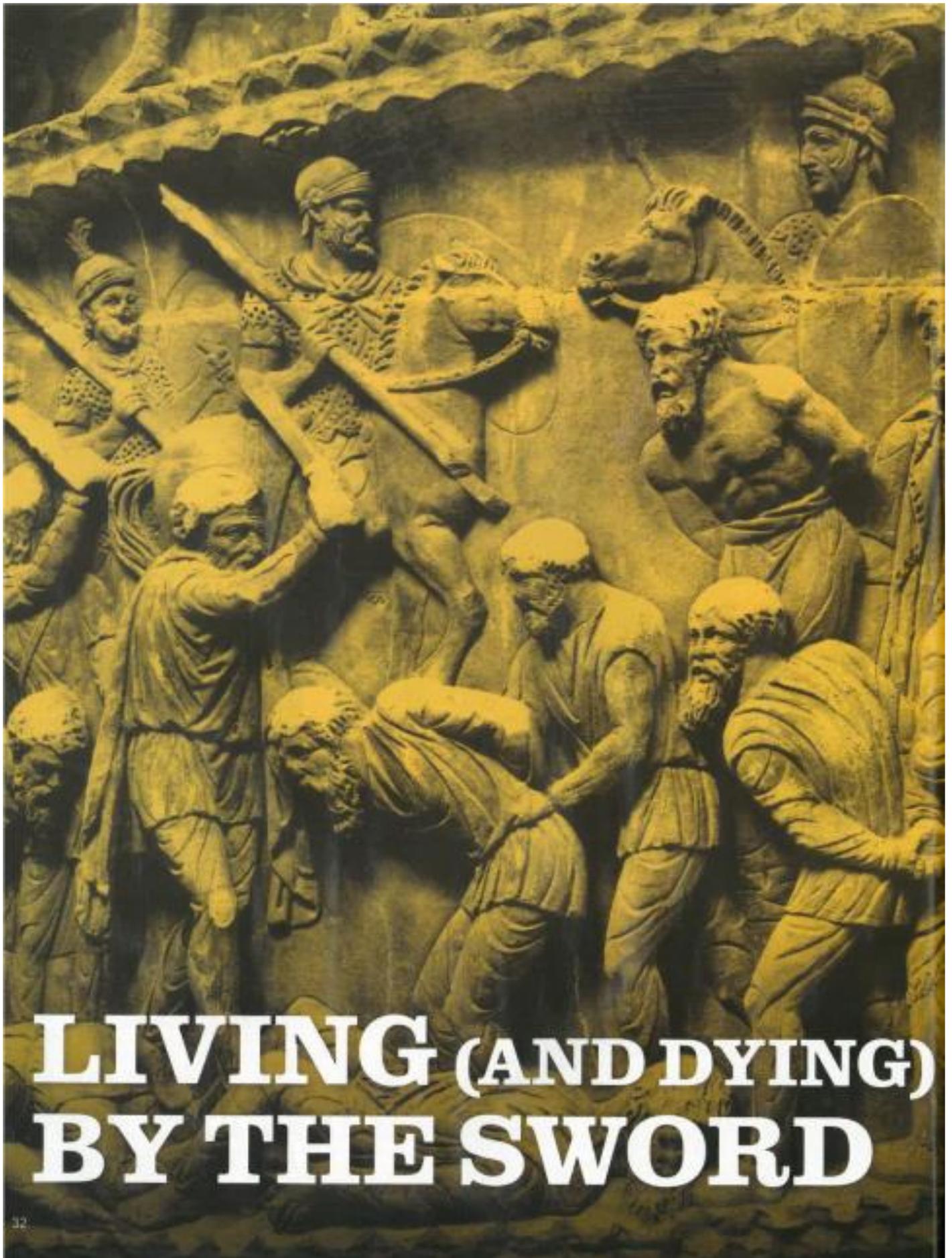
- 1) Romulus & Remus.
- 2) Mars.
- 3) Mount Vesuvius.
- 4) Augustus.
- 5) Latrines.
- 6) Patio heating!
- 7) France.
- 8) Roads.

## Roman Public Health?

- 1) Clean, spring water.
- 2) Everyone, they were cheap to use.
- 3) In the closest river.
- 4) Burying them away from cities and towns.
- 5) Not very equally, wealthy Romans had the aqueducts deliver clean water direct to their own properties.
- 6) Gravitational momentum to keep the water moving.
- 7) In their kitchens!
- 8) Social functions such as catching up on news and gossip and facilities to exercise and stay fit.

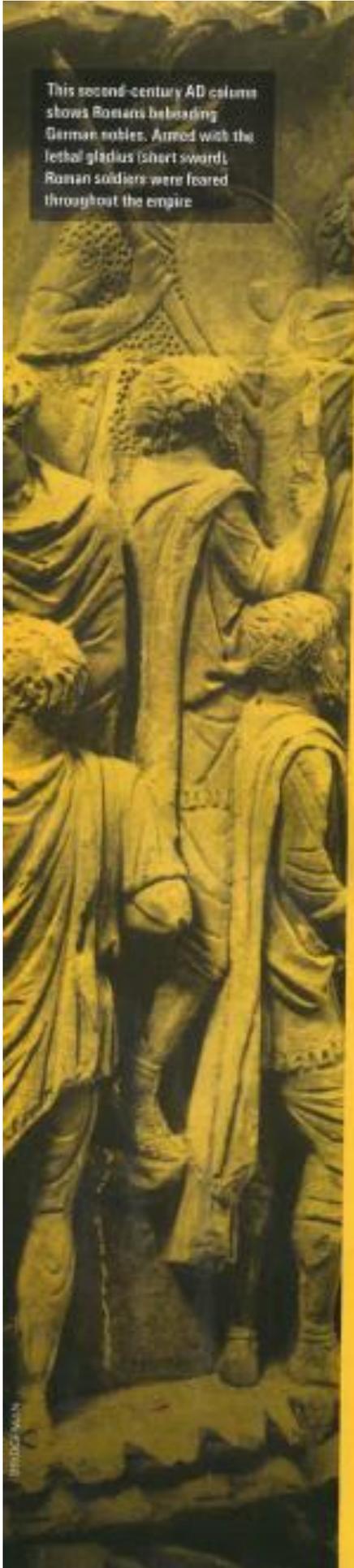
# Articles for Wider Reading and Flipped Learning





# LIVING (AND DYING) BY THE SWORD

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This second-century AD column shows Romans besieging German nobles. Armed with the lethal gladius (short sword), Roman soldiers were feared throughout the empire.

The beat of Roman soldiers' boots echoed throughout every corner of the empire – but what was it like to serve in the legions? Over the page, **Guy de la Bédoyère** delves into the vast archive these soldiers left behind and presents 10 snapshots of life in the ancient world's most powerful military force

**T**oday, the Roman army is remembered as the mightiest fighting machine that the ancient world had ever seen. And with good reason. But it took centuries to grow into the ferocious force that would strike fear into peoples spread across a sprawling empire.

In its earliest days, Rome's army was raised on an as-need basis from the citizenry based on property qualifications. At the top came men who could provide a horse, right down to the ordinary soldiers, or legionaries, who could afford only a sword. It required Rome's first two Punic Wars against Carthage in the third century BC for the Roman army to develop into the military behemoth that dominated the ancient world.

As the army's power grew, the number of men who served in it ballooned. In the Republic, numbers had varied according to requirements. They were mainly in the tens of thousands until the Late Republic (c104–31 BC), when Rome's warring generals raised vast forces to pursue their political ambitions. Under the emperors (27 BC–AD 337), the numbers rocketed from around 250,000 to 450,000, made up of citizen legionaries in the 5,000-strong legions and provincial auxiliaries in roughly equal numbers.

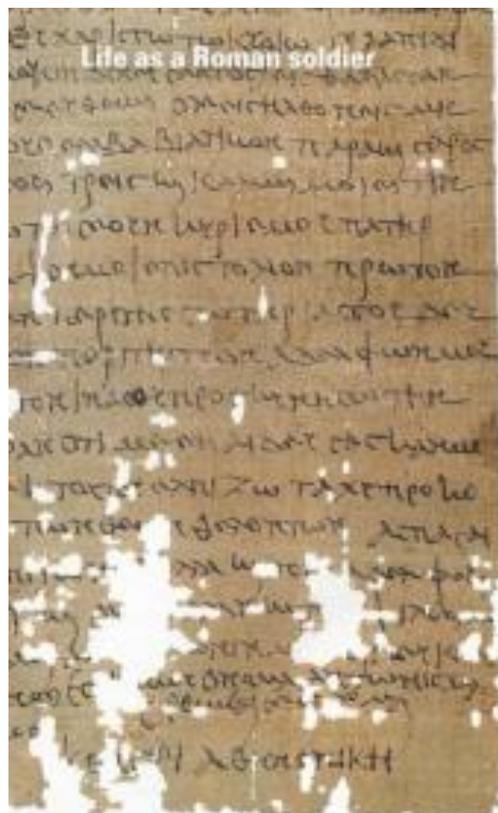
But the Roman army was about much more than war. It was almost the only means by which the Roman state exercised its power: Soldiers erected forts, built aqueducts, acted as bodyguards, policed civilians, managed quarries and prisons, and collected taxes. They also had families, petitioned the emperor, marched on campaign, committed acts of great valour and atrocities, and worshipped their gods. Some died from disease, enemy action, or

accidents. Others lived to sign on again as veterans, or retired to find their way in civilian life.

Yet despite its many roles in Roman society, the army is still best remembered for its military might. So how did the force manage to be so successful? It wasn't immune to defeat – far from it. But the Romans had a staggering ability to cope with adversity. Coming back from the disasters of Lake Trasimene (217 BC) and Cannae (216 BC) during the Second Punic War (when the Romans were heavily defeated twice by the Carthaginian general Hannibal who was roaming at will in Italy) was a turning point.

The Roman army was based on organisation and flexibility, always adapting to circumstances. Its soldiers were also exceptionally well-equipped, most notably with the *gladius Hispaniensis*, the 'Spanish sword'. It was a vicious weapon that reflected the harsh reality of brutal face-to-face fighting. But in the imperial age the soldiers became all too prone to toppling one emperor after another in search of ever bigger hand-outs and pay rises, destabilising the empire.

Stories of the army endured long after the last soldiers died – chiefly because the Romans left so much information about it. Historians such as Livy, Josephus and Tacitus loved military history and provide us with a huge amount of detail about campaigns and battles. And the soldiers themselves were also more literate than the general population and were more likely to leave records of their lives, be it in tombstones, religious offerings or letters. This has left a vast archive, and there is no parallel for any other ancient or medieval army.



Life as a Roman soldier

Apion's letter to his father, in which he shares the new Roman name he was given when he joined the fleet

## 1 What's in a name?

In the second century AD a young Egyptian called Apion fulfilled the exacting criteria for eligibility for the Roman military – he was between the ages of 17 and 46, freeborn, and passed a rigorous medical examination – and signed up to join the fleet. He then embarked on a dangerous journey from his village in Egypt to Italy, coming close to being shipwrecked en route. Happily, Apion safely reached the Roman fleet base at Misenum on the northern side of the bay of Naples, where he joined the company of a ship called the *Athenonica* and promptly set about writing home to his father.

His letter, which has survived, is in Greek, the everyday language in the eastern Roman empire. "I thank the lord Serapis that when I was in danger at sea he immediately saved me," wrote Apion. He was also delighted on arrival to have "received from Caesar three gold coins for travelling expenses". This was a considerable sum of money, equivalent to around half a year's pay for a member of the fleet. Apion had something else to tell his father, Epimachus: "My name is Antonius Maximus" – this was his brand-new Roman name. Although not every auxiliary soldier took a Roman moniker, some did – and it was a common practice in Apion's fleet. His new name was typically Roman, and for Apion a matter of pride.

## 2 Rivalry in the ranks

During Julius Caesar's Gallic campaign (fought in modern-day France), two centurions (commanders of 80 men) called Titus Pullo and Lucius Vorenus earned undying fame in the heat of a vicious battle. Caesar was so impressed that he even made a special point of telling their story.

The pair were bitter rivals for the best jobs. One day in 54 BC the legion was under attack from the Nervii tribe (warlike people who lived in the north of Gaul). Pullo goaded Vorenus, accusing him of waiting for a better opportunity to prove his bravery. Pullo then dived into the fight, leaving Vorenus no alternative but to follow him in case he was thought a coward.

Pullo threw his spear and struck one of the Nervii. But other Nervii flung their spears at Pullo, who had no chance of escaping. He had one spear stuck in his shield, another in his belt, and his scabbard had been pushed out of place. Vorenus dashed up to help, diverting the tribesmen's attention on to him because they thought Pullo was dead. Vorenus killed one and chased off the others, and during the melee Pullo had been able to get away and bring up reinforcements. They escaped back behind the Roman defences, lucky to have their lives.

Caesar said: "It was impossible to decide which should be considered the better man in valour."

## 3 Sleeves' secret meaning

An early third-century AD tombstone from South Shields fort reads: "Victor, a Moorish tribesman, aged 20, freedman of Numerianus... who most devotedly conducted him to the tomb." In the tombstone's engraving, Victor wears a long-sleeved tunic (men who wore this item of clothing were assumed to have a preference for male partners) and robe while he lounges on a couch. Whether he and Numerianus shared a sexual relationship can only be conjecture, but the unusually affectionate nature of the piece suggests that possibility.

Scipio Africanus, the famous general of the Second Punic War over 400 years earlier, disapproved of such relationships. He once described "a young man who with a lover has reclined (at meals) in a long-sleeved tunic on the inside of a couch, and is not only partial to wine, but also to men. Does anyone doubt that he does what sodomites are accustomed to doing?"

Victor's tombstone amounts to a



Victor (above) may have been the lover of a Roman soldier called Numerianus

visual realisation of Scipio's words, but replacing condemnation with veneration. It suggests that, by Victor's time and in this frontier fort, his relationship with Numerianus was most likely conducted openly and in safety.



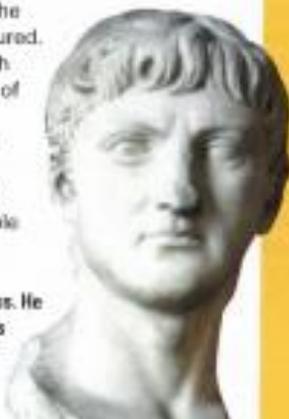
Ray Stevenson and Kevin McKidd portray centurions Titus Pullo (left) and Lucius Vorenus in the 2005 series *Rome*

## 4 Bullying centurions

Centurions played a key part in the everyday disciplining of soldiers, and it could backfire. During the mutiny among the Pannonian legions in AD 14, one harsh disciplinarian of a centurion called Lucillus was killed. He had earned himself the nickname *Cedo Alterum* ('bring me another!') in reference to his habit of breaking his vine rod symbol of office over the back of one ordinary soldier after another and calling for a fresh stick to be brought. The VIII and XV legions were on the point of coming to blows over another centurion called Sarpicus, as he also bullied common soldiers. Only the intervention of Legio VIII saved him.

In that same year, a mutiny was stirred up among the Rhine legions over the way pay and conditions had been ignored. The men's first target was the centurions "who had fuelled the soldiers' hatred for the longest". The soldiers all bore the scars of beatings they had endured. They struck each centurion with 60 blows to match the number of centurions in a legion, killing some and severely injuring the rest, and threw them into the rampart or into the Rhine. Only the general Germanicus was able to calm the men down.

The general Germanicus. He stopped mutinous soldiers from murdering centurions



ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES



This fourth-century Roman floor mosaic shows a boar hunt, a popular pastime among officers

## 5 In pursuit of pleasure

Some officers spent their spare time composing poetry or writing, but others had less refined hobbies – and for these men, hunting was often top of the list. In around the third century AD, Gaius Tettius Iulianus Micianus, the commanding officer of the Gaulish Ala Sebosiana in northern Britain, triumphantly hunted down a boar that had apparently fought off all other attempts to capture it.

The officer commemorated his kill on an altar that he set up on Bollhope Common. Its text brags: "Gaius Tettius Iulianus Micianus, prefect commanding the cavalry wing of Sebosians, willingly set this up to the Divinities of the Emperors and Unconquerable Severus [in return] for taking a wild boar of remarkable fineness which many of his predecessors had been unable to turn into booty."

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## Life as a Roman soldier

# 6 A civil war tragedy

In AD 69 Rome descended into a vicious civil war that involved four rival emperors who battled it out in turn: Galba, Otho, Vitellius and the eventual victor, Vespasian. As violence raged across the empire, one particularly tragic event occurred.

Legio XXI Rapax supported Vitellius. One of its soldiers was a Spaniard called Julius Mansuetus who had left a son behind at home. Not long after this, the boy reached adulthood and joined Legio VII Gemina, formed by Galba, one of the four rival emperors, in AD 68. But by the time of the second battle of Bedriacum, VII Gemina was on Vespasian's side.

During the fierce fighting, the young soldier unknowingly fatally wounded his own father. Only when he was searching Mansuetus' barely conscious body did he realise what he had done. Profusely apologising to his father before he died, he then picked up the body and buried it. Other soldiers noticed what was going on, and they all ruminated on the pointless destruction the war had brought. The historian Tacitus, however, told his readers that it made no difference. Nothing stopped the soldiers carrying on "killing and robbing their relatives, kin and brothers". Calling it a crime, "in the same breath they did it themselves".



One centurion used his power to restore the Roman baths (above) which had been vandalised.

# 7 Laying down the law

The job of centurion carried with it great responsibility – not only were they in charge of soldiers, but some were tasked with civilian administration, too. The centurion Gaius Severus Emeritus oversaw the region around the spa at Bath in Britain. He was disgusted to find that one of the sacred places had been wrecked "by insolent hands", as Emeritus called them. Frustrated by gratuitous vandalism and the oats responsible, he had the place restored, and set up an altar to commemorate the fact.

It seems to have been a good idea to keep these powerful men on side, and many tried to bribe them.

During the reign of Hadrian, Julius Clemens, a centurion of Legio XXII Deiotariana, wrote to Sokrator, an Egyptian civilian who had sent Clemens a bribe of olive oil, and implored: "And do you write to me about what you may need, knowing that I gladly do everything for you."

The potential for centurions in charge of civilian administration to abuse their positions is obvious. But they weren't alone. The poet Juvenal, who had himself once commanded an auxiliary unit, was deeply critical of how Roman soldiers threw their weight about, beat up members of the public and flouted justice.



The tombstone of Sextus Valerius Genialis. As a soldier, he met people from across the Roman empire.

# 8 Diverse homelands

Although most legionaries came from Italy, Gaul and Spain, the auxiliary forces were raised from all over the Roman empire. Let's take, for instance, an auxiliary soldier called Sextus Valerius Genialis. He was one of the Frisiavone people and hailed from Gallia Belgica (a region covering modern-day north-eastern France, Belgium and Luxembourg), but he served with a Thracian cavalry unit in Britain and had a completely Roman name.

The ethnic titles the auxiliary units sported – such as Ala I Britannica – are often taken surprisingly literally by military historians and archaeologists, who assume the men in these units must have been

of the same ethnicity. However, the records of individual soldiers show that unless very specialised fighting skills were involved (like those of the Syrian archers), the reality was often different.

From AD 240–50 the cavalry wing Ala I Britannica had around six Thracian men recruited to its ranks, and these men served with others of Pannonian origin (men from central Europe) – despite the fact that the cavalry wing was supposedly made up of Britons. Similar stories can be found in the fleet, too. A Briton named Veluotigemus joined the Classis Germanica fleet and was honourably discharged on 19 November AD 150 along with veterans from the auxiliary cavalry and infantry units in Germania Inferior.



A mother nurses her child on this sarcophagus. Soldiers weren't supposed to marry, but many did

## 9 Forbidden family

Although Roman soldiers were not supposed to marry (the law that prohibited them from taking a wife was only relaxed at the end of the second century AD) the evidence from tombstones and documents is that plenty did. In the late first century – around 100 years before the law was eased – the poet Martial knew a centurion called Aulus Pudens who was married to a woman called Claudia Peregina ('Claudia the Provincial'). Martial tells us Claudia was very fertile and that she had "sprung from the wood-stained Britons".

In Egypt, meanwhile, a soldier called Julius Terentianus placed his children and his other private affairs in the hands of his sister, Apollonius, in Keranis. As he refers to the care of his children in letters to her,

it is quite possible that this was a case of brother-sister marriage, which was well-known in Egypt. In AD 99 Apollonius wrote to him to say: "Do not worry about the children. They are in good health and are kept busy by a teacher."

More often we know about soldiers' children only because they died tragically young. For instance, Simplicia Florentina, a child "of the most innocent spirit", had lived for a scant 10 months before she passed away. Her father, Felicius Simplex, a centurion of Legio VI Victrix, buried her at York. Likewise, Septimius Licinius, who served with Legio II Parthica at Castra Albana in Italy, buried his "dear son Septimius Licinianus" when the boy was only aged three years, four months and 24 days.



Tombstones – like this one, belonging to Titus Flaminus of the XIII Legion – tell us much about soldiers' lives

## 10 Leaving their mark

Just before the battle of Pharsalus in 48 BC Julius Caesar asked Crassinius, one of his centurions, how he thought the battle would go. Crassinius replied: "We shall conquer, O Caesar, and you will thank me, living or dead." Crassinius was true to his word and covered himself in glory that day, but he lost his life. Caesar gave the centurion's body full military honours and had a tomb built specially for Crassinius alone, close to the mass burial mound for the rest.

Unlike Crassinius, the vast majority of Roman soldiers have no known resting place. However, the tombstones that have survived tell us a great deal about fighters' individual lives and their mindsets. This is quite unlike other ancient and medieval conflicts, such as the Wars of the Roses, for which there is no equivalent record.

For instance, from examining the tombstone of Titus Flaminus, who served with Legio XIII in the earliest days of the Roman conquest of Britain and died at the legion's base at Wroxeter aged 45 after 22 years' service, we can see that he seems to have had no regrets. His tombstone has a poignant message for us: "I served as a soldier, and now here I am. Read this, and be happy – more or less – in your lifetime. [May] the gods keep you from the wine-grape, and water, when you enter Tartarus [the mythical pit beneath the Earth]. Live honourably while your star gives you life." 

Guy de la Bédoyère is a historian and broadcaster. His new book, *Gladius: Living, Fighting and Dying in the Roman Army*, was published by Little, Brown Book Group last month.

### LISTEN

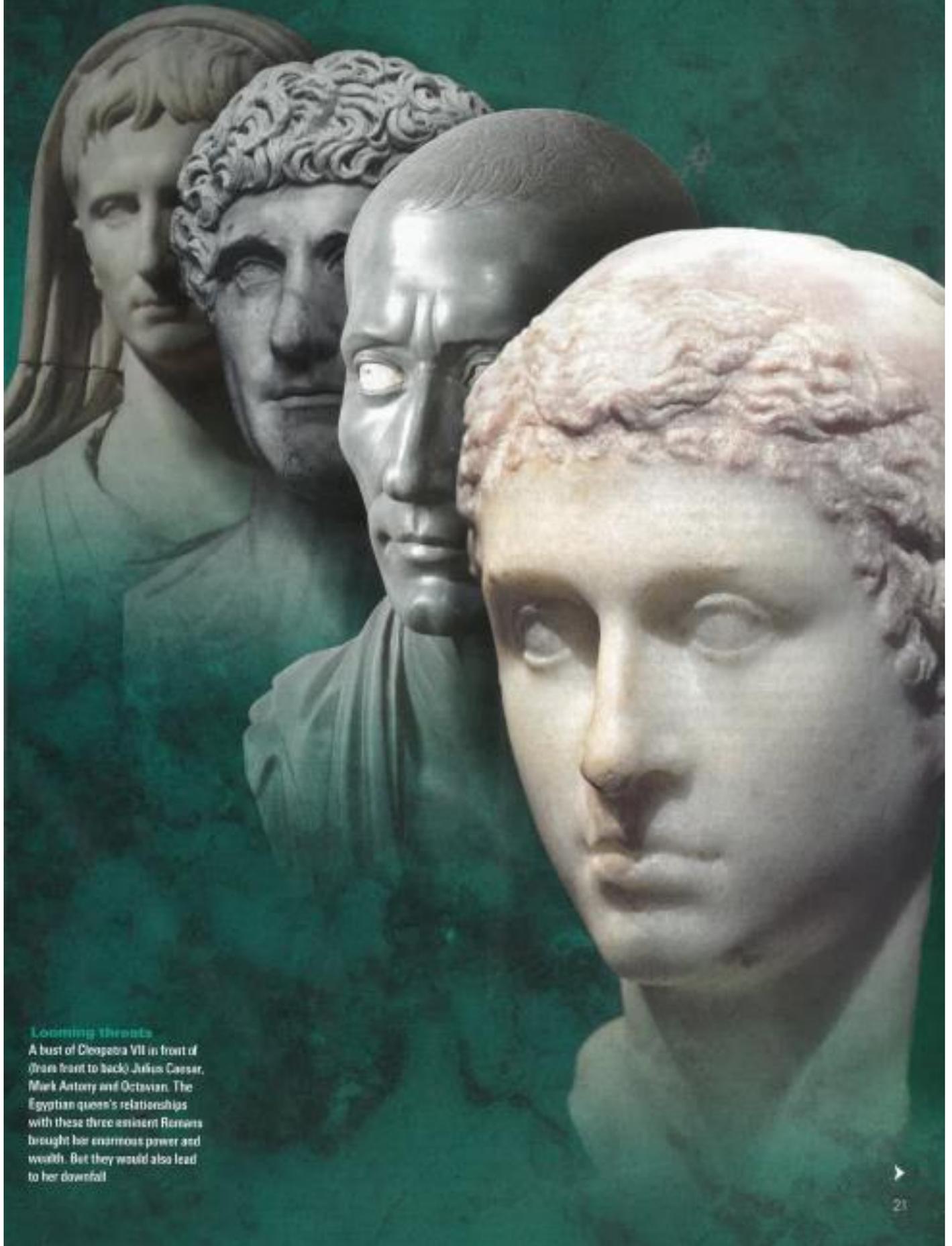
Tune into BBC Radio 4's *In our Time* episodes on ancient Rome: [bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01b6bhd](http://bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01b6bhd)



# ROME GLORIED IN CLEOPATRA'S TALE OF DECADENCE, LUST AND DEATH

**Joyce Tyldesley** on an Egyptian queen's ill-fated entanglements with three Roman generals

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY



**Looming threats**

A bust of Cleopatra VII in front of (from front to back) Julius Caesar, Mark Antony and Octavian. The Egyptian queen's relationships with these three eminent Romans brought her enormous power and wealth. But they would also lead to her downfall



## It is the autumn of 34 BC

and Cleopatra VII, queen of Egypt, is hosting a lavish celebration in her capital city, Alexandria. Seated on a golden throne, wearing flowing robes and an intricate crown decorated with a sun disk and cow horns, she is the living incarnation of the goddess Isis. Beside her sits her consort, the Roman general Mark Antony, dressed as the god Dionysus. Nearby, four lesser thrones have been provided for her son Caesarion – co-ruler of Egypt and, it is rumoured, son of Julius Caesar – and her three children by Antony: the twins Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene and the young Ptolemy Philadelphus.

At the climax of the ceremony Antony gives an astonishing speech that makes his ambitions clear. Cleopatra is recognised as queen of Egypt, Caesarion is both king of Egypt and the legitimate heir to Julius Caesar in Rome, and the younger children are destined to rule a vast expanse of lands. Antony, as patriarch, will effectively rule the world. Nothing could have been designed to annoy the watching Romans more.

Rome was never far from Cleopatra's thoughts. And, as a forthcoming film about the Egyptian queen (starring Gal Gadot of *Wonder Woman* fame) is likely to relate, Cleopatra's life was inextricably linked with the dominant power in the Mediterranean world. Her relationships and rivalries with three of Rome's greatest men – Julius Caesar, his great-nephew and heir Octavian (who would go on to become Augustus, Rome's first emperor), and great friend Mark Antony – would bring her immense riches and influence. But they would also bring about her downfall.

It is, perhaps, hardly surprising that

Cleopatra became entangled with Rome from an early age. A member of the Ptolemaic dynasty, a family of Macedonian heritage who had inherited Egypt following the death of Alexander the Great, she had seen her father, Ptolemy XII, plunge deep into debt as he bribed influential Romans to protect his crown. The danger was obvious. Egypt was fertile and ill-defended while Rome, ambitious and expanding, was ever-greedy for Egypt's plentiful grain.

When Ptolemy "died of disease" in 51 BC, he appointed the people of Rome guardians to his successors: the 18-year-old Cleopatra and her 10-year-old brother Ptolemy XIII. Ptolemaic tradition dictated that brothers and sisters ruled Egypt jointly, and sometimes married one another (though we're not sure if the latter was the case with Cleopatra and Ptolemy).

The joint reign started with Cleopatra as the dominant monarch and Ptolemy controlled by his advisors and tutors. By the time Ptolemy was old enough to assert his authority, the relationship between the siblings had irretrievably broken down. With civil war looming, Cleopatra raised an army in Syria.

## Rome, too, was in crisis.

Julius Caesar had crossed the Rubicon, effectively declaring war on his former ally, the powerful senator and general, Pompey the Great. In August 48 BC, Caesar won the battle of Pharsalus and the defeated Pompey fled to the Egyptian port of Pelusium. Here he found Ptolemy's forces nervously awaiting the arrival of Cleopatra's mercenary army. Wishing to impress Caesar with his loyalty, Ptolemy ordered that Pompey be killed.

Four days later Caesar arrived in

Alexandria and Ptolemy's men presented him with Pompey's severed head. Feigning horror – how could a mere Egyptian presume to kill a noble Roman? – he marched into the city. By nightfall he had commandeered the palace; there had been rioting and deaths.

Determined to avert civil war, Caesar summoned Cleopatra and Ptolemy and made it clear that he expected them to rule together in harmony. The poet Lucan, writing c65 AD, tells us that Cleopatra threw a lavish banquet to celebrate this new beginning: "When Caesar had made an expensive peace between the pair, they celebrated with a banquet. With pomp the queen displayed her luxuries, as yet unknown to Roman fashions..."

But Lucan's account needs to be taken with a pinch of salt. In reality no one, Caesar excepted, was happy with the new power-sharing arrangement, and Alexandria was soon plunged into vicious fighting which ended with Ptolemy XIII dead and Cleopatra ruling Egypt alongside a second young brother, Ptolemy XIV. The queen and king were supported by four Roman legions. Egypt was, in all but name, a Roman protectorate.

Suetonius tells us that Caesar was smitten by Cleopatra. "He often feasted with her until daybreak, and they would have sailed together in her barge nearly to Ethiopia had his soldiers agreed to follow him." Some time between 47 and 44 BC, Cleopatra gave birth to a son whom she named Ptolemy Caesar (Caesarion). In Rome, opinion was divided over the boy's paternity. In Egypt, no one really cared, although Ptolemy XIV must have started to wonder about his own life expectancy. With Caesarion and Cleopatra ruling Egypt, and Caesar dictator of Rome, Egypt would receive Roman protection, Rome would benefit from Egypt's generosity,

GETTY IMAGES/TOPFOTOALAMY

## TIMELINE The rise and fall of Egypt's last pharaoh

70 or 69 BC

The birth of Cleopatra VII is unrecorded, but Plutarch tells us that at the time of her death (12 August 30 BC) she was 39 years old. Her father is Ptolemy XII; her mother unknown.



A sculpture thought to depict Cleopatra, whose exact date of birth is unknown.

51 BC

Ptolemy XII is succeeded by Cleopatra and her brother (and perhaps husband) Ptolemy XIII.

47 BC

The siege of Alexandria ends with Caesar victorious. Ptolemy XII dead, and Cleopatra restored to her throne alongside a new co-ruler, the young Ptolemy XIV.



Julius Caesar established Rome as the dominant force in Egypt in 47 BC

c47 BC

Cleopatra gives birth to a son (pictured below) whom she names Ptolemy Caesar. The people of Alexandria leap to the obvious conclusion and rename the baby Caesarion, or "Little Caesar".



44 BC

Caesar is assassinated on 15 March, and Cleopatra flees Rome for Alexandria. Soon after her return, Ptolemy XIV dies and Caesarion takes his place as king.



### Escape to victory

A depiction of the 47 BC siege of Alexandria, which ended with Egypt becoming a Roman protectorate and Julius Caesar becoming Cleopatra's lover

## MARK ANTONY GAVE AN ASTONISHING SPEECH THAT MADE HIS AMBITIONS CLEAR. AS PATRIARCH HE WOULD EFFECTIVELY RULE THE WORLD

AUG-IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO/BRUCE MANN

Mark Antony depicted on a coin. The battle-hardened general, wrote Plutarch, fell instantly for Cleopatra's charms



and Caesar's family would be all powerful.

In the summer of 47 BC Caesar left Egypt. The couple next met in Rome, where Cleopatra stayed on Caesar's private estate until his assassination on the Ides of March (15 March) 44 BC. Cicero, a dedicated republican, met Cleopatra at this time and disliked her: "I hate the queen... I cannot recall her insolence, when she was living in Caesar's house in the gardens beyond the Tiber, without indignation."

Cicero confirms that Cleopatra left Rome within a month of Caesar's death: "I see nothing to object to in the flight of the queen." Back in Alexandria, Ptolemy XIV inexplicably died. With the three-year-old Ptolemy XV Caesarion beside her, Cleopatra ruled Egypt for three peaceful years.

Outside Egypt things were far from peaceful. A triumvirate of Mark Antony, Octavian and Lepidus (a general and ally of Caesar) had determined to capture Caesar's

### 41 BC

Responding to his fascination with the cult of Dionysus, Cleopatra meets Mark Antony in Tarsus, dressed as his consort, the Egyptian goddess Isis. The two soon begin a relationship that produces three children.

### 37 BC

Cleopatra negotiates with Antony for the return of the last eastern empire of her ancestor Ptolemy II Philadelphus, becoming possibly the world's wealthiest monarch.

### 34 BC

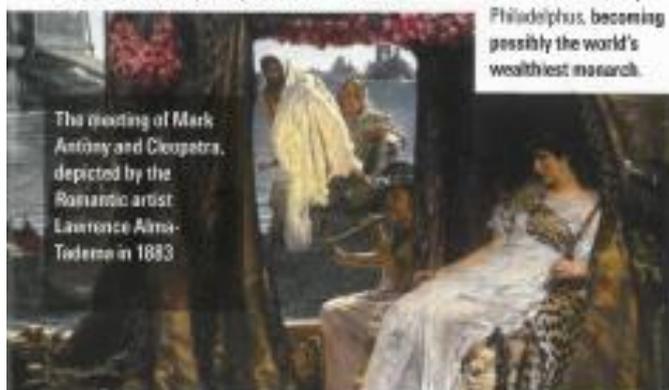
Antony makes his ambitions for his Egyptian royal family clear by distributing lands held by Rome and Parthia among Cleopatra's children. The bond between Antony and Julius Caesar's adopted son, Octavian, is irrevocably broken.

### 31 BC

The combined fleets of Cleopatra and Antony are defeated at the battle of Actium and they flee to Alexandria.

### 30 BC

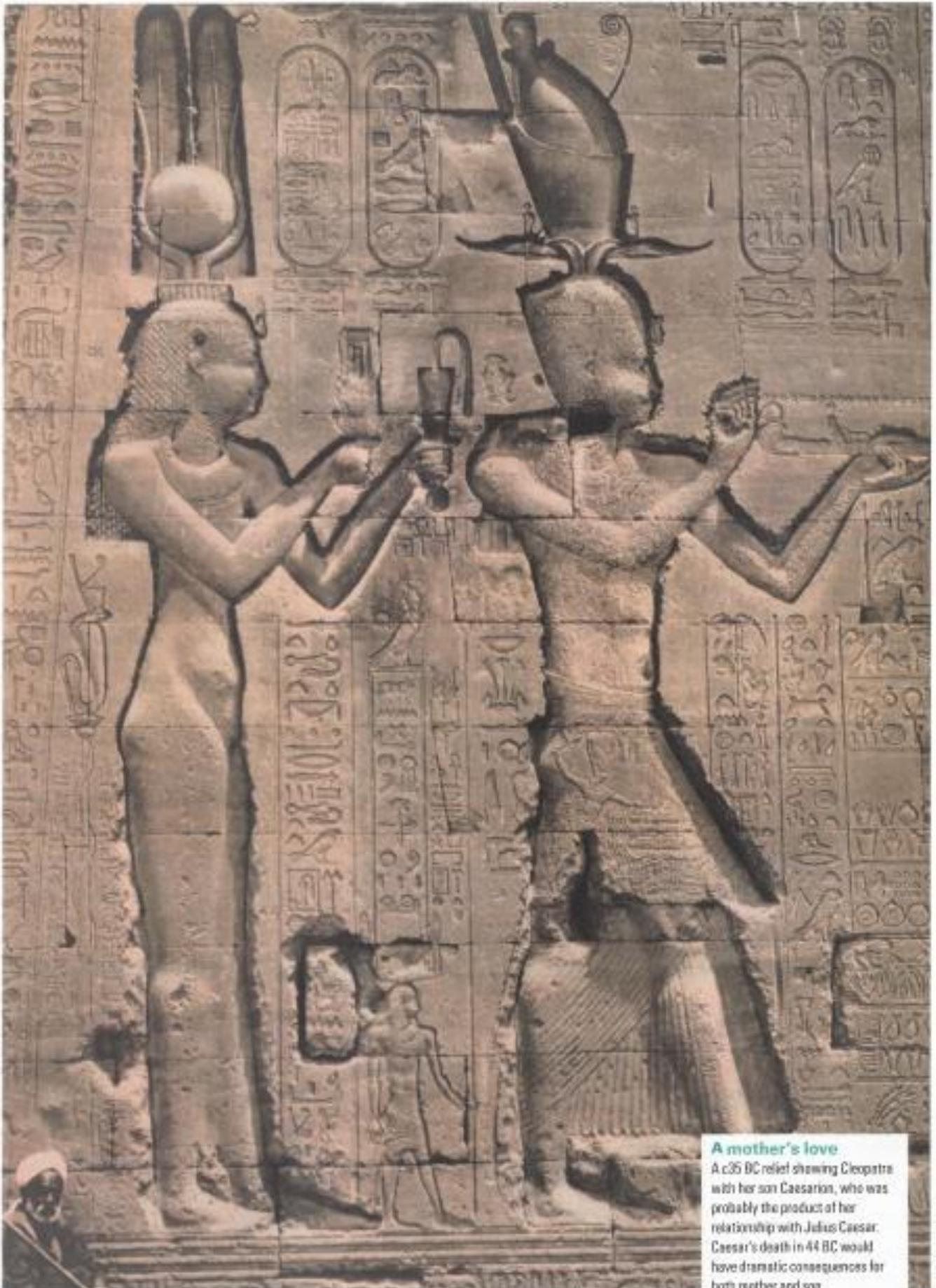
Cleopatra kills herself, possibly using snake venom. In Egypt, more than 3,000 years of dynastic rule ends. In Rome, imperial rule begins.



The meeting of Mark Antony and Cleopatra, depicted by the Romantic artist Lawrence Alma-Tadema in 1883



A coin depicting Cleopatra. Her death in 30 BC confirmed Rome's domination of Egypt



**A mother's love**

A c.36 BC relief showing Cleopatra with her son Caesarion, who was probably the product of her relationship with Julius Caesar. Caesar's death in 44 BC would have dramatic consequences for both mother and son

SHUTTERSTOCK

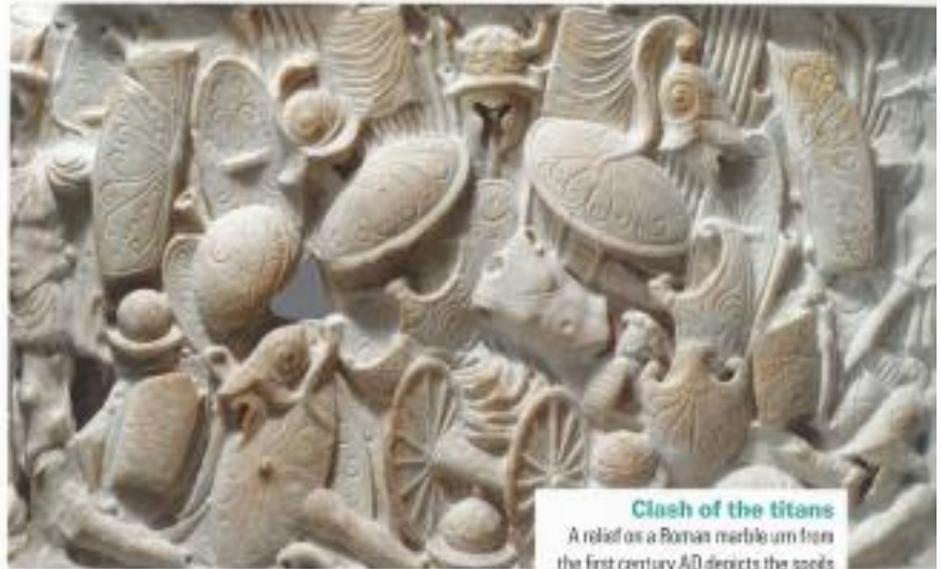
## CLEOPATRA NEEDED A ROMAN PROTECTOR, AND ANTONY – MORE EXPERIENCED AND POPULAR THAN OCTAVIAN – SEEMED HER NATURAL ALLY

assassins Brutus and Cassius, and they expected Egypt to help. Meanwhile, Brutus and Cassius also expected Egyptian assistance. Cleopatra hesitated then, siding with the triumvirate, she returned the Roman legions stationed in Egypt. She raised a fleet and set sail to join Octavian and Antony in Greece, but a storm blew up, her ships were damaged and Cleopatra fell ill. While she waited for a second fleet to be made ready, Brutus and Cassius killed themselves. With Lepidus essentially ineffective, two men now held power: Octavian controlled Rome's western empire, and Antony the east.

Cleopatra knew that she needed a Roman protector and Antony – older, more experienced and certainly more popular than Octavian – seemed her natural ally. When Antony summoned her to Tarsus (now in Turkey), she seized her chance. Plutarch is clear that Cleopatra intended to seduce Antony and that he almost immediately succumbed to her charms. "...she was going to visit Antony at the very time when women have the most brilliant beauty and are at the acme of intellectual power... she went putting her greatest confidence in herself, and in the charms and sorceries of her own person."

Cleopatra sailed into Tarsus on a gilded boat fitted with silver oars and a purple sail. Flutes, pipes and lutes played on deck, and incense perfumed the air. The queen, dressed as Isis, reclined beneath a gold spangled canopy attended by boys dressed as cupids. When Antony sent an invitation to dinner she declared that she would rather entertain him. Cleopatra captivated Antony with splendid food and drink, and they sat together that evening surrounded by a multitude of twinkling lights.

Cleopatra feasted with Antony, but she bargained with him too. She would provide funds to part-finance a Parthian campaign but he, in return, must protect her position.



### Clash of the titans

A relief on a Roman marble urn from the first century AD depicts the spoils of a battle. Caesar's death triggered a wave of bloodletting as the leading figures in the empire vied for power

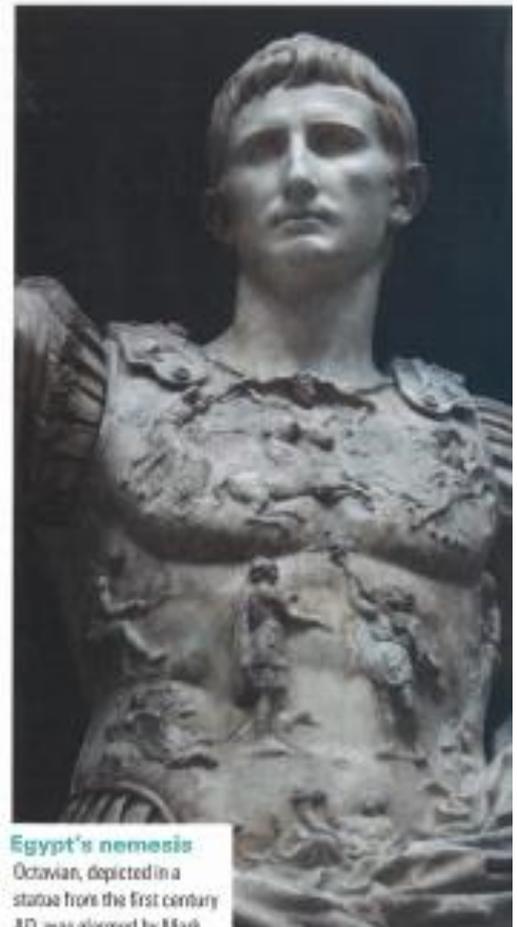
The couple spent the winter relaxing in Alexandria. But in 40 BC, when Cleopatra gave birth to twins, Antony had already gone. He would not see his Egyptian children for three and a half years.

## In 37 BC the triumvirate

was renewed for a second term. Antony now agreed to supply Octavian with 120 warships to be used against the pirate ships that were disrupting Mediterranean trade. Octavian, in return, would provide Antony with four legions to use against the Parthians. Antony handed over his ships, but the promised troops never arrived. Belatedly, Antony realised that he could not rely on Octavian. He travelled to Antioch, and once again summoned Cleopatra. She would provide the fleet that he needed, but in exchange she demanded the return of the extensive eastern Mediterranean empire ruled and then lost by the early Ptolemies. When Antony agreed, Cleopatra became probably the world's wealthiest monarch. In late summer 36 BC she bore her third son.

The Parthian campaign quickly turned into a humiliating disaster, and Antony was forced to retreat to Syria. It was not all bad news, however. In 34 BC Antony captured Artavasdes of Armenia. This was far from the major victory that he had anticipated. Nevertheless, Antony awarded himself the honour of entering Alexandria dressed in the golden robe of Dionysus, crowned with ivy leaves and carrying a wand symbolising prosperity, fertility and pleasure.

Octavian was not amused. Antony's celebration was akin to a triumph: a sacred Roman celebration. When this was followed by the elaborate public celebration known today as the "Donations of Alexandria", it seemed clear that Antony considered Alexandria a capital city to rival Rome.



### Egypt's nemesis

Octavian, depicted in a statue from the first century AD, was alarmed by Mark Antony's military campaigns in Egypt and elsewhere, so set out to eliminate his erstwhile ally



**All at sea:**  
A marble relief shows the battle of Actium, which saw Octavian smash Antony and Cleopatra's power and establish himself as the dominant force in the eastern empire.

Octavian and Antony could no longer rule together; one of them had to go. As a fierce propaganda war erupted, Octavian used Cleopatra – characterised as an unnatural, emasculating woman – to expose and explain Antony's inappropriate behaviour. Tales of Antony's unhealthy subservience spread like wildfire. Cleopatra had demanded and received the vast libraries of the Greek city of Pergamum in Asia Minor (modern Turkey); she had recruited Roman soldiers into her bodyguard; she had made Antony rub her feet like a slave at a banquet.

### In late 32 BC, Octavian

donned ritual garments, hurled a wooden javelin against an invisible enemy and declared war on Cleopatra "for her acts". It is not obvious what these hostile acts might have been. Cleopatra had in fact been a loyal vassal, preparing a fleet for Antony and Octavian and responding to various Roman summonses to Alexandria, Tarsus and Antioch. All this was irrelevant. Octavian needed to promote Cleopatra as an enemy of Rome if he were to achieve his ambition of eliminating the still-popular Antony. His men would not fight Antony, but they would

fight Cleopatra – and Antony, he gambled, would stand by his queen.

The battle of Actium shattered Antony's dream of a glorious eastern empire. Plutarch tells us that Cleopatra and Antony had raised an army of not less than 500 warships, 100,000 legionaries and armed infantry, and 12,000 cavalry. Cleopatra supplied at least 60 Egyptian ships and commanded her own fleet. Octavian, with a mere 250 ships, 80,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry, was outnumbered, but his fleet was better armed and better prepared, and his admiral, Agrippa, was highly experienced.

On 2 September 31 BC, Antony's ships emerged in three divisions, protecting Cleopatra's fleet. Almost immediately things went badly wrong as Octavian's fleet kept out of range, drawing Antony's ships out to sea. While Antony commanded the right division, the ships from the central and left divisions inexplicably retreated.

Then – unaccountably – Cleopatra's ships



### Heading for trouble

Cleopatra, portrayed on a coin minted in c32 BC. The Egyptian queen showed loyalty to Rome. In return, Octavian destroyed her armies and smeared her reputation.

## ROME PORTRAYED CLEOPATRA AS AN UNNATURAL WOMAN WHO DOMINATED MEN, SLEPT WITH HER BROTHERS AND GAVE BIRTH TO BASTARDS

hoisted their sails, broke through Octavian's line and sailed away. Antony transferred to a quinquireme (a galley with five banks of oars on each side) and chased after Cleopatra. The sea battle ended with 5,000 of Antony's men lost and 300 ships taken. Meanwhile, Antony's ground forces had been caught by Octavian's troops; most of his soldiers subsequently defected.

Cleopatra went straight to Alexandria. It still seemed reasonable to make extravagant plans. A plan to flee to Spain was dropped when it became obvious that Octavian's ships would make the sea crossing far too dangerous. A plan to flee to India via the Red Sea was abandoned when Cleopatra's boats were captured and burned by the Nabataean king Malchus. Antony arrived in Alexandria to find Cleopatra's partially completed mausoleum packed with treasure. If attacked, she intended to set fire to her fortune.

In the summer of 30 BC, Octavian invaded Egypt from the east, marching across the Nile Delta to set up camp just outside Alexandria. On the morning of 1 August, Antony led his troops through the city gate, while his fleet sailed to meet the Roman ships. To his horror his ships surrendered immediately, and his cavalry followed suit. His infantry remained loyal but it was a one-sided battle. Antony retreated and, hearing (incorrectly, in fact) that Cleopatra had already killed herself rather than be taken captive, stabbed himself in the stomach. Cleopatra's death on 12 August 30 BC brought 3,000 years of dynastic rule over Egypt to an end.

### The Roman propaganda

machine continued to manipulate public opinion against Cleopatra long after the battle of Actium. As Cleopatra had allowed Octavian to eliminate Mark Antony without staining Octavian's reputation, her story had



**Seductive image** Cleopatra – shown in John William Waterhouse's c1887 painting – has "evolved into a semi-mythological figure more famous for her beauty than her brains"

to survive as an integral part of his, Caesar, the adoptive father who gave Octavian his right to rule, was to be remembered as an upright man who manipulated an immoral foreign woman for his own ends. Antony, Octavian's rival, was to be remembered as a fatally weak man hopelessly ensnared in the coils of an immoral foreign woman. Cleopatra was to be that immoral foreign woman: an unnatural female who dominated men, slept with her brothers and give birth to bastards. A woman foolish enough to think that she might one day rule the world.

The Roman story of decadence, lust and suicide – the contrast between the seductive, decaying power of Egypt and the virile, disciplined strength of Rome – has captured the imaginations of western artists and writers over the centuries, allowing Cleopatra to evolve into a semi-mythological figure more famous for her beauty than her brains. Plutarch is at pains to stress that Cleopatra was not actually a great beauty ("Her beauty, as we are told, was in itself not altogether incomparable") but rather an intelligent woman with a flair for languages who could

"readily turn to whichever language she pleased, so that there were few foreigners she had to deal with through an interpreter".

Plutarch, writing at the beginning of the second century AD, can hardly be considered an eyewitness. Nevertheless his recognition of Cleopatra's intelligence fits well with medieval Arab historians' view of Cleopatra as the "virtuous scholar", a public benefactor who protects her people and is an accomplished philosopher, alchemist, mathematician and physician. It will be very interesting to see which version of Cleopatra the producers of the forthcoming film about her remarkable life choose to create. **11**

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**LISTEN** Joyce Tyldesley contributed to the BBC Radio 4 documentary *The Forum: Who Was the Real Cleopatra?*. To listen, go to [bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3crwqsp](http://bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3crwqsp)

