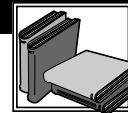


Chapter 6**Biography Activity**

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 and personality involved three of the most powerful men in Rome, influencing the civil wars that followed the death of Julius Caesar (textbook page 137). ♦ *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 (69–30 B.C.)

Cleopatra was the last monarch of a Greek dynasty that ruled Egypt for nearly 300 years. Its rule had begun when Alexander the Great's empire was divided in 323 B.C., and Ptolemy, one of his generals, became the ruler of Egypt.

Cleopatra was born in Alexandria in 69 B.C. and became queen (with her brother Ptolemy XIII) when she was 17. She was ambitious, charming, and eager for power. She was the first of her 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 and co-ruler. 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. When Caesar went back to Rome as its ruler, he invited her there as a royal guest. After Caesar was killed, 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 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 they 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.

Egyptian gold paid for several of Antony's military campaigns. Although they failed, he and Cleopatra held a victory celebration in Alexandria, declaring themselves (and their children) rulers of both Egypt and Rome. Cleopatra also maneuvered to take valuable lands in Palestine, which angered its ruler Herod and lost him as an ally.

Inevitably, in 32 B.C., Rome declared war on Antony and Cleopatra. Both sent fleets of ships 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 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 have 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 during and after their war against Rome?
4. Distinguishing 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?

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