

## Antonius, Marcus (Mark Antony)

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Marcus Antonius, “Mark Antony” (ca. January 14, 83–August 1, 30 BCE), was the eldest of three brothers born to M. Antonius Creticus (pr. 74), son of the famous orator M. Antonius (cos. 99). His mother Julia was the sister of the consul of 64 and a distant relative of the Dictator JULIUS CAESAR. His spendthrift father died in disgrace ca. 71, and his mother remarried. Antony’s stepfather was P. Lentulus (cos. 71), who was executed by Cicero in 63 for his involvement in Catiline’s conspiracy.

After briefly aiding Cicero’s enemy, the tribune P. Clodius, in 58, Antony served from 57 to 55 with distinction as commander of the cavalry under A. Gabinius (cos. 58), the governor of Syria. He saw action in Judaea and Egypt. Upon returning from the East in late 54, Antony joined Caesar’s army in Gaul. He was elected quaestor in 52, augur in 50, and tribune of the plebs for 49, all with Caesar’s backing.

In January 49, Antony exercised his tribunician veto to block the Senate from stripping Caesar of his command and fled on the night of the 7th to Caesar’s camp, ostensibly because of threats to his safety (Caes. *B Civ.* 1.5.5). Caesar made the defense of the tribunate his pretext for launching the Civil War and placed Italy under Antony’s control during his absence in Spain (ca. April 6–December 2), where he went to gain control of POMPEY’s armies. In 48, Antony contributed to Caesar’s victory over Pompey at PHARSALOS in Greece and from October 48 to October 47, managed affairs in Italy in Caesar’s absence. During Caesar’s African campaign in 46 and Spanish campaign in 45, Antony aided Caesar behind the scenes (Ramsey 2004).

In 44, Antony was consul with Caesar and at the Lupercalia festival (February 15) made the famous public gesture of offering Caesar a crown as a symbol of royal power (Cic. *Phil.* 2.84–7). The conspirators spared Antony’s life



**Figure 1** Gold coin (De Quelen Aureus) showing Marcus Antonius (Mark Antony), 82–30 BCE. © Photo Scala, Florence/BPK, Bildagentur für Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte, Berlin.

on the Ides (15th) of March in the hope that he would keep Caesar’s forces in check after Caesar’s murder. Antony called the meeting of the Senate on March 17 at which Caesar’s murderers were granted amnesty, but the hostile mood ignited by Antony’s funeral oration over Caesar (ca. March 20) forced the conspirators to withdraw from Rome. Antony soon gathered power into his own hands and intimidated his political opponents by forming a bodyguard of Caesar’s veterans. In early June, he gained control of Cisalpine and Further Gaul for five years after his consulship, but soon his leadership was challenged by Caesar’s great-nephew Octavian (the future emperor AUGUSTUS), who had been adopted in Caesar’s will and took the name Caesar. In November, Octavian enticed two of Antony’s legions to desert, causing Antony to depart hastily for Gaul with his remaining forces (November 28/29).

The governor of Cisalpine, D. Brutus, one of Caesar’s assassins, refused to hand over his province to Antony, and fighting broke out. Cicero rallied the Senate to side with Brutus and pressed for all out war against Antony.

Eventually, in April of 43, Antony was defeated in two battles and had to retreat across the Alps to seek reinforcements. Meanwhile the Senate's forces in Italy fell under the control of Octavian after both consuls perished in the fighting and the legions refused to obey the Senate's commander D. Brutus. After Octavian reconciled his differences with Antony, the two joined with Marcus AEMILIUS LEPIDUS to form a coalition known as the Triumvirate. The *lex Titia* (November 15, 43) granted them absolute power for five years as a board of three appointed ostensibly to restore the Roman state (*tresviri reipublicae constituendae*). They immediately set about raising cash to pay their troops and eliminating their political enemies by carrying out a bloody proscription, in which some 2,300 mostly wealthy citizens were butchered. Among the first to be hunted down and killed was Antony's bitter enemy Cicero (December 7).

In 42, while Lepidus oversaw affairs in Italy and the West, Antony and Octavian defeated the forces of the tyrannicides M. Brutus and Cassius at Philippi in Greece (Oct./Nov.). After spending the winter of 42/1 in Greece, Antony, the chief architect of the victory at PHILIPPI, set out to organize the eastern provinces and raise cash needed to pay the troops. He wintered in 41/0 in Alexandria, where he indulged in a brief love affair with the queen, CLEOPATRA VII, that resulted in the birth of twins in 40.

Fighting that broke out in Italy in 41 between Octavian and Antony's supporters, the so-called Perusine War, drew Antony back to Italy in the late spring of 40. All-out war was averted by a pact known as the Treaty of Brundisium (September 40). Under its terms, Octavian received control of all provinces in the West, except Africa, which was granted to Lepidus, and Antony took all provinces east of Scodra in Illyria. Antony married Octavian's sister OCTAVIA to cement this agreement and remained in Italy for the rest of 40 and much of 39. In 39, a severe food crisis caused by a naval blockade thrown up by Pompey's sole surviving son Sextus forced the dynasts to sign

a peace agreement with him known as the Treaty of Misenum (August).

When Antony returned to Syria in 38, he began settling affairs in the East, but renewed fighting between Octavian and Sextus Pompeius drew Antony back to Italy in the early spring of 37. Octavia played the role of mediator between her brother and husband, and at Tarentum (summer 37), the two dynasts agreed to a five-year renewal of the Triumvirate (37–33 BCE).

In the late summer of 37, Antony proceeded to Antioch, where he began making preparations for an invasion of PARTHIA. He also completed a thorough reorganization of territories in the Middle East, and to Cleopatra he restored most of the territories previously included in the old Ptolemaic kingdom. Cleopatra herself was summoned to join Antony at Antioch, where they spent the winter together (37/6). Antony recognized his paternity of the twins born to Cleopatra and entered upon a relationship with the queen that came to resemble a marriage in all but name.

In 36, Antony launched his campaign against Parthia and drove deep into Media. But when his supply lines were cut by the Parthians, and he was deserted by the client king Artavasdes of Armenia, he had to make a withdrawal with heavy losses. In 35–34, Antony busied himself with a punitive campaign against King Artavasdes of Armenia, whom he paraded as a captive in a Roman-style triumph celebrated with great pomp in Alexandria in 34, a gross violation of Roman custom. Also in 34, Antony carried out the so-called Donations of Alexandria, assigning a host of kingdoms in the Middle East and northern Africa to Cleopatra and to his children by her. This conduct on Antony's part was exploited by Octavian to paint his rival as an anti-Roman despot who had been corrupted by the luxury of the East.

The tension between Octavian and Antony grew and grew until finally it reached boiling point in 32 when Octavian's anti-Antonian propaganda caused Antony's supporters, the two consuls of that year and some three hundred senators, to withdraw from Italy and join

Antony at Ephesos, where he was mustering his forces. In the autumn, Antony deployed his considerable naval and land forces on the west coast of Greece. In the following spring, Octavian took up a position to the north, in Epirus. Antony appears to have intended to employ his initial superiority by sea to cut off Octavian's supplies and defeat him by a war of attrition. The tables were turned, however, when the more seasoned navy of Octavian won a series of engagements that trapped the main contingent of Antony's fleet at ACTIUM. In the subsequent naval engagement off that promontory at the entrance to the Ambracian Gulf (September 2, 31), Cleopatra broke through Octavian's line and fled, accompanied by Antony, back to Egypt. Antony's remaining ships and land forces soon surrendered to Octavian.

By official act of the Senate, Antony's statues were pulled down and his acts annulled when news of Octavian's victory was brought to Rome (Dio 51.19). On August 1, 30, when Alexandria fell to Octavian, Antony committed suicide. By a certain poetic justice, news of Antony's death reached Rome during the suffect consulship of Cicero's son Marcus (September 13–October 31, 30) (Plut. *Cic.* 49.4).

Antony had an open nature and was loyal to his friends to a fault. He lacked the ruthless and conniving ambition of his rival Octavian. His love of the good life (food, wine, women, and gambling), coupled with his capacity for enduring any necessary hardships, endeared him to the soldiers. By his marriage to Octavia he had two daughters, from whom three future emperors were descended: CALIGULA, CLAUDIUS, and NERO.

SEE ALSO: Brutus, Marcus Iunius; Cicero, Marcus Tullius; Civil war, Roman; Parthia; Pompeius Magnus Pius, Sextus.

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