[Template:Pp-vandalism](/wiki/Template:Pp-vandalism" \o "Template:Pp-vandalism) [Template:Other uses](/wiki/Template:Other_uses)[Template:Infobox royalty](/wiki/Template:Infobox_royalty)

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[Template:Ancient Rome and the fall of the Republic](/wiki/Template:Ancient_Rome_and_the_fall_of_the_Republic) **Cleopatra VII Philopator** ([Template:Lang-grc-gre](/wiki/Template:Lang-grc-gre); 69<ref name = Walker129>Walker, p. 129.</ref> – August 12, 30 BC[[1]](#cite_note-1)), known to history simply as **Cleopatra**, was the last active [pharaoh](/wiki/Pharaoh) of [Ptolemaic Egypt](/wiki/Ptolemaic_Egypt), shortly survived as pharaoh by her son [Caesarion](/wiki/Caesarion). After her reign, Egypt became a [province](/wiki/Egypt_(Roman_province)) of the then-recently established [Roman Empire](/wiki/Roman_Empire).

Cleopatra was a member of the [Ptolemaic dynasty](/wiki/Ptolemaic_dynasty), a family of [Macedonian Greek](/wiki/Ancient_Macedonians)[[2]](#cite_note-2)origin that ruled [Egypt](/wiki/Egypt) after [Alexander the Great's](/wiki/Alexander_the_Great) death during the [Hellenistic period](/wiki/Hellenistic_period). The Ptolemies, throughout their dynasty, spoke [Greek](/wiki/Ancient_Greek)[[3]](#cite_note-3) and refused to speak [Egyptian](/wiki/Egyptian_language), which is the reason that Greek as well as Egyptian languages were used on official court documents such as the [Rosetta Stone](/wiki/Rosetta_Stone).[[4]](#cite_note-4) By contrast, Cleopatra did learn to speak Egyptian[[5]](#cite_note-5) and represented herself as the reincarnation of an Egyptian goddess, [Isis](/wiki/Isis).

Cleopatra originally ruled jointly with her father, [Ptolemy XII Auletes](/wiki/Ptolemy_XII_Auletes), and later with her brothers, [Ptolemy XIII](/wiki/Ptolemy_XIII) and [Ptolemy XIV](/wiki/Ptolemy_XIV), whom she married as per Egyptian custom, but eventually she became sole ruler. As pharaoh she consummated a liaison with [Julius Caesar](/wiki/Julius_Caesar) that solidified her grip on the throne. She later elevated her son with Caesar, [Caesarion](/wiki/Caesarion), to co-ruler in name.

After [Caesar's assassination](/wiki/Assassination_of_Julius_Caesar) in 44 BC, she aligned with [Mark Antony](/wiki/Mark_Antony) in opposition to Caesar's legal heir, Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus (later known as [Augustus](/wiki/Augustus)). With Antony, she bore the twins [Cleopatra Selene II](/wiki/Cleopatra_Selene_II) and [Alexander Helios](/wiki/Alexander_Helios), and another son, [Ptolemy Philadelphus](/wiki/Ptolemy_Philadelphus_(Cleopatra)) (her unions with her brothers had produced no children). After losing the [Battle of Actium](/wiki/Battle_of_Actium) to Octavian's forces, Antony committed suicide. Cleopatra followed suit. According to tradition, she killed herself by means of an [asp](/wiki/Asp_(reptile)) bite on August 12, 30 BC.[[6]](#cite_note-6) She was outlived by Caesarion, who was declared pharaoh by his supporters, but soon killed on Octavian's orders. Egypt then became the [Roman province](/wiki/Roman_province) of [*Aegyptus*](/wiki/Egypt_(Roman_province)).

To this day, Cleopatra remains a source of perpetual fascination in Western culture. Her legacy survives in numerous works of art and many dramatizations of incidents from her life in literature and other media, including [William Shakespeare's](/wiki/William_Shakespeare) tragedy [*Antony and Cleopatra*](/wiki/Antony_and_Cleopatra), [George Bernard Shaw's](/wiki/George_Bernard_Shaw) play [*Caesar and Cleopatra*](/wiki/Caesar_and_Cleopatra_(play)), [Jules Massenet's](/wiki/Jules_Massenet) opera [*Cléopâtre*](/wiki/Cléopâtre) and the films [*Cleopatra*](/wiki/Cleopatra_(1934_film)) (1934) and [*Cleopatra*](/wiki/Cleopatra_(1963_film)) (1963).

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## Etymology of the name[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

The name Cleopatra is derived from the [Greek](/wiki/Ancient_Greek) name Κλεοπάτρα (Kleopatra) which meant "she who comes from glorious father" or "glory of the father" in the [feminine form](/wiki/Grammatical_gender), derived from κλέος (kleos) "glory" combined with πατήρ (pater) "father" (the masculine form would be written either as Kleopatros (Κλεόπατρος), or Patroklos (Πάτροκλος)).[[7]](#cite_note-7)[[8]](#cite_note-8)

## Biography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

### Accession to the throne[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

[thumbnail|left|upright|Ptolemaic Queen (Cleopatra VII?), 50-30 B.C., 71.12,](/wiki/File:Ptolemaic_Queen_(Cleopatra_VII?),_50-30_B.C.E.,_71.12.jpg) [Brooklyn Museum](/wiki/Brooklyn_Museum) The identity of Cleopatra's mother is unknown, but she is generally believed to be [Cleopatra V Tryphaena](/wiki/Cleopatra_V_of_Egypt) of Egypt, the sister or cousin and wife of [Ptolemy XII Auletes](/wiki/Ptolemy_XII_Auletes), or possibly another Ptolemaic family member who was the daughter of Ptolemy X and Cleopatra Berenice III Philopator if Cleopatra V was not the daughter of Ptolemy X and Berenice III.[[9]](#cite_note-9) Cleopatra's father Auletes was a direct descendant of [Alexander the Great's](/wiki/Alexander_the_Great) general, [Ptolemy I Soter](/wiki/Ptolemy_I_Soter), son of [Arsinoe](/wiki/Arsinoe_of_Macedon) and [Lagus](/wiki/Lagus), both of [Macedon](/wiki/Macedon).

[Centralization of power](/wiki/Centralization_of_power) and [corruption](/wiki/Political_corruption) led to uprisings in and the losses of [Cyprus](/wiki/Cyprus) and [Cyrenaica](/wiki/Cyrenaica), making Ptolemy XII's reign one of the most calamitous of the dynasty. When Ptolemy went to Rome with Cleopatra, [Cleopatra VI Tryphaena](/wiki/Cleopatra_VI_Tryphaena) seized the crown but died shortly afterwards in suspicious circumstances. It is believed, though not proven by historical sources, that [Berenice IV](/wiki/Berenice_IV) poisoned her so she could assume sole rulership. Regardless of the cause, she ruled until Ptolemy Auletes returned in 55 BC, with Roman support, capturing Alexandria aided by Roman general [Aulus Gabinius](/wiki/Aulus_Gabinius). Berenice was imprisoned and executed shortly afterwards, her head allegedly being sent to the royal court on the decree of her father, the king. Cleopatra now, at age 14, became joint regent and deputy to her father, although her power would have been severely limited.

[Ptolemy XII](/wiki/Ptolemy_XII) died in March 51 BC. His will made 18-year-old Cleopatra and her brother, 10-year-old [Ptolemy XIII](/wiki/Ptolemy_XIII), joint monarchs. The first three years of their reign were difficult due to economic failures, famine, deficient floods of the [Nile](/wiki/Nile), and political conflicts. Although Cleopatra was married to her young brother, she quickly made it clear that she had no intention of sharing power with him.

In August 51 BC, relations between Cleopatra and Ptolemy completely broke down. Cleopatra dropped Ptolemy's name from official documents and her face alone appeared on coins, which went against Ptolemaic tradition of female rulers being subordinate to male co-rulers. In 50 BC Cleopatra came into serious conflict with the [Gabiniani](/wiki/Gabiniani), powerful Roman troops of Aulus Gabinius who had left them in Egypt to protect Ptolemy XII after his restoration to the throne in 55 BC. The Gabiniani killed the sons of the Roman governor of Syria, [Marcus Calpurnius Bibulus](/wiki/Marcus_Calpurnius_Bibulus), when they came to ask for their assistance for their father against the Parthians. Cleopatra handed the murderers over in chains to Bibulus, whereupon the Gabiniani became bitter enemies of the queen.[[10]](#cite_note-10) This conflict was one of the main causes of Cleopatra's fall from power shortly afterward. The sole reign of Cleopatra was finally ended by a cabal of courtiers, led by the [eunuch](/wiki/Eunuch) [Pothinus](/wiki/Pothinus), in connection with a half-Greek general, [Achillas](/wiki/Achillas), and [Theodotus of Chios](/wiki/Theodotus_of_Chios). Circa 48 BC, Cleopatra's younger brother Ptolemy XIII became sole ruler.[[11]](#cite_note-11) Cleopatra tried to raise a rebellion around [Pelusium](/wiki/Pelusium), but was soon forced to flee with her only remaining sister, [Arsinoë](/wiki/Arsinoe_IV).[[12]](#cite_note-12)

### Relations with Rome[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

#### Assassination of Pompey[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

While Cleopatra was in exile, [Pompey](/wiki/Pompey) became embroiled in the [Roman civil war](/wiki/Caesar's_Civil_War). After his defeat at the [Battle of Pharsalus](/wiki/Battle_of_Pharsalus), in the autumn of 48 BC, Pompey fled from the forces of Caesar to [Alexandria](/wiki/Alexandria), seeking sanctuary. Ptolemy, thirteen years old at that time, had set up a throne for himself on the harbor. From there he watched as on September 28, 48 BC, Pompey was murdered by one of his former officers, now in Ptolemaic service. He was beheaded in front of his wife and children, who were on the ship from which he had just disembarked. Ptolemy is thought to have ordered the death to ingratiate himself with Caesar, thus becoming an ally of Rome, to which Egypt was in debt at the time. This act proved a miscalculation on Ptolemy's part. When Caesar arrived in Egypt two days later, Ptolemy presented him with Pompey's severed head; Caesar was enraged. Although he was Caesar's political enemy, Pompey was a [Roman consul](/wiki/List_of_Roman_consuls) and the [widower](/wiki/Widower) of Caesar's only legitimate daughter, [Julia](/wiki/Julia_(daughter_of_Julius_Caesar)), who died in childbirth. Caesar seized the Egyptian capital and imposed himself as arbiter between the rival claims of Ptolemy and Cleopatra.

#### Relationship with Julius Caesar[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[left|thumb|](/wiki/File:Cleopatra_and_Caesar_by_Jean-Leon-Gerome.jpg)[*Cleopatra and Caesar*](/wiki/Cleopatra_and_Caesar_(painting)) (1866). Painting by [Jean-Léon Gérôme](/wiki/Jean-Léon_Gérôme) Eager to take advantage of [Julius Caesar's](/wiki/Julius_Caesar) anger toward Ptolemy, Cleopatra had herself secretly smuggled into his palace to meet with Caesar. [Plutarch](/wiki/Plutarch), in his [*Life of Julius Caesar*](/wiki/Parallel_Lives)[[13]](#cite_note-13) gives a vivid description of how she entered past Ptolemy’s guards rolled up in a carpet that [Apollodorus the Sicilian](/wiki/Apollodorus_the_Sicilian) was carrying.[[14]](#cite_note-14) She became Caesar’s mistress and nine months after their first meeting, in 47 BC, Cleopatra gave birth to their son, Ptolemy Caesar, [nicknamed](/wiki/Nickname) [Caesarion](/wiki/Caesarion), which means "little Caesar."

At this point, Caesar abandoned his plans to annex Egypt, instead backing Cleopatra's claim to the throne. After [Mithridates](/wiki/Mithridates_I_of_the_Bosporus) raised the [siege of Alexandria](/wiki/Siege_of_Alexandria_(47 BC)), Caesar defeated Ptolemy's army at the [Battle of the Nile](/wiki/Battle_of_the_Nile_(47 BC)); Ptolemy XIII drowned in the [Nile](/wiki/Nile)[[15]](#cite_note-15)[[16]](#cite_note-16) and Caesar restored Cleopatra to her throne, with another younger brother [Ptolemy XIV](/wiki/Ptolemy_XIV) as her new co-ruler.[[17]](#cite_note-17)[[18]](#cite_note-18)[[19]](#cite_note-19) When Caesar left Egypt he stationed a Roman occupying army of three legions there under the command of [Rufio](/wiki/Rufio_(officer_of_Caesar)).[[20]](#cite_note-20)[thumb|right|Cleopatra VII and her son](/wiki/File:Denderah3_Cleopatra_Cesarion.jpg) [Caesarion](/wiki/Caesarion) at the [Temple of Dendera](/wiki/Dendera_Temple_complex)

Although Cleopatra was 21 years old when they met and Caesar was 52, they became lovers during Caesar’s stay in Egypt between 48 BC and 47 BC. Cleopatra claimed Caesar was the father of her son and wished him to name the boy his heir, but Caesar refused, choosing his grandnephew [Octavian](/wiki/Augustus) instead. During this relationship, it was also rumored that Cleopatra introduced Caesar to her astronomer [Sosigenes of Alexandria](/wiki/Sosigenes_of_Alexandria), who proposed the idea of [leap days](/wiki/Leap_day) and [leap years](/wiki/Leap_year). This was not new - they were proclaimed in 238 BC but the reform never took effect. Caesar made this the basis of his reform of the Roman calendar in 45 BC and the Egyptian calendar was reformed along these lines in 26 BC.

Cleopatra, Ptolemy XIV and Caesarion visited Rome in the summer of 46 BC. The Egyptian queen resided in one of Caesar's country houses, which included the [Horti Caesaris](/wiki/Horti_Caesaris) just outside Rome (as a foreign head of state she was not allowed inside Rome's [pomerium](/wiki/Pomerium))[[21]](#cite_note-21)[[22]](#cite_note-22) The relationship between Cleopatra and Caesar was obvious to the Roman people and caused a scandal because the Roman dictator was already married to [Calpurnia Pisonis](/wiki/Calpurnia_Pisonis). But Caesar even erected a golden statue of Cleopatra represented as [Isis](/wiki/Isis) in the temple of [Venus Genetrix](/wiki/Venus_Genetrix) (the mythical ancestress of Caesar's family), which was situated at the [Forum Julium](/wiki/Forum_of_Caesar).[[23]](#cite_note-23)[[24]](#cite_note-24) The Roman orator [Cicero](/wiki/Cicero) said in his preserved letters that he hated the foreign queen.[[22]](#cite_note-22) Cleopatra and her entourage were still in Rome when Caesar was assassinated on 15 March 44 BC,[[25]](#cite_note-25) returning with her relatives to Egypt. When Ptolemy XIV died – allegedly poisoned by his older sister – Cleopatra made [Caesarion](/wiki/Caesarion) her co-regent and successor and gave him the [epithets](/wiki/Epithet) *Theos Philopator Philometor* (= *Father- and mother-loving God*).[[26]](#cite_note-26)[[27]](#cite_note-27)[[28]](#cite_note-28)

#### Cleopatra in the Roman Civil War[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

In the Roman civil war between the Caesarian faction, led by [Mark Antony](/wiki/Mark_Antony) and Octavian, and the faction including the assassins of Caesar, led by [Marcus Junius Brutus](/wiki/Marcus_Junius_Brutus) and [Gaius Cassius Longinus](/wiki/Gaius_Cassius_Longinus), Cleopatra sided with the Caesarian party because of her past. Brutus and Cassius left Italy and sailed to the east of the Roman Empire, where they conquered large areas and established military bases. At the beginning of 43 BC, Cleopatra formed an alliance with the leader of the Caesarian party in the east, [Publius Cornelius Dolabella](/wiki/Publius_Cornelius_Dolabella), who also recognized Caesarion as her co-ruler.[[29]](#cite_note-29)[[30]](#cite_note-30) But soon, Dolabella was encircled in Laodicea and committed suicide (July 43 BC).

Cassius wanted to invade Egypt to seize the treasures of that country and for her support for Dolabella. Egypt seemed an easy target because it did not have strong land forces and there was famine and an epidemic. Cassius also wanted to prevent Cleopatra from bringing reinforcements for Antony and Octavian. But he could not execute an invasion of Egypt because Brutus summoned him back to [Smyrna](/wiki/Smyrna) at the end of 43 BC. Cassius tried to blockade Cleopatra’s route to the Caesarians. For this purpose Lucius Staius Murcus moved with 60 ships and a legion of elite troops into position at [Cape Matapan](/wiki/Cape_Matapan) in the south of the [Peloponnese](/wiki/Peloponnese). Nevertheless, Cleopatra sailed with her fleet from Alexandria to the west along the Libyan coast to join the Caesarian leaders, but she was forced to return to Egypt because her ships were damaged by a violent storm, and she became ill. Staius Murcus learned of the queen's misfortune and saw wreckage from her ships on the coast of Greece. He then sailed with his ships into the [Adriatic Sea](/wiki/Adriatic_Sea).[[31]](#cite_note-31)

#### Cleopatra and Mark Antony[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

[thumb|*Antony and Cleopatra*, by](/wiki/File:Lawrence_Alma-Tadema-_Anthony_and_Cleopatra.JPG) [Lawrence Alma-Tadema](/wiki/Lawrence_Alma-Tadema) [thumb|](/wiki/File:011-Mark_Antony,_with_Cleopatra_VII_-3.jpg)[Denarius](/wiki/Denarius), 32 BC. Obverse: Diademed bust of Cleopatra, CLEOPATRA[E REGINAE REGVM]FILIORVM REGVM. Reverse: Bust of M. Antony, ANTONI ARMENIA DEVICTA In 41 BC, [Mark Antony](/wiki/Mark_Antony), one of the [triumvirs](/wiki/Second_Triumvirate) who ruled Rome in the power vacuum following Caesar's death, sent his intimate friend [Quintus Dellius](/wiki/Quintus_Dellius) to Egypt to summon Cleopatra to [Tarsus](/wiki/Tarsus_in_Cilicia) to meet Antony and answer questions about her loyalty. During the Roman civil war she allegedly had paid much money to Cassius. It seems that in reality Antony wanted Cleopatra’s promise to support his intended war against the [Parthians](/wiki/Parthians). Cleopatra arrived in great state, and so charmed Antony that he chose to spend the winter of 41 BC–40 BC with her in Alexandria.[[32]](#cite_note-32) To safeguard herself and Caesarion, she had Antony order the death of her sister [Arsinoe](/wiki/Arsinoe_IV_of_Egypt), who had been banished to the [Temple of Artemis](/wiki/Temple_of_Artemis) in Roman-controlled [Ephesus](/wiki/Ephesus) for her role in leading the [Siege of Alexandria](/wiki/Siege_of_Alexandria_(47 BC)). The execution was carried out in 41 BC on the steps of the temple, and this violation of temple sanctuary scandalised Rome.[[33]](#cite_note-33) Cleopatra also retrieved her [strategos](/wiki/Strategos) (military governor) of Cyprus [Serapion](/wiki/Serapion_(strategos)), who had supported Cassius against her wishes.[[34]](#cite_note-34) On 25 December 40 BC, Cleopatra gave birth to [twins](/wiki/Fraternal_twin) fathered by Antony, [Alexander Helios](/wiki/Alexander_Helios) and [Cleopatra Selene II](/wiki/Cleopatra_Selene_II). Four years later, Antony visited Alexandria again en route to make war with the Parthians. He renewed his relationship with Cleopatra, and from this point on, Alexandria was his home. He married Cleopatra according to the Egyptian rite (a letter quoted in [Suetonius](/wiki/Lives_of_the_Twelve_Caesars) suggests this), although he was at the time married to [Octavia Minor](/wiki/Octavia_Minor), sister of his fellow triumvir [Octavian](/wiki/Augustus). He and Cleopatra had another child, [Ptolemy Philadelphus](/wiki/Ptolemy_Philadelphus_(Cleopatra)). [left|thumb|A tetradrachm of Cleopatra VII,](/wiki/File:Cleopatra_VII_tetradrachm_Syria_mint.jpg) [Syria](/wiki/Syria) mint At the [Donations of Alexandria](/wiki/Donations_of_Alexandria) in late 34 BC, following Antony's conquest of [Armenia](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Armenia_(antiquity)), Cleopatra and Caesarion were crowned co-rulers of [Egypt](/wiki/Egypt) and [Cyprus](/wiki/Cyprus); [Alexander Helios](/wiki/Alexander_Helios) was crowned ruler of Armenia, [Media](/wiki/Medes), and [Parthia](/wiki/Parthia); Cleopatra Selene II was crowned ruler of [Cyrenaica](/wiki/Cyrenaica) and [Libya](/wiki/Libya); and Ptolemy Philadelphus was crowned ruler of [Phoenicia](/wiki/Phoenicia), [Syria](/wiki/Syria), and [Cilicia](/wiki/Cilicia). Cleopatra was also given the title of "Queen of Kings" by Antonius.[[35]](#cite_note-35) Her enemies in Rome feared that Cleopatra, "...was planning a war of revenge that was to array all the East against Rome, establish herself as empress of the world at Rome, cast justice from [Capitolium](/wiki/Capitolium), and inaugurate a new universal kingdom."[[36]](#cite_note-36) [Caesarion](/wiki/Caesarion) was not only elevated having coregency with Cleopatra, but also proclaimed with many titles, including god, son of god and [king of kings](/wiki/King_of_kings), and was depicted as [Horus](/wiki/Horus).[[37]](#cite_note-37) Egyptians thought Cleopatra was a reincarnation of the goddess [Isis](/wiki/Isis), as she called herself *Nea Isis*.[[38]](#cite_note-38) Relations between Antony and Octavian, disintegrating for several years, finally broke down in 33 BC, and Octavian convinced the Senate to levy war against Egypt. In 31 BC Antony's forces faced the Romans in a naval action off the coast of [Actium](/wiki/Actium). Cleopatra was present with a fleet of her own. According to Plutarch, Cleopatra took flight with her ships at the height of the battle and Antony followed her.[[39]](#cite_note-39) Following the [Battle of Actium](/wiki/Battle_of_Actium), Octavian invaded Egypt. As he approached Alexandria, Antony's armies deserted to Octavian on August 1, 30 BC.

There are a number of unverifiable stories about Cleopatra, of which one of the best known is that, at one of the lavish dinners she shared with Antony, she playfully bet him that she could spend ten million [sestertii](/wiki/Sestertius) on a dinner. He accepted the bet. The next night, she had a conventional, unspectacular meal served; he was ridiculing this, when she ordered the second course — only a cup of strong vinegar. She then removed one of her priceless pearl earrings, dropped it into the vinegar, allowed it to dissolve, and drank the mixture. The earliest report of this story comes from [Pliny the Elder](/wiki/Pliny_the_Elder) and dates to about 100 years after the banquet described would have happened. The [calcium carbonate](/wiki/Calcium_carbonate) in pearls does dissolve in vinegar, but slowly unless the pearl is first crushed.[[40]](#cite_note-40)

### Death[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[thumb|*The Death of Cleopatra* by](/wiki/File:Guido_Cagnacci_003.jpg) [Guido Cagnacci](/wiki/Guido_Cagnacci), 1658 The ancient sources, particularly the Roman ones, are in general agreement that Cleopatra killed herself by inducing an Egyptian cobra to [bite](/wiki/Snakebite) her. The oldest source is [Strabo](/wiki/Strabo), who was alive at the time of the event, and might even have been in Alexandria. He says that there are two stories: that she applied a toxic ointment, or that she was bitten by an [asp](/wiki/Asp_(reptile)) on her breast, but he said in his writings that he was not sure if Cleopatra poisoned herself or was murdered.[[41]](#cite_note-41) Several Roman poets, writing within ten years of the event, all mention bites by two asps,[[42]](#cite_note-42)[[43]](#cite_note-43)[[44]](#cite_note-44) as does [Florus](/wiki/Florus), a historian, some 150 years later.[[45]](#cite_note-45) [Velleius](/wiki/Marcus_Velleius_Paterculus), sixty years after the event, also refers to an asp.[[46]](#cite_note-46)</ref>[[47]](#cite_note-47) Other authors have questioned these historical accounts, stating that it is possible that Augustus had her killed.[[48]](#cite_note-48)In 2010, the German historian Christoph Schaefer challenged all other theories, declaring that the queen had actually been poisoned and died from drinking a mixture of poisons. After studying historical texts and consulting with toxicologists, the historian concluded that the asp could not have caused a quick and pain-free death, since the asp ([Egyptian cobra](/wiki/Egyptian_cobra)) venom paralyses parts of the body, starting with the eyes, before causing death. As Cleopatra would have wanted a relatively painless death, it is quite unlikely that the asp was the cause of her death. Also, the asp's bite is not always fatal. Schaefer and his toxicologist Dietrich Mebs decided Cleopatra used a mixture of [hemlock](/wiki/Conium), [wolfsbane](/wiki/Aconitum) and [opium](/wiki/Opium).[[49]](#cite_note-49)[left|thumb|*The Death of Cleopatra* by Reginald Arthur, 1892](/wiki/File:The_Death_of_Cleopatra_arthur.jpg) [Plutarch](/wiki/Plutarch), writing about 130 years after the event, reports that Octavian succeeded in capturing Cleopatra in her mausoleum after the death of Antony. He ordered his freedman [Epaphroditus](/wiki/Epaphroditus_(freedman_of_Augustus)) to guard her to prevent her from committing suicide, because he allegedly wanted to present her in his [triumph](/wiki/Roman_triumph). But Cleopatra was able to deceive Epaphroditus and kill herself nevertheless.[[50]](#cite_note-50) Plutarch states that she was found dead, her handmaiden Iras dying at her feet, and another handmaiden, Charmion, adjusting her crown before she herself fell.[[51]](#cite_note-51) He then goes on to state that an asp was concealed in a basket of figs that was brought to her by a rustic, and, finding it after eating a few figs, she held out her arm for it to bite. Other stories state that it was hidden in a vase, and that she poked it with a spindle until it got angry enough to bite her on the arm. Finally, he indicates that in Octavian's triumphal march back in Rome, an effigy of Cleopatra that had an asp clinging to it was part of the parade.[[52]](#cite_note-52) [Suetonius](/wiki/Suetonius), writing about the same time as Plutarch, also says Cleopatra died from an asp bite.[[53]](#cite_note-53) Although classical sources say that Cleopatra was bitten on the arm,[[54]](#cite_note-54)[[55]](#cite_note-55)[[56]](#cite_note-56)she is more usually depicted in medieval and Renaissance iconography with asps at her breast, a tradition followed by Shakespeare.[[57]](#cite_note-57) [thumb|left|*Ang kamatayan ni Cleopatra* (The Death of Cleopatra) by](/wiki/File:The_Death_of_Cleopatra_by_Juan_Luna1881.jpg) [Juan Luna](/wiki/Juan_Luna), 1881. [thumb|upright|Cleopatra is depicted taking her own life with the bite of a venomous serpent.](/wiki/Image:Adam_Lenckhardt_-_Cleopatra_-_Walters_71416_-_Right.jpg) [Adam Lenckhardt](/wiki/Adam_Lenckhardt) (Ivory).[[58]](#cite_note-58) The Walters Art Museum. Plutarch tells us of the death of Antony. When his armies deserted him and joined with Octavian, he cried out that Cleopatra had betrayed him. She, fearing his wrath, locked herself in her monument with only her two handmaidens and sent messengers to tell Antony that she was dead. Believing them, Antony stabbed himself in the stomach with his sword, and lay on his couch to die. Instead, the blood flow stopped, and he begged any and all to finish him off. Another messenger came from Cleopatra with instructions to bring him to her, and he, rejoicing that Cleopatra was still alive, consented. She would not open the door, but tossed ropes out of a window. After Antony was securely trussed up, she and her handmaidens hauled him up into the monument. This nearly finished him off. After dragging him in through the window, they laid him on a couch. Cleopatra tore off her clothes and covered him with them. She raved and cried, beat her breasts and engaged in self-mutilation. Antony told her to calm down, asked for a glass of wine, and died upon finishing it.[[59]](#cite_note-59) The site of their [mausoleum](/wiki/Mausoleum) is uncertain, though the [Egyptian Antiquities Service](/wiki/Egyptian_Antiquities_Service) believes it is in or near the temple of [Taposiris Magna](/wiki/Taposiris_Magna), southwest of [Alexandria](/wiki/Alexandria).[[60]](#cite_note-60) Cleopatra's son by Caesar, [Caesarion](/wiki/Caesarion), was proclaimed pharaoh by the Egyptians, after Alexandria fell to Octavian. Caesarion was captured and killed, his fate reportedly sealed when one of Octavian's advisers paraphrased Homer: "It is bad to have too many Caesars."[[61]](#cite_note-61) This ended not just the Hellenistic line of Egyptian pharaohs, but the line of all Egyptian pharaohs. The three children of Cleopatra and Antony were spared and taken back to Rome where they were taken care of by Antony's wife, [Octavia Minor](/wiki/Octavia_Minor). The daughter, [Cleopatra Selene](/wiki/Cleopatra_Selene_II), was married through arrangements of Octavian to [Juba II of Mauretania](/wiki/Juba_II_of_Mauretania).[[62]](#cite_note-62) [Template:Clear](/wiki/Template:Clear)

## Character and cultural depictions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[thumb|upright|Statue of Cleopatra as](/wiki/File:Клеопатра_VII.jpg) [Egyptian goddess](/wiki/Egyptian_goddess); Basalt, second half of the 1st century BC. Hermitage, [Saint Petersburg](/wiki/Saint_Petersburg) [thumb|left|*Cleopatra Testing Poisons on Condemned Prisoners* by](/wiki/File:Alexandre_Cabanel_-_Cléopatre_essayant_des_poisons_sur_des_condamnés_à_mort.jpg) [Alexandre Cabanel](/wiki/Alexandre_Cabanel) (1887). [Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) Cleopatra was regarded as a great beauty, even in the ancient world. In his *Life of Antony*, [Plutarch](/wiki/Plutarch) remarks that "judging by the proofs which she had had before this of the effect of her beauty upon Caius Caesar and Gnaeus the son of Pompey, she had hopes that she would more easily bring Antony to her feet. For Caesar and Pompey had known her when she was still a girl and inexperienced in affairs, but she was going to visit Antony at the very time when women have the most brilliant beauty."<ref name=cleoppearance>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> Later in the work, however, Plutarch indicates that "her beauty, as we are told, was in itself neither altogether incomparable, nor such as to strike those who saw her."<ref name=cleoppearance/> Rather, what ultimately made Cleopatra attractive were her wit, charm and "sweetness in the tones of her voice."<ref name=cleoppearance/>

[Cassius Dio](/wiki/Cassius_Dio) also spoke of Cleopatra's allure: "For she was a woman of surpassing beauty, and at that time, when she was in the prime of her youth, she was most striking; she also possessed a most charming voice and knowledge of how to make herself agreeable to everyone. Being brilliant to look upon and to listen to, with the power to subjugate everyone, even a love-sated man already past his prime, she thought that it would be in keeping with her role to meet Caesar, and she reposed in her beauty all her claims to the throne."<ref name=cleoppearance/>

These accounts influenced later cultural depictions of Cleopatra, which typically present her using her charms to influence the most powerful men in the Western world.

Cleopatra was also renowned for her intellect. Plutarch writes that she could speak at least nine languages and rarely had need of an interpreter.[[63]](#cite_note-63)

## Ancestry[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

The high degree of [inbreeding](/wiki/Inbreeding) amongst the Ptolemies is also illustrated by Cleopatra's immediate ancestry, of which a reconstruction is shown below.[[64]](#cite_note-64) Through three uncle–niece marriages and three sister–brother marriages, her family tree collapses to a single couple at four, five or six generations back (counting through different lines).[[65]](#cite_note-65)

**Ancestors of Cleopatra VII of Egypt**

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## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

* [List of female rulers and title holders](/wiki/List_of_female_rulers_and_title_holders)

## Notes[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

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## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

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[Template:Sister project links](/wiki/Template:Sister_project_links) [Template:Wikinews](/wiki/Template:Wikinews)

* [Template:In Our Time](/wiki/Template:In_Our_Time)
* [Cleopatra](http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10992), a Victorian children's book by [Jacob Abbott](/wiki/Jacob_Abbott), 1852, [Project Gutenberg](/wiki/Project_Gutenberg) edition
* ["Mysterious Death of Cleopatra"](http://www.discoverychannelasia.com/ontv_egyptweek/death_cleopatra/index.shtml) at the [Discovery Channel](http://www.discoverychannelasia.com/)
* [Cleopatra VII](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/cleopatra_vii.shtml) at [BBC History](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/)

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