[Template:Other uses](/wiki/Template:Other_uses" \o "Template:Other uses) [Template:Infobox royalty](/wiki/Template:Infobox_royalty) [Template:Julio-Claudian dynasty](/wiki/Template:Julio-Claudian_dynasty) **Nero** ([Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en); [Latin](/wiki/Latin): *Nerō Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus*;[[1]](#cite_note-1)[[66]](#cite_note-66)[[67]](#cite_note-67) According to [Dion Cassius](/wiki/Dion_Cassius), Sporus bore an uncanny resemblance to Sabina, and Nero even called him by his dead wife's name.[[67]](#cite_note-67)

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

[thumb|320px|Coin showing Nero distributing charity to a citizen. c. 64–66.](/wiki/Image:Nero_charity.jpg) Over the course of his reign, Nero often made rulings that pleased the lower class. Nero was criticized as being obsessed with personal popularity.[[68]](#cite_note-68) Nero began his reign in 54 by promising the Senate more autonomy.[[62]](#cite_note-62) In this first year, he forbade others to refer to him with regard to enactments, for which he was praised by the Senate.[[69]](#cite_note-69) Nero was known for spending his time visiting brothels and taverns during this period.[[69]](#cite_note-69) In 55, Nero began taking on a more active role as an administrator. He was [consul](/wiki/Roman_consul) four times between 55 and 60. During this period, some ancient historians speak fairly well of Nero and contrast it with his later rule.[[70]](#cite_note-70) Under Nero, restrictions were put on the amount of bail and fines.[[71]](#cite_note-71) Also, fees for lawyers were limited.[[72]](#cite_note-72) There was a discussion in the Senate on the misconduct of the freedmen class, and a strong demand was made that patrons should have the right of revoking freedom.[[73]](#cite_note-73) Nero supported the freedmen and ruled that patrons had no such right.[[74]](#cite_note-74) The Senate tried to pass a law in which the crimes of one slave applied to all slaves within a household. Despite riots from the people, Nero supported the Senate on their measure, and deployed troops to organise the execution of 400 slaves affected by the law. However, he vetoed strong measures against the freedmen affected by the case.[[75]](#cite_note-75) After tax collectors were accused of being too harsh to the poor, Nero transferred collection authority to lower commissioners.[[71]](#cite_note-71) Nero banned any magistrate or procurator from exhibiting public entertainment for fear that the venue was being used as a method to sway the populace.[[76]](#cite_note-76) Additionally, there were many impeachments and removals of government officials along with arrests for extortion and corruption.[[77]](#cite_note-77) When further complaints arose that the poor were being overly taxed, Nero attempted to repeal all indirect taxes.[[78]](#cite_note-78) The Senate convinced him this action would bankrupt the public treasury.[[78]](#cite_note-78) As a compromise, taxes were cut from 4.5% to 2.5%.[[79]](#cite_note-79) Additionally, secret government tax records were ordered to become public.[[79]](#cite_note-79) To lower the cost of food imports, merchant ships were declared tax-exempt.[[79]](#cite_note-79) [thumb|350px|Nero's abandoned](/wiki/Image:Remains_of_Nero's_Isthmus_Canal_in_1881.jpg) [Corinth canal](/wiki/Isthmus_of_Corinth). In imitation of the Greeks, Nero built a number of gymnasiums and theatres.[[80]](#cite_note-80) Enormous gladiatorial shows were also held.[[81]](#cite_note-81) Nero also established the [quinquennial Neronia](/wiki/Quinquennial_Neronia).[[80]](#cite_note-80)[[81]](#cite_note-81) The festival included games, poetry, and theater. Historians indicate that there was a belief that theatre led to immorality.[[80]](#cite_note-80) Others considered that to have performers dressed in Greek clothing was old fashioned.[[82]](#cite_note-82) Some questioned the large public expenditure on entertainment.[[82]](#cite_note-82) In 64, [Rome burned](/wiki/Great_Fire_of_Rome).[[83]](#cite_note-83) Nero enacted a public relief effort[[83]](#cite_note-83) as well as significant reconstruction.[[84]](#cite_note-84) A number of other major construction projects occurred in Nero's late reign. Nero had the marshes of Ostia filled with rubble from the fire. He erected the large [Domus Aurea](/wiki/Domus_Aurea).[[85]](#cite_note-85) In 67, Nero attempted to have a canal dug at the [Isthmus of Corinth](/wiki/Isthmus_of_Corinth).[[86]](#cite_note-86) Ancient historians state that these projects and others exacerbated the drain on the State's budget.[[87]](#cite_note-87) The cost to rebuild Rome was immense, requiring funds the state treasury did not have. Nero devalued the [Roman currency](/wiki/Roman_currency) for the first time in the Empire's history. He reduced the weight of the [denarius](/wiki/Denarius) from 84 per [Roman pound](/wiki/Roman_pound) to 96 (3.85 grams to 3.35 grams). He also reduced the silver purity from 99.5% to 93.5%—the silver weight dropping from 3.83 grams to 3.4 grams. Furthermore, Nero reduced the weight of the [aureus](/wiki/Aureus) from 40 per Roman pound to 45 (8 grams to 7.2 grams).[[88]](#cite_note-88) Between 62 and 67, according to [Plinius the Elder](/wiki/Plinius_the_Elder) and Seneca, Nero promoted an expedition to discover the sources of the [Nile River](/wiki/Nile_River). It was the first exploration of equatorial [Africa](/wiki/Africa) from Europe in history.[[89]](#cite_note-89) However, Nero's expedition up the Nile failed because water plants had clogged the river, denying Nero's vessels access to the [Sudd](/wiki/Sudd) of present-day [South Sudan](/wiki/South_Sudan).

The economic policy of Nero is a point of debate among scholars. According to ancient historians, Nero's construction projects were overly extravagant and the large number of expenditures under Nero left Italy "thoroughly exhausted by contributions of money" with "the provinces ruined."[[90]](#cite_note-90)[[91]](#cite_note-91) Modern historians, though, note that the period was riddled with deflation and that it is likely that Nero's spending came in the form of public works projects and charity intended to ease economic troubles.[[92]](#cite_note-92)

### Great Fire of Rome (64 AD)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) The Great Fire of Rome erupted on the night of 18 July to 19 July 64. The fire started at the southeastern end of the [Circus Maximus](/wiki/Circus_Maximus) in shops selling flammable goods.[[83]](#cite_note-83)[thumb|250px|Artwork depicting the](/wiki/File:Hubert_Robert_-_The_Fire_of_Rome_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg) [Great Fire of Rome](/wiki/Great_Fire_of_Rome).

The extent of the fire is uncertain. According to [Tacitus](/wiki/Tacitus), who was nine at the time of the fire, it spread quickly and burned for over five days.[[93]](#cite_note-93) It destroyed three of fourteen Roman districts and severely damaged seven.[[93]](#cite_note-93) The only other historian who lived through the period and mentioned the fire is [Pliny the Elder](/wiki/Pliny_the_Elder), who wrote about it in passing.[[94]](#cite_note-94) Other historians who lived through the period (including [Josephus](/wiki/Josephus), [Dio Chrysostom](/wiki/Dio_Chrysostom), [Plutarch](/wiki/Plutarch) and [Epictetus](/wiki/Epictetus)) make no mention of it in what remains of their work. [160px|thumb|left|Sketch of Ancient](/wiki/Image:Nero-graffito.jpg) [graffiti](/wiki/Graffiti) portrait of Nero found at the *Domus Tiberiana*. It is uncertain who or what actually caused the fire—whether accident or [arson](/wiki/Arson).[[83]](#cite_note-83) [Suetonius](/wiki/Suetonius) and [Cassius Dio](/wiki/Cassius_Dio) favor Nero as the [arsonist](/wiki/Arson), so he could build a palatial complex. Tacitus mentions that Christians confessed to the crime, but it is not known whether these confessions were induced by torture.[[6]](#cite_note-6) However, accidental fires were common in ancient Rome.[[95]](#cite_note-95) In fact, Rome suffered other large fires in 69[[96]](#cite_note-96) and in 80.[[97]](#cite_note-97) It was said by Suetonius and Cassius Dio that Nero sang the "[Sack of Ilium](/wiki/Sack_of_Ilium)" in stage costume while the city burned.[[98]](#cite_note-98) Popular legend claims that Nero played the [fiddle](/wiki/Fiddle) at the time of the fire, an [anachronism](/wiki/Anachronism) based merely on the concept of the [lyre](/wiki/Lyre), a stringed instrument associated with Nero and his performances. (The fiddle was not invented until the 10th century.) Tacitus's account, however, has Nero in Antium at the time of the fire.[[99]](#cite_note-99) Tacitus also said that Nero playing his lyre and singing while the city burned was only rumor.[[99]](#cite_note-99) According to Tacitus, upon hearing news of the fire, Nero returned to Rome to organize a relief effort, which he paid for from his own funds.[[99]](#cite_note-99) Nero's contributions to the relief extended to personally taking part in the search for and rescue of victims of the blaze, spending days searching the debris without even his bodyguards.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) After the fire, Nero opened his palaces to provide shelter for the homeless, and arranged for food supplies to be delivered in order to prevent starvation among the survivors.[[99]](#cite_note-99) In the wake of the fire, he made a new urban development plan. Houses after the fire were spaced out, built in brick, and faced by [porticos](/wiki/Porticos) on wide roads.[[84]](#cite_note-84) Nero also built a new palace complex known as the [Domus Aurea](/wiki/Domus_Aurea) in an area cleared by the fire. This included lush artificial landscapes and a 30-meter-tall statue of himself, the [Colossus of Nero](/wiki/Colossus_of_Nero).[[85]](#cite_note-85) The size of this complex is debated (from 100 to 300 acres).[[100]](#cite_note-100)[[101]](#cite_note-101)[[102]](#cite_note-102) To find the necessary funds for the reconstruction, [tributes](/wiki/Tributes) were imposed on the provinces of the empire.[[103]](#cite_note-103) Tacitus, in [one of the earliest non-Christian references to the origins of Christianity](/wiki/Tacitus_on_Christ), notes that the population searched for a scapegoat and rumors held Nero responsible.[[6]](#cite_note-6) To deflect blame, Nero targeted Christians. He ordered Christians to be thrown to dogs, while others were crucified and burned.[[6]](#cite_note-6)

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

[thumb|300px|Nero coin, c. 66.](/wiki/Image:As-Nero-Ara_pacis-RIC_0562.jpg) [Ara Pacis](/wiki/Ara_Pacis) on the reverse.

Nero enjoyed driving a one-horse chariot, singing to the lyre and poetry.[[104]](#cite_note-104) He even composed songs that were performed by other entertainers throughout the empire.[[105]](#cite_note-105) At first, Nero only performed for a private audience.[[106]](#cite_note-106) In 64 AD., Nero began singing in public in [Neapolis](/wiki/Naples) in order to improve his popularity.[[106]](#cite_note-106) He also sang at the second [quinquennial Neronia](/wiki/Quinquennial_Neronia) in 65.[[107]](#cite_note-107) It was said that Nero craved the attention,[[108]](#cite_note-108) but historians also write that Nero was encouraged to sing and perform in public by the Senate, his inner circle and the people.[[109]](#cite_note-109) Ancient historians strongly criticize his choice to perform, calling it shameful.[[110]](#cite_note-110) Nero was persuaded to participate in the [Olympic Games](/wiki/Ancient_Olympic_Games) of 67 in order to improve relations with Greece and display Roman dominance.[[111]](#cite_note-111) As a competitor, Nero raced a ten-horse chariot and nearly died after being thrown from it.[[112]](#cite_note-112) He also performed as an actor and a singer.[[113]](#cite_note-113) Though Nero faltered in his racing (in one case, dropping out entirely before the end) and acting competitions,[[112]](#cite_note-112) he won these crowns nevertheless and paraded them when he returned to Rome.[[112]](#cite_note-112) The victories are attributed to Nero bribing the judges and his status as emperor.[[114]](#cite_note-114)

### War and peace with Parthia[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

[Template:Details](/wiki/Template:Details) Shortly after Nero's accession to the throne in 54, the Roman [vassal](/wiki/Vassal) [kingdom of Armenia](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Armenia_(antiquity)) overthrew their [Iberian](/wiki/Caucasian_Iberia) prince [Rhadamistus](/wiki/Rhadamistus) and he was replaced with the [Parthian](/wiki/Parthian_Empire) prince [Tiridates](/wiki/Tiridates_I_of_Armenia).[[115]](#cite_note-115) This was seen as a Parthian invasion of Roman territory.[[115]](#cite_note-115) There was concern in Rome over how the young Emperor would handle the situation.[[116]](#cite_note-116) Nero reacted by immediately sending the military to the region under the command of [Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo](/wiki/Gnaeus_Domitius_Corbulo).[[117]](#cite_note-117) The Parthians temporarily relinquished control of Armenia to Rome.[[118]](#cite_note-118) [thumb|350px|The](/wiki/Image:Map_Parthian_Empire-fr.png) [Parthian Empire](/wiki/Parthian_Empire) c. 60. Nero's peace deal with Parthia was a political victory at home and made him beloved in the east. The peace did not last and full-scale war broke out in 58. The Parthian king [Vologases I](/wiki/Vologases_I_of_Parthia) refused to remove his brother Tiridates from Armenia.[[119]](#cite_note-119) The Parthians began a full-scale invasion of the Armenian kingdom.[[44]](#cite_note-44) Commander Corbulo responded and repelled most of the Parthian army that same year.[[120]](#cite_note-120) Tiridates retreated and Rome again controlled most of Armenia.[[120]](#cite_note-120) Nero was acclaimed in public for this initial victory.[[121]](#cite_note-121) [Tigranes](/wiki/Tigranes_VI_of_Armenia), a Cappadocian noble raised in Rome, was installed by Nero as the new ruler of Armenia.[[122]](#cite_note-122) Corbulo was appointed governor of Syria as a reward.[[122]](#cite_note-122) In 62, Tigranes invaded the Parthian province of [Adiabene](/wiki/Adiabene).[[123]](#cite_note-123) Again, Rome and Parthia were at war and this continued until 63. Parthia began building up for a strike against the Roman province of Syria.[[124]](#cite_note-124) Corbulo tried to convince Nero to continue the war, but Nero opted for a peace deal instead.[[125]](#cite_note-125) There was anxiety in Rome about eastern grain supplies and a budget deficit.[[126]](#cite_note-126) The result was a deal where Tiridates again became the Armenian king, but was crowned in Rome by Emperor Nero.[[127]](#cite_note-127) In the future, the [king of Armenia](/wiki/List_of_Armenian_Kings#Arshakuni_(Arsacid)_Kings_of_Armenia) was to be a Parthian prince, but his appointment required approval from the Romans. Tiridates was forced to come to Rome and partake in ceremonies meant to display Roman dominance.[[83]](#cite_note-83)[[128]](#cite_note-128) This peace deal of 63 was a considerable victory for Nero politically.[[129]](#cite_note-129) Nero became very popular in the eastern provinces of Rome and with the Parthians as well.[[129]](#cite_note-129) The peace between Parthia and Rome lasted 50 years until Emperor [Trajan](/wiki/Trajan) of Rome invaded Armenia in 114.

### Other major power struggles and rebellions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[thumb|220px|A plaster bust of Nero,](/wiki/Image:Nero_pushkin.jpg) [Pushkin Museum](/wiki/Pushkin_Museum), Moscow. The war with Parthia was not Nero's only major war but he was both criticized and praised for an aversion to battle.[[130]](#cite_note-130) Like many emperors, Nero faced a number of rebellions and power struggles within the empire.

British Revolt of 60–61 (Boudica's Uprising)

[Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) In 60, a major rebellion broke out in the province of [Britannia](/wiki/Britannia).[[131]](#cite_note-131) While the governor [Gaius Suetonius Paulinus](/wiki/Gaius_Suetonius_Paulinus) and his troops were busy capturing the island of Mona ([Anglesey](/wiki/Isle_of_Anglesey)) from the druids, the tribes of the southeast staged a revolt led by queen [Boudica](/wiki/Boudica) of the [Iceni](/wiki/Iceni).[[132]](#cite_note-132) Boudica and her troops destroyed three cities before the army of Paulinus could return, receive reinforcements, and quell the rebellion in 61.[[133]](#cite_note-133) Fearing Paulinus himself would provoke further rebellion, Nero replaced him with the more passive [Publius Petronius Turpilianus](/wiki/Publius_Petronius_Turpilianus).[[134]](#cite_note-134)

The Pisonian Conspiracy of 65

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) In 65, [Gaius Calpurnius Piso](/wiki/Gaius_Calpurnius_Piso), a Roman statesman, organized a conspiracy against Nero with the help of Subrius Flavus and Sulpicius Asper, a tribune and a centurion of the Praetorian Guard.[[135]](#cite_note-135) According to Tacitus, many conspirators wished to "rescue the state" from the emperor and restore the [Republic](/wiki/Roman_Republic).[[136]](#cite_note-136) The freedman Milichus discovered the conspiracy and reported it to Nero's secretary, [Epaphroditos](/wiki/Epaphroditos).[[137]](#cite_note-137) As a result, the conspiracy failed and its members were executed including [Lucan](/wiki/Marcus_Annaeus_Lucanus), the poet.[[138]](#cite_note-138) Nero's previous advisor, [Seneca](/wiki/Seneca_the_Younger) was ordered to commit suicide after admitting he discussed the plot with the conspirators.[[139]](#cite_note-139)

The First Jewish War of 66–70

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) In 66, there was a Jewish revolt in Judea stemming from Greek and Jewish religious tension.[[140]](#cite_note-140) In 67, Nero dispatched [Vespasian](/wiki/Vespasian) to restore order.[[141]](#cite_note-141) This revolt was eventually put down in 70, after Nero's death.[[142]](#cite_note-142) This revolt is famous for Romans breaching the walls of Jerusalem and destroying the Second [Temple of Jerusalem](/wiki/Temple_of_Jerusalem).[[143]](#cite_note-143)

### The revolt of Vindex and Galba and the death of Nero[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

[thumb|265px|Nero,](/wiki/File:Roman_coins_sestertius_Nero_countermark_X_Legion_Gemina.jpg) [Sestertius](/wiki/Sestertius) with countermark "X" of [Legio X Gemina](/wiki/Legio_X_Gemina).   
Obv: Laureate bust right.   
Rev: Nero riding horse right, holding spear, DECVRSIO in exergue; S C across fields. [thumb|200px|A marble bust of Nero, Antiquarium of the](/wiki/Image:Nero_Palatino_Inv618.jpg) [Palatine](/wiki/Palatine). In March 68, [Gaius Julius Vindex](/wiki/Vindex), the governor of [Gallia Lugdunensis](/wiki/Gallia_Lugdunensis), rebelled against Nero's tax policies.[[144]](#cite_note-144)[[145]](#cite_note-145) [Lucius Verginius Rufus](/wiki/Lucius_Virginius_Rufus), the governor of [Germania Superior](/wiki/Germania_Superior), was ordered to put down Vindex's rebellion.[[146]](#cite_note-146) In an attempt to gain support from outside his own province, Vindex called upon [Servius Sulpicius Galba](/wiki/Galba), the governor of [Hispania Tarraconensis](/wiki/Hispania_Tarraconensis), to join the rebellion and further, to declare himself emperor in opposition to Nero.[[147]](#cite_note-147) At the [Battle of Vesontio](/wiki/Battle_of_Vesontio) in May 68, Verginius' forces easily defeated those of Vindex and the latter committed suicide.[[146]](#cite_note-146) However, after putting down this one rebel, Verginius' legions attempted to proclaim their own commander as Emperor. Verginius refused to act against Nero, but the discontent of the legions of Germany and the continued opposition of Galba in Spain did not bode well for him.

While Nero had retained some control of the situation, support for Galba increased despite his being officially declared a public enemy. The prefect of the [Praetorian Guard](/wiki/Praetorian_Guard), [Gaius Nymphidius Sabinus](/wiki/Nymphidius_Sabinus), also abandoned his allegiance to the Emperor and came out in support for Galba.

In response, Nero fled Rome with the intention of going to the port of [Ostia](/wiki/Ostia_Antica) and, from there, to take a fleet to one of the still-loyal eastern provinces. According to Suetonius, Nero abandoned the idea when some army officers openly refused to obey his commands, responding with a line from [Vergil's](/wiki/Vergil) [*Aeneid*](/wiki/Aeneid): "Is it so dreadful a thing then to die?" Nero then toyed with the idea of fleeing to [Parthia](/wiki/Parthia), throwing himself upon the mercy of Galba, or to appeal to the people and beg them to pardon him for his past offences "and if he could not soften their hearts, to entreat them at least to allow him the prefecture of Egypt". Suetonius reports that the text of this speech was later found in Nero's writing desk, but that he dared not give it from fear of being torn to pieces before he could reach the Forum.[[148]](#cite_note-148) Nero returned to Rome and spent the evening in the palace. After sleeping, he awoke at about midnight to find the palace guard had left. Dispatching messages to his friends' palace chambers for them to come, he received no answers. Upon going to their chambers personally, he found them all abandoned. When he called for a gladiator or anyone else adept with a sword to kill him, no one appeared. He cried, "Have I neither friend nor foe?" and ran out as if to throw himself into the [Tiber](/wiki/Tiber).[[148]](#cite_note-148) Returning, Nero sought for some place where he could hide and collect his thoughts. An imperial freedman, [Phaon](/wiki/Phaon_(freedman)), offered his villa, located 4 miles outside the city. Travelling in disguise, Nero and four loyal [freedmen](/wiki/Freedman), [Epaphroditos](/wiki/Epaphroditos), [Phaon](/wiki/Phaon_(freedman)), [Neophytus](/wiki/Neophytus_(freedman)), and [Sporus](/wiki/Sporus), reached the villa, where Nero ordered them to dig a grave for him.

At this time, a courier arrived with a report that the Senate had declared Nero a public enemy and that it was their intention to execute him by beating him to death and that armed men had been sent to apprehend him for the act to take place in the Forum. The Senate actually was still reluctant and deliberating on the right course of action as Nero was the last member of the Julio-Claudian Family. Indeed, most of the senators had served the imperial family all their lives and felt a sense of loyalty to the deified bloodline, if not to Nero himself. The men actually had the goal of returning Nero back to the Senate, where the Senate hoped to work out a compromise with the rebelling governors that would preserve Nero's life, so that at least a future heir to the dynasty could be produced.[[149]](#cite_note-149) Nero, however, did not know this, and at the news brought by the courier, he prepared himself for [suicide](/wiki/Forced_suicide), pacing up and down muttering "Qualis artifex pereo" which translates to English as "What an artist dies in me."[[150]](#cite_note-150) Losing his nerve, he first begged for one of his companions to set an example by first killing himself. At last, the sound of approaching horsemen drove Nero to face the end. However, he still could not bring himself to take his own life but instead he forced his private secretary, [Epaphroditos](/wiki/Epaphroditos), to perform the task.[[151]](#cite_note-151) When one of the horsemen entered, upon his seeing Nero all but dead he attempted to stop the bleeding in vain. Nero's final words were "Too late! This is fidelity!" He died on 9 June 68, the anniversary of the death of Octavia, and was buried in the Mausoleum of the Domitii Ahenobarbi, in what is now the [Villa Borghese](/wiki/Villa_Borghese) ([Pincian Hill](/wiki/Pincian_Hill)) area of Rome.[[152]](#cite_note-152) With his death, the [Julio-Claudian dynasty](/wiki/Julio-Claudian_dynasty) ended. The Senate, when news of his death reached Rome, posthumously declared Nero a public enemy to appease the coming Galba (as the Senate had initially declared Galba as a public enemy) and proclaimed Galba the new emperor. Chaos would ensue in the [year of the Four Emperors](/wiki/Year_of_the_Four_Emperors).[[96]](#cite_note-96)

### Post mortem[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|upright|*Nero*, painting of](/wiki/File:15-07-05-Schloß-Caputh-RalfR-N3S_1528.jpg) [Abraham Janssens van Nuyssen](/wiki/Abraham_Janssens_van_Nuyssen), (1620) [thumb|250px|The alleged Tomb of Nero.](/wiki/File:Piranesi-3014.jpg) According to Suetonius and Cassius Dio, the people of Rome celebrated the death of Nero.[[153]](#cite_note-153)[[154]](#cite_note-154) Tacitus, though, describes a more complicated political environment. Tacitus mentions that Nero's death was welcomed by Senators, nobility and the upper class.[[155]](#cite_note-155) The lower-class, slaves, frequenters of the arena and the theater, and "those who were supported by the famous excesses of Nero", on the other hand, were upset with the news.[[155]](#cite_note-155) Members of the military were said to have mixed feelings, as they had allegiance to Nero, but were bribed to overthrow him.[[156]](#cite_note-156) Eastern sources, namely Philostratus II and [Apollonius of Tyana](/wiki/Apollonius_of_Tyana), mention that Nero's death was mourned as he "restored the liberties of [Hellas](/wiki/Roman_Greece) with a wisdom and moderation quite alien to his character"[[157]](#cite_note-157) and that he "held our liberties in his hand and respected them."[[158]](#cite_note-158) Modern scholarship generally holds that, while the Senate and more well-off individuals welcomed Nero's death, the general populace was "loyal to the end and beyond, for Otho and Vitellius both thought it worthwhile to appeal to their nostalgia."[[159]](#cite_note-159) Nero's name was erased from some monuments, in what Edward Champlin regards as an "outburst of private zeal".[[160]](#cite_note-160) Many portraits of Nero were reworked to represent other figures; according to Eric R. Varner, over fifty such images survive.<ref name=pollini>John Pollini (September 2006), Review of *Mutilation and Transformation: Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture* by Eric R. Varner, [*The Art Bulletin*](/wiki/The_Art_Bulletin).</ref> This reworking of images is often explained as part of the way in which the memory of disgraced emperors was condemned posthumously[[161]](#cite_note-161) (see [damnatio memoriae](/wiki/Damnatio_memoriae)).<ref name=pollini/> Champlin, however, doubts that the practice is necessarily negative and notes that some continued to create images of Nero long after his death.[[162]](#cite_note-162) [190px|thumb|](/wiki/Image:Nero-nancy.jpg)[Apotheosis](/wiki/Apotheosis) of Nero, c. after 68. Artwork portraying Nero rising to divine status after his death.

The civil war during the [year of the Four Emperors](/wiki/Year_of_the_Four_Emperors) was described by ancient historians as a troubling period.[[96]](#cite_note-96) According to Tacitus, this instability was rooted in the fact that emperors could no longer rely on the perceived legitimacy of the imperial bloodline, as Nero and those before him could.[[155]](#cite_note-155) [Galba](/wiki/Galba) began his short reign with the execution of many allies of Nero and possible future enemies.[[163]](#cite_note-163) One such notable enemy included [Nymphidius Sabinus](/wiki/Nymphidius_Sabinus), who claimed to be the son of Emperor [Caligula](/wiki/Caligula).[[164]](#cite_note-164) [Otho](/wiki/Otho) overthrew Galba. Otho was said to be liked by many soldiers because he had been a friend of Nero's and resembled him somewhat in temperament.[[165]](#cite_note-165) It was said that the common Roman hailed Otho as Nero himself.[[166]](#cite_note-166) Otho used "Nero" as a surname and reerected many statues to Nero.[[166]](#cite_note-166) [Vitellius](/wiki/Vitellius) overthrew Otho. Vitellius began his reign with a large funeral for Nero complete with songs written by Nero.[[167]](#cite_note-167) After Nero's suicide in 68, there was a widespread belief, especially in the eastern provinces, that he was not dead and somehow would return.[[168]](#cite_note-168) This belief came to be known as the [Nero Redivivus Legend](/wiki/Nero_Redivivus_Legend).

The legend of Nero's return lasted for hundreds of years after Nero's death. [Augustine of Hippo](/wiki/Augustine_of_Hippo) wrote of the legend as a popular belief in 422.[[169]](#cite_note-169) At least [three Nero imposters](/wiki/Pseudo-Neros) emerged leading rebellions. The first, who sang and played the cithara or lyre and whose face was similar to that of the dead emperor, appeared in 69 during the reign of Vitellius.[[170]](#cite_note-170) After persuading some to recognize him, he was captured and executed.[[170]](#cite_note-170) Sometime during the reign of [Titus](/wiki/Titus) (79–81), another impostor appeared in Asia and sang to the accompaniment of the lyre and looked like Nero but he, too, was killed.[[171]](#cite_note-171) Twenty years after Nero's death, during the reign of [Domitian](/wiki/Domitian), there was a third pretender. He was supported by the Parthians, who only reluctantly gave him up,[[172]](#cite_note-172) and the matter almost came to war.[[96]](#cite_note-96)

## Physical appearance[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

In his book *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, [Suetonius](/wiki/Suetonius) describes Nero as "about the average height, his body marked with spots and [malodorous](/wiki/Body_odor), his hair light blonde, his features regular rather than attractive, his eyes blue and somewhat weak, his neck over thick, his belly prominent, and his legs very slender."[[173]](#cite_note-173)

## Historiography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

The history of Nero's reign is problematic in that no historical sources survived that were contemporary with Nero. These first histories at one time did exist and were described as biased and fantastical, either overly critical or praising of Nero.[[174]](#cite_note-174) The original sources were also said to contradict on a number of events.[[175]](#cite_note-175) Nonetheless, these lost primary sources were the basis of surviving secondary and tertiary histories on Nero written by the next generations of historians.[[176]](#cite_note-176) A few of the contemporary historians are known by name. [Fabius Rusticus](/wiki/Fabius_Rusticus), [Cluvius Rufus](/wiki/Cluvius_Rufus) and [Pliny the Elder](/wiki/Pliny_the_Elder) all wrote condemning histories on Nero that are now lost.[[177]](#cite_note-177) There were also pro-Nero histories, but it is unknown who wrote them or for what deeds Nero was praised.[[178]](#cite_note-178) The bulk of what is known of Nero comes from [Tacitus](/wiki/Tacitus), [Suetonius](/wiki/Suetonius) and [Cassius Dio](/wiki/Cassius_Dio), who were all of the senatorial class. Tacitus and Suetonius wrote their histories on Nero over fifty years after his death, while Cassius Dio wrote his history over 150 years after Nero's death. These sources contradict on a number of events in Nero's life including the death of [Claudius](/wiki/Claudius), the death of [Agrippina](/wiki/Agrippina_the_Younger), and the Roman fire of 64, but they are consistent in their condemnation of Nero.

A handful of other sources also add a limited and varying perspective on Nero. Few surviving sources paint Nero in a favourable light. Some sources, though, portray him as a competent emperor who was popular with the Roman people, especially in the east.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Cassius Dio

[Cassius Dio](/wiki/Cassius_Dio) (c. 155–229) was the son of [Cassius Apronianus](/wiki/Cassius_Apronianus), a Roman senator. He passed the greater part of his life in public service. He was a senator under [Commodus](/wiki/Commodus) and governor of Smyrna after the death of [Septimius Severus](/wiki/Septimius_Severus); and afterwards suffect consul around 205, and also proconsul in Africa and Pannonia.

Books 61–63 of Dio's *Roman History* describe the reign of Nero. Only fragments of these books remain and what does remain was abridged and altered by [John Xiphilinus](/wiki/John_Xiphilinus), an 11th-century monk.

Dio Chrysostom

[Dio Chrysostom](/wiki/Dio_Chrysostom) (c. 40–120), a Greek philosopher and historian, wrote the Roman people were very happy with Nero and would have allowed him to rule indefinitely. They longed for his rule once he was gone and embraced imposters when they appeared:

[Template:Quote](/wiki/Template:Quote)

Epictetus

[Epictetus](/wiki/Epictetus) (c. 55–135) was the slave to Nero's scribe [Epaphroditos](/wiki/Epaphroditos). He makes a few passing negative comments on Nero's character in his work, but makes no remarks on the nature of his rule. He describes Nero as a spoiled, angry and unhappy man.

Josephus

[thumb|The historian](/wiki/Image:Josephusbust.jpg) [Josephus](/wiki/Josephus) (c. 37–100) accused other historians of slandering Nero. The historian [Josephus](/wiki/Josephus) (c. 37–100), while calling Nero a tyrant, was also the first to mention bias against Nero. Of other historians, he said:

[Template:Quote](/wiki/Template:Quote)

Lucan

Though more of a poet than historian, [Lucanus](/wiki/Marcus_Annaeus_Lucanus) (c. 39–65) has one of the kindest accounts of Nero's rule. He writes of peace and prosperity under Nero in contrast to previous war and strife. Ironically, he was later involved in a conspiracy to overthrow Nero and was executed.[[179]](#cite_note-179)

Philostratus

[Philostratus](/wiki/Philostratus) II "the Athenian" (c. 172–250) spoke of Nero in the [Life of Apollonius Tyana](/wiki/Life_of_Apollonius_Tyana) (Books 4–5). Though he has a generally bad or dim view of Nero, he speaks of others' positive reception of Nero in the East.

Pliny the Elder

The history of Nero by [Pliny the Elder](/wiki/Pliny_the_Elder) (c. 24–79) did not survive. Still, there are several references to Nero in Pliny's *Natural Histories*. Pliny has one of the worst opinions of Nero and calls him an "enemy of mankind."[[180]](#cite_note-180)

Plutarch

[Plutarch](/wiki/Plutarch) (c. 46–127) mentions Nero indirectly in his account of the Life of Galba and the Life of Otho. Nero is portrayed as a tyrant, but those that replace him are not described as better.

Seneca the Younger

It is not surprising that [Seneca](/wiki/Seneca_the_Younger) (c. 4 BC–65), Nero's teacher and advisor, writes very well of Nero.[[181]](#cite_note-181)

Suetonius

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Suetonius](/wiki/Suetonius) (c. 69–130) was a member of the equestrian order, and he was the head of the department of the imperial correspondence. While in this position, Suetonius started writing biographies of the emperors, accentuating the anecdotal and sensational aspects.

Tacitus

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) The *Annals* by [Tacitus](/wiki/Tacitus) (c. 56–117) is the most detailed and comprehensive history on the rule of Nero, despite being incomplete after the year 66. Tacitus described the rule of the Julio-Claudian emperors as generally unjust. He also thought that existing writing on them was unbalanced:

[Template:Quote](/wiki/Template:Quote)

Tacitus was the son of a [procurator](/wiki/Promagistrate), who married into the elite family of Agricola. He entered his political life as a senator after Nero's death and, by Tacitus' own admission, owed much to Nero's rivals. Realising that this bias may be apparent to others, Tacitus protests that his writing is true.[[182]](#cite_note-182)

Girolamo Cardano

In 1562 [Girolamo Cardano](/wiki/Girolamo_Cardano) published in Basel his *Encomium Neronis*, which was one of the first historical references of the [Modern era](/wiki/Modern_era) to portray Nero in a positive light.

## Nero in Jewish and Christian tradition[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

### Jewish tradition[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

At the end of 66, conflict broke out between Greeks and Jews in [Jerusalem](/wiki/Jerusalem) and Caesarea. According to the [Talmud](/wiki/Talmud), Nero went to Jerusalem and shot arrows in all four directions. All the arrows landed in the city. He then asked a passing child to repeat the verse he had learned that day. The child responded, "I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel" ([Ez.](/wiki/Ezekiel) [25,14](http://av1611.com/kjbp/kjv-bible-text/Eze-25.html)). Nero became terrified, believing that God wanted the [Temple in Jerusalem](/wiki/Temple_in_Jerusalem) to be destroyed, but would punish the one to carry it out. Nero said, "He desires to lay waste His House and to lay the blame on me," whereupon he fled and converted to Judaism to avoid such retribution.[[183]](#cite_note-183) [Vespasian](/wiki/Vespasian) was then dispatched to put down the rebellion.

The Talmud adds that the sage [Reb Meir Baal HaNess](/wiki/Rabbi_Meir), **Rabbi Meir** or **Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes** (Rabbi Meir the miracle maker) was a Jewish sage who lived in the time of the [Mishna](/wiki/Mishna) a prominent supporter of the [Bar Kokhba](/wiki/Simon_bar_Kokhba) [rebellion](/wiki/Bar_Kokhba's_revolt) against Roman rule. He was considered one of the greatest of the [Tannaim](/wiki/Tannaim) of the third generation (139-163). According to the Talmud, his father was a descendant of the [Roman Emperor](/wiki/Roman_Emperor) Nero who had converted to Judaism. His wife [Bruriah](/wiki/Bruriah_daughter_of_Rabbi_Hananiah_Ben_Teradion) is one of the few women cited in the [Gemara](/wiki/Gemara). He is the third most frequently mentioned sage in the Mishnah.[[184]](#cite_note-184) Roman and Greek sources nowhere report Nero's alleged trip to Jerusalem or his alleged conversion to Judaism.[[185]](#cite_note-185) There is also no record of Nero having any offspring who survived infancy: his only recorded child, [Claudia Augusta](/wiki/Claudia_Augusta), died aged 4 months.

### Christian tradition[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

[thumb|400px|*A Christian Dirce*, by](/wiki/Image:Siemiradzki_Christian_Dirce.jpg) [Henryk Siemiradzki](/wiki/Henryk_Siemiradzki). A Christian woman is martyred in this re-enactment of the myth of [Dirce](/wiki/Dirce).

[thumb|Nero's Torches](/wiki/File:Siemiradski_Fackeln.jpg) Non-Christian historian [Tacitus](/wiki/Tacitus) describes Nero extensively torturing and executing Christians after the fire of 64.[[6]](#cite_note-6) [Suetonius](/wiki/Suetonius) also mentions Nero punishing Christians, though he does so because they are "given to a new and mischievous superstition" and does not connect it with the fire.[[186]](#cite_note-186) Christian writer [Tertullian](/wiki/Tertullian) (c. 155–230) was the first to call Nero the first persecutor of Christians. He wrote, "Examine your records. There you will find that Nero was the first that persecuted this doctrine".[[187]](#cite_note-187) [Lactantius](/wiki/Lactantius) (c. 240–320) also said that Nero "first persecuted the servants of God".[[188]](#cite_note-188) as does [Sulpicius Severus](/wiki/Sulpicius_Severus).[[189]](#cite_note-189) However, Suetonius writes that, "since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he [emperor [Claudius](/wiki/Claudius)] expelled them from Rome" ("*Iudaeos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantis Roma expulit*").[[190]](#cite_note-190) These expelled "Jews" may have been early Christians, although Suetonius is not explicit. Nor is the Bible explicit, calling Aquila of Pontus and his wife, Priscilla, both expelled from Italy at the time, "Jews".[[191]](#cite_note-191)

#### Martyrdoms of Peter and Paul[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

The first text to suggest that Nero ordered the execution of an apostle is a letter by [Clement](/wiki/Pope_Clement_I) to the Corinthians traditional dated to around 96 A.D.[[192]](#cite_note-192) The apocryphal [Ascension of Isaiah](/wiki/Ascension_of_Isaiah), a Christian writing from the 2nd century says, "the slayer of his mother, who himself (even) this king, will persecute the plant which the Twelve Apostles of the Beloved have planted. Of the Twelve one will be delivered into his hands" was interpreted to mean Nero.[[193]](#cite_note-193) [Bishop](/wiki/Bishop) [Eusebius](/wiki/Eusebius) of [Caesarea](/wiki/Caesarea) (c. 275–339) was the first to write explicitly that Paul was beheaded in Rome during the reign of Nero.[[194]](#cite_note-194) He states that Nero's persecution led to Peter and Paul's deaths, but that Nero did not give any specific orders. However, several other accounts going back to the 1st century have Paul surviving his two years in Rome and travelling to [Hispania](/wiki/Hispania), before facing trial in Rome again prior to his death.[[195]](#cite_note-195) Peter is first said to have been [crucified upside-down](/wiki/Cross_of_St._Peter) in Rome during Nero's reign (but not by Nero) in the [apocryphal](/wiki/Apocryphal) [Acts of Peter](/wiki/Acts_of_Peter) (c. 200).[[196]](#cite_note-196) The account ends with Paul still alive and Nero abiding by God's command not to persecute any more Christians.

By the 4th century, a number of writers were stating that Nero killed Peter and Paul.[[197]](#cite_note-197)

#### The Antichrist[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

The [Sibylline Oracles](/wiki/Sibylline_Oracles), Book 5 and 8, written in the 2nd century, speak of Nero returning and bringing destruction.[[198]](#cite_note-198)[[199]](#cite_note-199) Within Christian communities, these writings, along with others,[[200]](#cite_note-200) fueled the belief that Nero would return as the Antichrist. In 310, [Lactantius](/wiki/Lactantius) wrote that Nero "suddenly disappeared, and even the burial place of that noxious wild beast was nowhere to be seen. This has led some persons of extravagant imagination to suppose that, having been conveyed to a distant region, he is still reserved alive; and to him they apply the Sibylline verses", Lactantius maintains that it is not right to believe this.[[188]](#cite_note-188)[[192]](#cite_note-192) In 422, [Augustine of Hippo](/wiki/Augustine_of_Hippo) wrote about 2 Thessalonians 2:1–11, where he believed Paul mentioned the coming of the Antichrist. Though he rejects the theory, Augustine mentions that many Christians believed that Nero was the Antichrist or would return as the Antichrist. He wrote, "so that in saying, 'For the mystery of iniquity doth already work,'[[201]](#cite_note-201) he alluded to Nero, whose deeds already seemed to be as the deeds of Antichrist."[[169]](#cite_note-169) Some modern biblical scholars[[202]](#cite_note-202)[[203]](#cite_note-203) such as Delbert Hillers ([Johns Hopkins University](/wiki/Johns_Hopkins_University)) of the [American Schools of Oriental Research](/wiki/American_Schools_of_Oriental_Research) and the editors of the Oxford & Harper Collins Study Bibles, contend that the number [666](/wiki/Number_of_the_Beast) in the [Book of Revelation](/wiki/Book_of_Revelation) is a code for Nero,[[204]](#cite_note-204) a view that is also supported in [Roman Catholic](/wiki/Roman_Catholic) Biblical commentaries.[[205]](#cite_note-205)[[206]](#cite_note-206) The concept of Nero as the Antichrist is often a central belief of [Preterist](/wiki/Preterism) [eschatology](/wiki/Eschatology).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]

* [Nero in popular culture](/wiki/Nero_in_popular_culture)

## Notes[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]

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## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]

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## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]

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* [Finding Nero: shining a new light on Romano-British sculpture](http://dx.doi.org/10.11141/ia.32.5)
* [International Society for Neronian Studies](http://www.sien-neron.fr/?lang=en)

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