

# Cleopatra essay examples

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

\n \t

1. [World History](#) \n \t
2. [NOTES:](#) \n \t
3. [Bibliography](#) \n

\n[/[toc](#)]\n \n

## **World History**

We stand in awe thinking of these modern female leaders. Many of them made names in our history and were given special names. The late prime minister of the United Kingdom, Margaret Thatcher was called the iron lady. She gained her name because of her firm decision and dedication as a female leader rising to the top in a political arena dominated by men. She brought England to economic progress. In spite of the political crises manifested by labor strikes and constant battle for supremacy in the House of Commons, she came up to be a champion. Another woman, akin to her prowess has made a tremendous impact to world history. She is the great Queen of Egypt.

This great queen was born around 69 B. C in Egypt. Her name was Cleopatra VII1. She was the great-great-great granddaughter of Seleukos I, the childhood friend of Alexander the Great. It was said that after Alexander died, he took over and made himself a king. He founded Antioch, ruled Syria and created a great dynasty during the Hellenistic era. To strengthen his rule, Ptolemy V, his son, was joined in marriage to Cleopatra 1.

Cleopatra's mother was a Macedonian and she encouraged her to love the

Egyptian culture and learn from it. Nothing much was written about her mother. It was said that she was a descendant of the priest, which was still considered royalty during her time. Cleopatra's father was called the "flute player". He made many travels to Athens. Cleopatra was able to observe the political activities which later became of interest to her when she ruled. It was common and expected of the royalty to be well educated and intelligent even in the field of medicine. During that time, Alexandria was considered to have the best and finest library. It had an adjacent research center, Mouseion where many scholars would meet and study. It was said that Cleopatra developed her studies in the field of medicine. Her mother wanted her to be brilliant in letters and art. It was assumed that Cleopatra VII spent a lot of time with these scholars. She was introduced to Philostratos. He was elderly but was considered the best orator during his time. He became the tutor of Cleopatra in rhetorics, oratory as well as philosophy. It is believed that Cleopatra was greatly influenced by Philostratos who made her a great public speaker. Egypt was frequently visited by learned and philosophers from Greece. Cleopatra would discuss and was persuasive in her discourse. Plutarch had a high regard on her as she was able to speak Ethiopian, Trogyte, Hebraioi, Arabes, Syrian, Medes, Parthians, and many others<sup>3</sup>. Cleopatra was always with his father during his travel, which explains her ability to speak the different languages. Before coming back to Egypt, from his long travel and stay in other countries. During his travel he incurred a lot of debt from a very rich Roman citizen. By the time of his debt, he still owed a lot of money to Rome.

Ptolemy XII was the father of Cleopatra and became the King of Egypt. Egypt

at that time was considered a province of Rome. Ptolemy was restored to office by the Roman dictator L. Cornelius Sulla. He was known to have dealings with other royalties in India and Asia Minor. Rome had a lot of political unrest and has affected the coffers. Sulla was interested in the contributions from Egypt being rich in its resources.

Cleopatra's father was not very interested in politics neither in running his country. Ptolemy XII was concerned maintaining in his power as well as for his children. He continued to support and send money to Rome. He ambioned to be a friend of Julius Ceasar so that he will be considered a friend of Rome, meaning, his position would still be considered by Rome. Ptolemy XII made his son Ptolemy XIII and his daughter Cleopatra joint rulers of Egypt. Ptolemy XIII was much younger than Cleopatra. Cleopatra came to office with a lot problems in her reign. Her father left her an enormous amount of debt from different Romans to an estimated amount of 17. 5 million drachmas<sup>4</sup>. She was now indebted to Julius Caesar. This tested her prowess as a queen. She was beset by problems from her elder siblings too. In order to seek alliance, he contacted her younger brother, Ptolemy XIV but it lasted only a few months. Cleopatra was very much interested in preserving the Egyptian culture. She attending a lot of festivals to show her supported them. During this time, Rome continued to be in such political upheaval. At this time, being a queen at twenty (20) she received the first Roman visitor. It was the son of Pompeius the Great bearing his father's request for military assistance. The great old man was a very good friend of Cleopatra's father. Julius Caesar and Pompeius was in a collision. Cleopatra showed her support and sent 60 ships and 500 troops<sup>5</sup>. The fleet was being

used in battle. At this time, Cleopatra had a very big disagreement with his Ptolemy XIII which forced her to leave Alexandria go on exile to region of Thebes. Her mother was believed to come from this place, from the descendants of Ptah, the priest. However, she did not find Thebes to be her place of refuge. She then travelled to Syria with her younger sister, Arsinoe. In Syria, Cleopatra motivated men to join her army.

Cleopatra attempted to return to Egypt. She was blocked by her brother which made per camped and positioned in Delta city of Pelousion. There is no record of how she was able to set in that place. In the meantime, her brother Ptolemy XIII continued to rule Egypt but did not want any intervention from Rome. So, when Pompeius came to Egypt, they laid a trap which killed him.

At this point in time, Cleopatra at 21 was trying to regain her supremacy. She continue to raise her army and her brother paid no attention to her existence in Pelousion. With Pompeius dead, Ceasar returned to Egypt. He felt obligated to support the Ptolemaic kingdom.

Egypt was now considered a province of Rome. Caesar ordered Cleopatra and Ptolemy XIII to settle their political difference with Caesar as the arbiter. He also demanded partial payment from the 17.5 million drachmas owed him. He needed the money to support his army. Cleopatra planned to meet Caesar in person without the knowledge of her brother. The scheme was subtle. Plutarch reported that she had herself tied to a bedsack and brought to the presence of Caesar. He was stricken by her beauty. Cleopatra was well aware that it was demeaning for a queen to appear and act that way. Thus, the debt was forgotten and a special relationship developed. Ptolemy XIII

was summoned to appear for the negotiation. When he came, he noticed that it was a different situation and that Caesar was on his sister's side. He could not believe what he saw. Thus, he provoked a riot by tearing the tiara from his head. Caesar saved Cleopatra and arrested Ptolemy XIII. Caesar brought the will of Ptolemy XII, showing that Ptolemy XIII and Cleopatra would be joint rulers in order to peacefully settle the situation. Arsinoe and Ptolemy XIV were given Cyprus to rule. Traditionally it was presumed to be marriage of siblings. Cleopatra in return was happy because her younger brother and sister were sent away from her.

Ptolemy and his cohorts noticed that the settlement between Ptolemy XIII and his sister, Cleopatra favored her. Ptolemy knew that Caesar came to Egypt with only 4,000 men and had little support. Egypt at this time had 20,000 soldiers. So, while celebration and festivities were happening, Ptolemy devised a plan to overthrow Cleopatra and Caesar. This began the Alexandrian War. While the war was going on, Cleopatra lived peacefully in her region. Cleopatra was still joint ruler with her brother but was considered subordinate being a woman. The romantic relationship between Caesar and Cleopatra remained and she lived with him. With the war over, Caesar returned to Rome.

After many years, Cleopatra visited Rome. She saw her great influence on Caesar. A public library was established and appointed Asinius as librarian<sup>6</sup>. She waited for Caesar who was traveling. Then report came that Caesar was dead. She remained in Rome for diplomatic reasons. She later left for Alexandria. Along the years after Caesar's death, she received death threats from Caesar's assassin, Cassius who informed her of invasion and sought her

help. She refused for the reason that his kingdom was in trouble. In the end, she supported him. Octavius summoned Cleopatra to visit him in Tarsos to explain why he supported their enemy, Cassius. She sailed to Tarsos with all the lavishment of the Eastern culture. She had a special agenda to pursue. She then was acquitted. Her sister, Arsinoe, who was supporting Cassius was eliminated from the temple and her brother dead now. This leaves Cleopatra the sole ruler of Egypt. Antonius from Rome was attracted to Cleopatra, now at 28. He became her personal guest. She strengthen her power by allying with the most prominent Roman citizen, Antonius. Antonius was married and was well known to be philandering with pretty royalties. Cleopatra was aware that she needed an heir since she was ruling Egypt alone. She carefully chose the father of her child and found Antonius the favored because he was the most powerful Roman statement. Antonius was part of the triumvirate and has to return to Rome. Cleopatra offered him 200 ships as gratitude for his support to her political and territorial ambitions. Cleopatra in return withdrew from the public and was only later seen with her children Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene, fathered by Antonius<sup>7</sup>. Cleopatra continued to make alliance and supported Antonius who helped her expand her territories. After numerous war, the Seleuid Empire no longer existed. Antonius returned other Ptolemaic regions back to Egypt under the rule of Cleopatra. Thus, her ambition to control the whole of Egypt was fulfilled. The restoration of the Ptolomaic kingdom was a new era of Cleopatra's rule. She released the double-coin for year 36 and 37 BC. But during this time, river Nile of Egypt was very low and could not supply enough for the farm. Aggravating the situation, she was to pay Rome for the debt of his father.

Cleopatra was feeling greatly devastated. Antonius went back to his wife which put her into great anguish. She ended her life but regally dressed as the queen of Egypt and allowed the poisonous viper to bite her. Thus ended the life of Cleopatra.

## **NOTES:**

- Duane W. Roller, *Cleopatra: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 15, [https://www. questia. com/read/121308937](https://www.questia.com/read/121308937).
- Ibid, p. 16
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