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Egypt's Greatest Ruler: Cleopatra the Misunderstood MistressJocelyn C. RoyerLVV 4U1In the time of ancient civilizations, Egypt was one to take note of in particular. Amagnificent empire situated in Africa that was centred along the coast of the NileRiver, the source of all life for ancient Egyptians at the time. As exaggerated as itmay seem the Nile was life for them just as their ruler was supreme. This countrywas ruled by a Pharaoh rather than a King. The Pharaoh was more than a Kingfor the Egyptians, he was a leader and ideally a God in the eyes of his people. But who was considered Egypt's greatest ruler? A genius among the many thatthere were. Egypt’s last and final ruler was not one to be reckoned with, but aswell not the commonly thought male figure that usually ruled over an entirecivilization such as this one. This leader was a woman and one who's actionswent down in history for all to see. Contrary to popular opinion Cleopatra's accession to the thrown and herreign as one of Egypt's greatest rulers was not because she was a promiscuousbeautiful maiden but rather the fact that she was an individual of high intellect, apersuasive speaker and a political prodigy. Although many factors prominently played their part in Cleopatra'slife and why she was considered the great ruler many individuals saw her to be, the one ingredient to this recipe that was of the utmost importance was herintelligence and knowledge. It clearly states in the following: " She had anEgyptians belief in the absolute power of the Pharaoh, and a Greeks reverencefor knowledge and learning." (Hunt, 2008). What this demonstrates about her isthat Cleopatra saw the importance of intelligence and that the means to attainpower was evidently through the intake of knowledge by research and study. Herheritage and background aloud her to see the importance of knowledge andlearning all together relating back to the Greek interpretation of schooling andeducation. She would then combine it with the Egyptian understanding ofcomplete and utter control to attain power. Most significantly relating back to thethesis, this is a relevant and critical point because it gave her the possibility to beable to gain the ability to learn and use other perspectives that she would uselatter on in her life as methods of persuasion and seduction. She was raised inan environment were there was a complete fusion between Greek and Egyptiancultures. This allowed her to not only understand one perspective but many interms of history and culture. This brought diversity into her life and it gave her theunderstanding to know the difference between things whether they be simple orcomplex. Looking further into culture Cleopatra was brought up in a city that wasconsidered one of the most cultured in the world during the era of classicalcivilizations, the city of Alexandria. It was named after Alexander the Great, thefounding father of the Ptolemaic dynasty and a individual who appreciatededucation and learning. Ironically the city was also known as the capitol oflearning, a place that would raise many teachers and philosophers of their time. In fact many scholars and philosophers even began to move to Alexandriabecause it became a place for teaching and learning. In the quote: " The ancientlibrary of Alexandria. The library was the centre of Cleopatra's world, said to haveheld 700, 000 scrolls collected by her ancestors." (Hunt, 2008). It explains thatthe library of Alexandria was the source that fed all of her hunger for learning. Indoing so she was offered the opportunity to attain vast knowledge in all aspectsof life at the time, helping expand her thoughts and ideas on a whole new scale. Quite relevant to the thesis because she could use this to her advantage as aruler, the library not only provided her with the knowledge and perception ofmany teachers and scholars but as well gave her the chance to learn fromprevious historical periods' mistakes and try to change what they did wrong oradd to whatever they were missing at the time. Hence she gained insight ondifferent ideas and stories that were written on scrolls. In the end this would onlyfurther her understanding of the world and all of its mechanics. As far as knowledge and understanding goes, it leads to more specificelements of Cleopatra's personality that made her one of Egypt's greatest rulers. This factor being her ability and skill as a speaker. Known internationallythroughout the classical era for her persuasive and compelling monologues withsome of the most powerful rulers in history that she undoubtedly lured in with herwords of compulsion. Proof of her proficiency in speaking, " She was taught tospeak 9 or 10 languages." (Elston, 2009). Being the only Ptolemaic ruler of Egyptto actually learn how to speak and even write in the native Egyptian language. Ittakes an individual with a passion for learning and speaking to actually take thetime to learn multiple languages and understand them. Cleopatra was not onlymultilingual in the way that she could speak all of the languages she learnedbut she could also read and write in those languages. A crucial element relatingback to the thesis, this point has huge importance because Cleopatra wanted toget her point across any way that she could even if that meant learning newlanguages. Being the only Ptolemaic ruler to learn Egyptian possibly showed herpeople that she cared enough about them to learn it, while it was more likelyto be one of her many methods of manipulation and persuasive speaking whenthought about more clearly. Regarding her ability as a manipulative and ambitious speaker, Cleopatraoften had many particular moments in her life where she could display her abilityto try and get her way. She often used this ability to form alliances with thedifferent empires when she felt Egypt was unsafe or her position was in dangerof being taken from her altogether. This is evident in the quote: " Antonysummoned her to Tarsus in Cilicia, she responded eagerly. Matching herpreparations to the man whose weaknesses she knew, she dazzled Antony andbent him to her will." (Houghton, 2002). Cleopatra knew that her relationship withCaesar was going to perish and soon enough his position would be taken over orhe would be killed. She saw the opportunity in this situation to seduce MarkAntony with her eloquent words and ideas. An essential factor that is hugelysignificant to the thesis, What people don't understand about Cleopatra was thatshe wasn't just getting what she wanted because she was beautiful but rathershe understood that advantage and used it in a flirtatious manner to persuadeand manipulate whoever she wanted into doing her chores. She was smartenough to comprehend that she had an advantage so why not use it. Cleopatrawent to extraordinary lengths to try and save her empire that she even envelopedherself in a carpet to get into Caesars palace to try and dazzle him. Last but surely not least, even though vast knowledge and great speakingskills were great assets to Cleopatra's reign as Pharaoh they would've only beensemi-effective if not for her understanding of politics at an immeasurable level. Being the daughter of the previous ruler of Egypt and so forth even back to thebeginning of the Ptolemaic dynasty, she was able to witness the evolution ofpolitics and government through learning about the history of her forefathersreigns. In the quote: " She learned her political lessons by watching thehumiliating efforts of her father to maintain himself on the throne of Egypt bybuying the support of powerful Romans." (Gale, 1998). This explains thatCleopatra was taught lessons based on politics at a very young age, andlatter on used them as an advantage but also motivation to succeed and notmake the same mistakes her father did. This relates to the thesis completelybecause Cleopatra was a political inspiration and had a captivating way ofspeaking that attracted almost every individual she met. Even latter on in her lifeshe used this skill to her benefit. Her meeting with Caesar was usually portrayedas a seduction on her behalf but it had vast political significance. Although itseems she became his mistress it is clear that they also became partners, instead of surrendering she formed an alliance and it's rumoured that sheseduced him not sexually but persuasively with her words. Regarding her political prowess, Cleopatra had created her own form ofpropaganda that would inescapably entice her people once again to admire andsee her as godly altogether. In the following statement: " In the Edfu temple, during its build Cleopatra depicted herself in statues and portraits as the Egyptiangod Isis, but it was also hugely implied that Caesar was depicted as Horus."(Hunt, 2008). Cleopatra was stating to her people that she was not only theirPharaoh and ruler but one of their God's as well. She depicted herself as theGoddess Isis, the Goddess of fertility who also watched over the Nile. This wasan excellent move on her behalf because regardless of the fact that she wasbeing looked up to and idolized before, now she was being worshipped as ahigher deity and this had compelled them completely to look at her only positivelyand with worshipping intentions. This is significant to the thesis because it was avery cunning move on her behalf, she used Egypt’s religion and beliefs as a wayto display and enforce political propaganda thus making people conform to her insome way or another. It's as if she almost did it as a way to get their trust and tomake them feel like she truly felt she was Egyptian. She even displayed hugeinterest in their culture, portraits of her were found dressed in complete historicaland traditional Egyptian garments. She even made the effort to adapt her entirelifestyle to coexist with their own. In conclusion, though it may seem Cleopatra was only a pretty face with aalluring attitude she truly displayed the qualities of a great and memorable rulerand leader. Although there were multiple factors in her life that threatened herposition on the thrown such as her relationship with her brothers and thepotential conquering of Egypt by both Rome and Greece. This only motivatedand determined her to manipulate and persuade her way to the top, she wasEgypt's greatest ruler by far. Even in her death she displayed how she was theone to have the last word, paying attention to Cleopatra's life and history as awhole she truly was an individual of high intellect, a persuasive speaker and apolitical prodigy.