

Cleopatra assignment

People



Cleopatra Assignment What does it tell us about Plutarch's view of the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra? Plutarch views the relationship between Antony and Cleopatra as one where Cleopatra uses manipulation, temptation and obsession to control Antony. She is viewed as a fatal influence on Antony and he seemed powerless to resist her charms. In the eyes of Rome, Antony was changing from a veteran statesman and warrior to that of an effeminate love sick juvenile on the road to destruction.

At the very beginning of the passage Life of Antony, Plutarch states Cleopatra is 'ever contributing some fresh delight and charm to Antony's hours of seriousness and mirth' but there is no hint of love or romance which was viewed as showing a sign of weakness. The Romans did not value romantic love and this infatuation was another indication to Plutarch of Antony's self indulgence and complete lack of self-control.

Plutarch then adds she 'kept him in constant tutelage and released him neither night or day' playing dice, drinking and hunting with him showing an obsessiveness and a leading role in this relationship and never letting Antony out of her sight. His infatuation for Cleopatra was seen as a failing and Cleopatra treated Antony with disdain and mockery, all was on her terms and Antony seemed powerless to resist her charms.

Antony goes to great lengths to impress Cleopatra, for example he cheats when fishing by ordering "his fishermen to dive down and secretly fasten to his hook some fish and Cleopatra goes along with this and humours him by pretending to "admire her lover's skill". Cleopatra then confides in her friends about Antony's 'skill' and invites them to be spectators the following

day. This attempt at impressing Cleopatra in his fishing ability backfires, as she is one step ahead.

As soon as Antony has thrown in his line “ she ordered one of her own attendants to get the start of him by swimming onto his hook and fastening on it a salted Pontic Herring”. When Antony pulled in his catch revealing the kipper, which is not an impressive catch, this was met with great laughter by Cleopatra’s spectators and made Antony to look like a fool. It must be noted that this is a viewpoint from Plutarch from a series of character studies and not designed as a piece of conventional narrative history.