

# Suetonius compare and contrast paper essay

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It seems that Suetonius gives very good treatment to those emperors that he likes and very harsh treatment to those emperors that he dislikes, which says quite a lot about his integrity as a historian.

For example, as is mentioned in the introduction, he talks about Tiberius's bad character trait of miserliness in an absolutely negative way, even though his economy allowed him to avoid an increase in taxes. Suetonius also strongly criticizes Caligula, Nero, and even Augustus for that. So the point here is that Suetonius is not always honest when it comes to laying out and discussing the good and bad qualities of the Roman emperors. Nonetheless, *The Twelve Caesars* remains a uniquely valuable historical work of this day because it contains a lot of important information on topics that were ignored by other historians of the time such as public games, domestic relations of the emperors, and their private lives. There are many very good imperial lives from which one can choose to compare and contrast in *The Twelve Caesars*, and choose to contrast the lives of Nero and Augustus. Before diving right into it, it is important here to discuss what a good Roman emperor is, not only according to Suetonius, but to the Roman people at large. A good Roman emperor tries to serve a lot of people from all social classes. He takes care of people at every level of society, not just the nobility and the ruling elites.

He gets along well with the Senate. He respects their opinions and considers their interests and concerns. He works with them in the governance of the empire whenever he can as opposed to ruling alone. A good Roman emperor is morally upright. He loves his family. He treats them well. They have good

relations. He does not have sexual relationships with freeborn men and he does not rape married women and he does not hurt and kill innocent people.

His rule is characterized by justice. He is compassionate and forgiving. He does not hold a grudge against his enemies and seek vengeance on them, but rather forgives and embraces them. A good Roman emperor is caring and giving. He cares a lot about the people and tries his best to win their love and support by making their lives better and more comfortable and more fun. He rules for THEIR benefit. He knows well the hardship of the poor working class, so he tries to avoid increasing taxes, and does not waste taxpayer money. Now begin to contrast the lives of Nero and Augustus.

Nero is the epitome of a bad emperor, whereas Augustus is a great example of a good emperor. It seems obvious that Suetonius really likes Augustus and dislikes Nero. Suetonius probably really likes Augustus and rates him highly because he is the founder of a dynasty. Suetonius writes Augustus's biography in a magnificent way, does not mention bad things he did or his bad qualities (except him killing that one stoic critic and his bad quality of avarice), while he writes the biography of Nero in a very negative way.

What is funny, however, is that Suetonius forgot to mention one significantly good thing Nero did during his reign. Suetonius should have mentioned the fact that Nero tried his best to put out the great fire and to save as many people as he could and discuss his relief efforts after the fire. He did not.

In the negative aspects of his reign section, he does not talk about Augustus's great persecution of Christians, which is a significantly bad aspect of his reign. He should talk about Nero crucifying and burning Christians alive at <https://assignbuster.com/suetonius-compare-and-contrast-paper-essay/>

the stake in his garden. He should mention the fact that Nero ordered Christians to be thrown to dogs and lions. He should mention the fact that Nero used Christians as human torches.

Why did he leave that part out? It is hard to find similarities between Nero and Passion because Nero is an evil tyrant, while Passion is a good virtuous ruler. They are polar opposites. But, Nero was not always a bad emperor.

In fact, in his early reign, Nero was a good ruler and he did many positive things. He intended to be a virtuous ruler. He never missed an opportunity of being generous or merciful or of showing what a good companion he was (Nero, 10). He lowered heavy taxes, gave 400 sasses to the people, raised the annual salaries of distressed, yet impoverished senators to 500,000 sasses in some cases, and he gave free monthly issue of grain to praetorian cohorts (Nero, 10). To gain popularity with the people, he provided them with a lot of entertainment—youth games, chariot races in the circus, stage plays (Nero, 11). He even frequently participated in singing and acting contests held in public theaters, which senators strongly disapproved of since singing and acting were considered to be disgraceful professions for people of low status in Roman society. It is interesting that he even staged a naval warfare on an artificial lake of sea water which had sea monsters swimming in it (Nero, 12). Also, during his reign, he suppressed a great number of public abuses through the imposition of heavy penalties (Nero, 16). Nero did do some good things in his early reign, but he is principally known as an icon of evil tyrant who committed countless terrible, wicked acts.

He raped the Vestal Virgin Rubric and forcibly turned a boy named Sprout whom he was attracted to into a girl by castration, went through a wedding ceremony with him, and treated him as his wife (Nero, 28. ) He was indeed a wasteful spender of taxpayer money. He built a house stretching from the Palatine to the Aquiline, and when it burned down, he rebuilt under the name of ' The Golden House' which had a huge statue of himself, 120 feet high, standing in the entrance (Nero, 31). He once tried to retrieve this great hidden treasure in some African cave, and when became bankrupt he resorted to bribery and blackmail, which is something that a good emperor never does (Nero, 32). He tried to poison Britannica because he was jealous of his voice which was far more musical than his own (Nero, 33). He killed his mother Grapping and his aunt Domain.

He even kicked to death his wife Poppa because she implanted that he came home late from chariot races. There were ; o big plots against his life. They were both discovered. He killed all the senators that were involved.

He banished from Rome all children of the condemned men. They then starved to death or were poisoned (Nero, 36). He brazenly set common folks' property on fire and he burned down great public monuments and he even caused many people to take shelter in the tombs for six days and seven nights (Nero, 38). By contrast, Passion was a great Roman emperor. He Was a humane person who had a good share of adversity and uncertainty in his life. He was raised by his paternal grandmother Tarantula on her estate at Coos.

As emperor, he often visited her place and kept it exactly as it had always been to preserve his childhood memories intact. To honor his dear memories of her, he drank from a silver cup that belonged to her at religious festivals (Passion, 2). He behaved generously to all classes: granting subventions to senators who did not possess the property qualifications of their rank and rebuilding many cities throughout the empire that were destroyed by fire. He was the first to pay teachers of Latin and Greek rhetoric a regular annual sum of 100,000 sesterces (Passion, 17).

He was not the type of man who held grudges. He arranged a splendid match for the daughter of his former enemy Vitellius, and he even provided her dowry and trousseau (Passion, 14). He reformed the senatorial and equestrian orders by replacing the undesirables with the most eligible Italian and provincial candidates available (Passion, 9). When Passion came into office, there was a huge pile of lawsuits on his desk. He had to deal with them quickly so he set up a board of commissioners to settle war-compensation claims and make emergency decisions, which irately reduced the number of cases and this is significant because if he had not done this, most of the litigants would have died by the time they were summoned to appear.