

Cleopatra

[History](#), [Ancient History](#)



Synopsis I have always been interested with anything to do with Egypt, and thought that Cleopatra would be quite a fascinating topic to study. I was interested in learning more about her life and thought it would be a good topic to gain a better understanding of her. I thought the mystery of her death would be an interesting addition to this assignment. To do this I wanted to look at the details of Cleopatra's life and what events led up to her death. The three main theories of Cleopatra's death is suicide by snake bite, suicide by poison, and the possibility that she was murdered. I analysed this information, along with the information I had gathered about the background of her life and came to the conclusion that she either committed suicide by poison, or she was murdered. The information is too strong and believable for the poison suicide, however I personally think it is more believable that she was murdered, as people would have more to gain from this, rather than Cleopatra ending her own life over a broken heart. Who was Cleopatra, and how did she die? Queen Cleopatra of Egypt is the most well known of all the ancient Egyptian queens. She was born in Alexandria, Egypt in 69 B. C. during the reign of Ptolemy. Cleopatra was not Egyptian, but rather Macedonian, descended through a general of Alexander the Great. In 51 B. C. when Cleopatra was eighteen years of age, her father, Ptolemy Auletes, ruler of Egypt, died, leaving his kingdom and his will to Cleopatra, for her to become Egypt's new queen. Little did they know she would be the last, after her mysterious death in 30 B. C. Cleopatra's cause of death has presented many theories that have been contemplated for many years and continue to be to this day. The events of Cleopatra's life have influenced these theories including her very special relationship with Marc Antony, which is to be

believed the core motivation for two of the main theories. Suicide by snake bite is the first theory for the mysterious death of Queen Cleopatra, the second; suicide by poison and the third; murder. When Cleopatra took the throne, Egypt was in turmoil. There was a famine in the land, and the Roman Empire was growing larger and becoming a greater threat to Egypt. In 48 B. C. Cleopatra was removed from her position as queen because of her actions which displeased some of the more powerful court officials. She was overthrown by them in favour of her younger brother, whom they believed would be easier to influence, causing Cleopatra to flee the country. She did not return to Alexandria until Caesar arrived to obtain the country from her brother, Ptolemy in 48 B. C. She knew important meetings would be held about the country and did not want to be left out of anything, so she had herself smuggled in to meet Caesar wrapped up in a rug. It is thought that Cleopatra and Caesar fell in love at first sight and immediately became lovers. Caesar dethroned Ptolemy and placed Cleopatra on the throne as a puppet ruler for the country, and before long she became pregnant with their son. They traveled back to Rome together, where many disapproved of Caesar's affection for her. When the Senate in Rome realized that Caesar was preparing to position himself as the new king, they had him assassinated on March 15, 44 B. C. Cleopatra was afraid for her life and that of her child, so she fled back to her home in Alexandria. When she returned, she had her brother Ptolemy XIV killed and regained the throne, making her four-year old son her coregent, always watching to seek the next man of power in Rome. In 41 B. C. , Mark Antony invited Cleopatra to Tarsus where they met and became lovers, despite his already existing wife. The two spent

much time together and once Antony had finally divorced his wife, the Western part of the world had to acknowledge his relationship with Cleopatra. By doing this, he put himself at odds with the forces of Rome, and made himself the enemy of Octavian, the emperor. In 31 B. C. Octavian's army defeated Antony in Greece. He sent for Cleopatra, but was lied to and told that she was dead. When he heard this news, he committed suicide with his own sword. Cleopatra eventually came to him before he died, and stayed with him during his final moments. After Antony's death, Cleopatra was taken to Octavian, where she was told that she would be displayed as a slave to all of the countries that she had ruled over. This would bring her great suffering and humiliation so she had her servants bring her a poisonous asp hidden in a basket. Her religion believed that if one died by snake bite, they would become immortal. She died on August 12, 30 B. C. , when she was only 39 years old. It has been documented that the snake bit Cleopatra on the arm, but there have also been reports that the snake bit her on the chest. This incident was followed with a note asking to be buried with Antony. However, this method of suicide has been believed to be unlikely because it has too many contradictions. According to previous accounts, this method did not seem to be in Cleopatra's nature as she was portrayed as a smart, charismatic woman who had shown great strength and courage. This makes it hard to believe that Cleopatra would resort to a method of death that involved so much pain, instead of researching a quick and painless method. Along with this is the lack of evidence of a snake in the mausoleum and the temperature for August would have been too warm for a snake to be with her at her time of death. Although the theory of suicide by

snake bite has been the most popular over time, there are too many contradictions and missing or incorrect components for this theory to be correct. The second theory for Cleopatra's death is that she committed suicide by poisoning herself, again, because of the loss of Antony. It has been known that Cleopatra studied different poisons to find the most effective and it is said that she kept poison in a hollow comb in her hair. German historian, Christoph Schaefer believes that hemlock, combined with wolfsbane and opium, may have been the deadly combination that led to death of Queen Cleopatra, based on the materials that would have been available to her at that time. It also fits the profile as this would have been the smarter option, because it would have been quick and painless. The third theory is that Queen Cleopatra was murdered. A criminal profiler found that Cleopatra did not fit the normal profile for a suicide victim, no matter how much she may have loved Antony. Cleopatra was a strong woman, and had nothing to gain by dying, which made the two suicide theories unstable and unbelievable. These facts support the theory that Cleopatra may have been murdered. Cleopatra was the last Queen to rule before the Roman takeover. This was a time when it was common for rulers to be murdered. It has been speculated that Octavia sent men to kill Cleopatra and commanded them to make it look like a suicide. The fact that Cleopatra didn't fit the profile for a suicide victim, combined with what could be gained from her death makes this theory more plausible. In addition to this, upon Cleopatra's death, Octavia became the new pharaoh, which proves he had the motive to kill her. Cleopatra was a strong powerful, woman, who had an extremely eventful life, and a mysterious, puzzling death. There is no uncertainty that

our historical knowledge of Cleopatra will continue to grow. So as we see the world and our association with bewildering situations continually change -the reputation and portrayal of Cleopatra will continue to develop, along with the many theories that give insight into her life and death. Bibliography

<https://heritage-key.com/blogs/ann/did-cleopatra-prefer-poison-suicide-snake> * Informed me on how the snake bite theory could be proven wrong and good information on the poison theory. https://penelope.chicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia_romana/miscellanea/cleopatra/rixens.html * This

site had good visuals with a recreated image of the ' death scene'. This provided some good information on th

e background with Antony and Octavia, as well as some details about the snake bite theory. <https://www.kingtutshop.com/freeinfo/cleopatra.htm> *

This provided some good background information on Cleopatra, as well as some good information on the background of Cleopatra's family.

<https://ancienthistory.about.com/od/cleopatra/a/Cleopatra.tm> * This had some good information on Cleopatra's relationship with Julius Caesar, and their first meeting, but did not help my investigation much. I was

disappointed to find it did not have much information into the different death theories. MacDonald, F. (2003) Cleopatra: Queen of the Kings. Dorling

Kindersley Ltd. Great Britain. * I found this book to have some quite good information about the three different death theories, I think this was a good help overall. It was set out nicely, visually as well.

<https://assignbuster.com/cleopatra/>