

How much do you
think octavian's rise,
up to the siege of
persia essay sample



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Octavian's rise to the powerful position he held at the time of the siege of Persia, was considerably rapid, especially at such a young age. It is impossible to name one element as the root of his success, since there are many different factors that contributed to this swift ascension to power. Julius Caesar played an important part in introducing Octavian to the Political scene, and for giving him a head start in his career. Caesar had him elected to the college of pontiffs, and at the age of sixteen, he was allowed to join Caesar in his African triumphs.

Caesar obviously held Octavian in the highest esteem, and in Suetonius, Augustus Ch. it says, " This action delighted Caesar, who, moreover, soon formed a high estimate of Augustus' character... " His opinion of Octavian goes beyond this to that of fatherly affection. Augustus Caesar, by David Shotta, Ch. 3, " The avuncular role appears to have become more paternal" Soon after this Caesar changes his will and named Octavian as his adopted son and heir. This was vital for Octavian's rise, since without it he would never have had the opportunity to gain political power. He used this connection to his advantage since throughout his career he used Caesar's legacy and popularity as propaganda to increase his power.

Another man who had a great influence on Octavian's rise is Mark Antony. At first Antony underestimated the young heir, to what he considered to be rightfully his, and was quite hostile toward him, checking his power: Ancient Rome, Pamela Bradley, " Antony blocked Octavian's attempts to make his adoption made legally valid and refused to hand over Caesar's money" The two soon united (Second Triumvirate) in the force against the Republicans, and Antony and his legions proved to be a great help in defeating them.

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Octavian can however credit some of his overall success to his military achievements. On his own enterprise and expense he raised an army from veterans of Caesar's army. Although there are some arguments in opposition, it is generally believed that he was a good military leader- Suetonius, Augustus Ch. 10, " he showed not only skill as a commander but courage as a soldier". He seems to have been quite good at preparing troops for battle, " he exercised his crews all one winter" (Suetonius, Augustus, Ch. 6) Also, he obviously understood the tactics of the military engagements he was involved with, since when he realized that defeating Antony would leave his father's assassins in control of the state, he swiftly switched sides.

Octavian switched sides many times; sometimes fighting for the Republicans and sometimes for the Caesarians. His opponents were almost always different- Antony, Brutus and Cassius, Lucius Antonius and Sextus Pompeius. This shows that his military action was not against or in defiance of a particular enemy, but for a greater cause- avenging his father's death and for gaining strength and status- Shotta Ch. , " Octavian's stature grew with success; the armies run by himself and Agrippa achieved successes which could be advertised as crucial to Italy's security" This is also an example of Octavian using propaganda to increase support for himself.

He was constantly emphasising his link with Caesar, as a sort of mandate to his authority. Certain decisions made by the Senate, especially early in Octavian's career, gave him power that he could not have achieved otherwise. The Senate legalised his position by the grant of propraetorian imperium. What he has done is to encourage, not check, the ambition and desire for power of this youth"- Bradley, Pg 401.

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What they were doing was using him to get rid of Antony, planning to dispose of him when convenient. However, Octavian turned against them and used the authority they had given him to his advantage, and it really was an advantage, because ordinarily he would have had to wait 20 years to be eligible for that position of power which the senate gave him. There are many instances like the above, where malicious acts of others turn around to Octavian's advantage.

Also on several occasions coincidences, example- The comet of Caesar's soul appearing during the games, help him gain popularity. Octavian appears to have a great deal of luck- often narrowly escaping death. This brings the question of fate into the equation. Perhaps Octavian was destined to rise to power... It is quite clear that Octavian was a unique young man with initiative, boldness and skill which assisted him in his rise to power. However he could not have done it alone. The merits and miscalculations of others were equally important in his conquest.