

Cleopatra VII

WORKSHEET A

When Cleopatra VII was born, the Pyramids at Giza were already 2,500 years old. In 51 BC Ptolemy Auletus died, leaving his kingdom to his eighteen-year-old daughter, Cleopatra VII, and his son, Ptolemy XIII. Cleopatra was the third in a family of six. She had two older sisters, Cleopatra VI (who died when she was a child), and Berenice IV (who was beheaded at her father's command), one younger sister and two younger brothers.

Cleopatra became the ninth ruler in the Ptolemy family dynasty. Ptolemy I had been a general from Macedonia in the army of Alexander the Great (from whom the Egyptian capital's name, Alexandria, was taken). So, even though the Ptolemy family ruled Egypt for more than 300 years, they were not actually Egyptians. However, they accepted the laws of the Egyptians and one of those laws stated that a queen must take a brother or son as husband, regardless of his age. Cleopatra (who, judging by the image seen on Egyptian coins, was not beautiful) married her brother, Ptolemy XIII, when he was twelve.

Egypt was under the protection of Rome at the time but Cleopatra and her brother/husband were locked in conflict with each other and on the verge of starting a civil war. Julius Caesar came to sort things out in 48 BC and immediately fell in love with Cleopatra. In the civil war that followed (known as the Alexandrian War) Ptolemy's generals were killed and Ptolemy drowned in the Nile while trying to escape. Cleopatra became the ruler of Egypt. However, according to Egyptian law she had to marry her other brother, Ptolemy XIV, who was eleven.

To celebrate their victory against Ptolemy XIII, Cleopatra and Caesar took a holiday cruise up the Nile, and while they were away she became pregnant. They named their baby Caesarion. Shortly after his birth Caesar returned to Rome and Cleopatra followed a year later. However, in 44 BC Caesar was assassinated and Cleopatra had to leave Rome. On her return to Egypt she had her husband Ptolemy XIV murdered and so she and her son Caesarion, who became Ptolemy XV, began to rule Egypt together. He was 3.

Egypt was falling into ruin. Rome was in the hands of the Triumvirate, which consisted of Octavian (Julius Caesar's adopted son, later known as Augustus), Lepidus and Marcus Antonius (Mark Antony). In 41 BC Antony met and fell in love with Cleopatra. Almost immediately, Cleopatra announced another pregnancy. Meanwhile, Mark Antony returned to Rome and had to marry Octavian's sister to keep the peace. He stayed in Rome for four years.

Cleopatra gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl. Finally, Mark Antony returned to Egypt and Cleopatra; a move which Octavian disapproved of. They had another son in 36 BC and Mark Antony had mixed fortunes in war. By 34 BC Cleopatra and Mark Antony were behaving like gods in front of the people, which was very unpopular. When Mark Antony divorced Octavian's sister in 31 BC things got much worse for him. Octavian attacked and defeated Mark Antony at Actium. Mark Antony killed himself and Octavian took Cleopatra prisoner. Octavian had Ptolemy XV killed but Cleopatra managed to take her own life. She arranged for a basket of figs containing an asp, a type of cobra, to be smuggled into her room. One bite from the snake was enough. The last Pharaoh of Egypt was dead at the age of 39. The Romans were the new rulers.

20 facts about Cleopatra?

WORKSHEET B

How much can you remember about Cleopatra? Read the statements below and tick (✓) a box on the right according to whether each statement is true or false according to the text.

	TRUE	FALSE
1. She was the eldest child and only daughter in her family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. A pyramid was built at Giza to celebrate her birth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Her Egyptian roots can be traced back to 2500 years before her birth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Cleopatra's sister was also called Cleopatra.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The Egyptian capital Alexandria was named after her mother.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. She married her brother.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. When she married she was twelve and her husband was eighteen.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Egypt was under the protection of Rome at the time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. She had a love affair with Julius Caesar.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Egyptian coins show us her extraordinary beauty.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. She had a son with Julius Caesar, who they called Caesarion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. She had an affair with Roman general Mark Antony.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. She had three children by Mark Antony.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. The son she had with Caesar became king of Egypt.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. She had an affair with Roman general Octavian.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. She had two children by Octavian.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Octavian had Mark Antony killed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Octavian was Julius Caesar's adopted son.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Cleopatra committed suicide by swallowing poison.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. She was just 26 years old when she died.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>