

## Who was Cleopatra, and how did she become the queen of Egypt?

The Queen of Egypt didn't belong to Egyptian ethnicity. She was the daughter of Ptolemy XII, who was a descendant of Greek general Ptolemy who took reigns of Egypt in 323 BC, after the death of Alexander the Great.

Cleopatra's father Ptolemy XII was expelled from Egypt in 58 BCE. He was returned to power in 51 BCE by the Romans. Here, it is important to mention that by 168 BC, Egypt was controlled by Rome. Ptolemy died the same year he came back to power and the throne of Egypt went to his daughter Cleopatra who became co-regent with Ptolemy XIII, her brother.

Ptolemy XIII and his advisors did not want Cleopatra on the throne, and so, they decided to conspire against her. Cleopatra was expelled from Alexandria, the capital city of Egypt and was removed from the throne. This made her brother the only Pharaoh in Egypt once again. In an attempt to regain control of Egypt, Cleopatra came up with a plan to get help from her friend and ally in Rome, Julius Caesar.

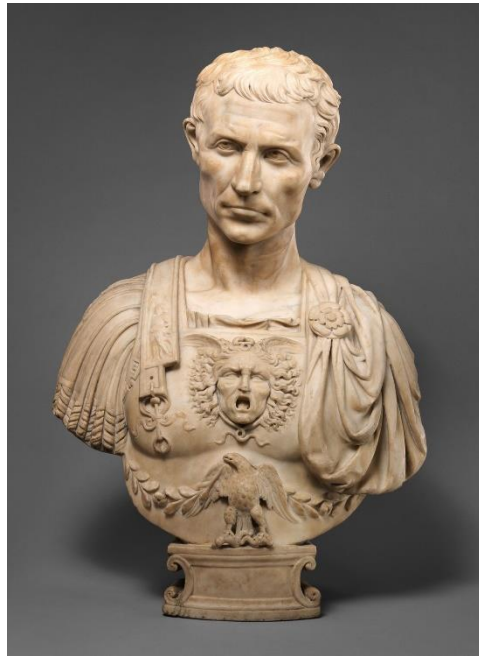
Cleopatra had herself rolled up in a rug and delivered to Caesar's home. Charmed by Cleopatra's clever plan, Caesar agreed to help her and went to war with Ptolemy XIII. It is said that Ptolemy died in the river Nile, trying to run away from war. Cleopatra, now married to her other brother Ptolemy XIV, was restored to her throne. In June

47 BCE she gave birth to Ptolemy Caesar (known to the people of Alexandria as Caesarion, or "little Caesar"). Whether Caesar was the father of Caesarion, as his name implies, cannot now be known.

It took Caesar two years to extinguish the last flames of Pompeian opposition. As soon as he returned to Rome, in 46 BCE, he celebrated a four-day triumph—the ceremonial in honour of a general after his victory over a foreign



enemy—in which Arsinoe, Cleopatra's younger and hostile sister, was paraded. Cleopatra paid at least one state visit to Rome, accompanied by her husband-brother and son. She



was accommodated in Caesar's private villa beyond the Tiber River and may have been present to witness the dedication of a golden statue of herself in the temple of Venus Genetrix, the ancestress of the Julian family to which Caesar belonged. Cleopatra was in Rome when Caesar was murdered in 44 BCE.

The vast majority of Egypt's many hundreds of queens, although famed throughout their own land, were more or less unknown in the outside world. As the dynastic age ended and the hieroglyphic script was lost, the queens' stories were forgotten and their monuments buried under Egypt's sands. But Cleopatra had lived in a highly literate

age, and her actions had influenced the formation of the Roman Empire; her story could not be forgotten. Octavian (the future emperor Augustus) was determined that Roman history should be recorded in a way that confirmed his right to rule. To achieve this, he published his own autobiography and censored Rome's official records. As Cleopatra had played a key role in his struggle to power, her story was preserved as an integral part of his. But it was diminished to just two episodes: her relationships with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. Cleopatra, stripped of any political validity, was to be remembered as an immoral foreign woman who tempted upright Roman men. As such, she became a useful enemy for Octavian, who preferred to be remembered for fighting against foreigners rather than against his fellow Romans.