

External assessment 2025

Stimulus book

Ancient History

General instruction

- Work in this book will not be marked.

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Source 1

Excerpt from Suetonius's *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*

And in the eulogy of [Caesar's] aunt [Caesar] spoke in the following terms of her paternal and maternal ancestry and that of his own father: 'The family of my aunt Julia is descended by her mother from the kings, and on her father's side is akin to the immortal Gods; for the Marcii Reges (her mother's family name) go back to [King] Ancus Marcius, and the Julii, the family of which ours is a branch, to Venus [a Roman goddess]. Our stock¹ therefore has at once the sanctity of kings, whose power is supreme among mortal men, and the claim to reverence which attaches to the Gods, who hold sway over kings themselves.'

Source: Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, translated by JC Rolfe, 1914.

Context statement

Suetonius (c. 69 CE – after 122 CE) was a Roman historian who wrote *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, a collection of biographies about the personal and public lives of Roman emperors.

The eulogy described in the excerpt was given circa 68 BCE, shortly after Caesar's entrance into politics.

1 ancestry or family line

Source 2
Roman Republican Coin



Source: Ghey, E, Leins, I & Crawford, MH 2010, *A Catalogue of the Roman Republican Coins in the British Museum*.

Context statement

This gold coin was produced by Julius Caesar's travelling military mint (facility to create coins) between 48 BCE and 47 BCE. On the obverse (left) is likely the head of Venus, goddess of victory, who Julius Caesar claimed as the mother of his family line. She wears a civic crown, which was given to Romans who saved the lives of fellow citizens from an enemy. On the reverse (right) from left to right are a Gallic shield, a Roman military trophy, a carnyx (Gallic war instrument designed to intimidate opponents) and an axe. The inscription 'Caesar' appears across the bottom of the coin.

Coins of this design were produced after the conclusion of the Gallic Wars (58 BCE – 50 BCE) and during the height of Caesar's civil campaign (49 BCE – 45 BCE) against Pompey and his allies. The Gallic Wars were a series of military campaigns fought by Julius Caesar against Gallic tribes. The people of Gaul lived in what is now modern-day France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Switzerland and Germany.

Source 3

Excerpt from Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*

[The] campaigns by which [Caesar] tamed [Gaul] ... [marked] a new start, and it [was] as if he had begun a new way of life, a new path of achievement. He showed himself as good a warrior and commander as any of history's greatest and most respected generals. One can compare Fabii and Scipios and Metelli; or Caesar's own contemporaries and immediate predecessors, Sulla, Marius and both Luculli; or even Pompey himself, whose glory at the time blossomed through the whole [sky] for every sort of military virtue. Caesar's achievements outdo them all. Some he excelled in the difficulty of the terrain over which he fought; others in the extent of the territory he acquired; others in the numbers and formidable qualities of the antagonists he defeated ... The campaigns in Gaul lasted for less than ten years, and in that time he took over eight hundred cities by force of arms; he conquered three hundred nations, he faced a total of three million [enemies] in successive battles, and he killed one million of these in action and took the same number again as prisoners.

Source: Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, translated by CBR Pelling, 2012.

Context statement

Plutarch of Chaeronea (c. 45 CE – c. 120 CE) was a Greek philosopher and biographer. *Parallel Lives* contains 23 pairs of biographies of famous Greek and Roman leaders, including Julius Caesar, who Plutarch paired with Alexander the Great. In his introduction to this pair, he wrote 'I do not tell of all the famous actions of these men, nor even speak exhaustively at all [about each of them] ... For it is not Histories that I am writing, but Lives ... a slight thing like a phrase or a [joke or witty remark] often makes a greater revelation of character than battles.'

The excerpt refers to men such as Sulla, Marius, both Luculli and Pompey, who were all renowned and highly successful Roman generals.

Source 4

Excerpt from Velleius Paterculus's *The Roman History*

It was in Caesar's consulship that there was formed between himself, Gnaeus Pompeius and Marcus Crassus the partnership in political power which proved so [destructive] to the city, to the world, and, subsequently at different periods to each of the triumvirs themselves. Pompey's motive in the adoption of this policy had been to secure through Caesar as consul the long delayed [approval] of his acts in the provinces across the seas, to which, as I have already said, many still raised objections; Caesar agreed to it because he realised that in making this concession to the prestige of Pompey he would increase his own, and that by throwing on Pompey the [hatred] for their joint control he would add to his own power; while Crassus hoped by the influence of Pompey and the power of Caesar he might achieve a place of [superiority] in the state which he had not been able to reach single-handed. Furthermore, a tie of marriage was cemented between Caesar and Pompey, in that Pompey now wedded Julia, Caesar's daughter.

Source: Velleius Paterculus, *The Roman History*, translated by FW Shipley, 1924.

Context statement

Velleius Paterculus (c. 20 BCE – after 30 CE) was a Roman historian, soldier and senator who wrote in the early years of the first century CE. An experienced soldier, he was appointed to a government position by Emperor Augustus (Caesar's adopted son). He then worked in other roles under Augustus's successor, Emperor Tiberius.

Source 5

Excerpt from Appian's *The Civil Wars*

In the meantime Pompey, who had acquired great glory and power by his Mithridatic war, was asking the Senate to ratify numerous concessions that he had granted to kings, princes, and cities. Most Senators, however, moved by envy, made opposition, and especially Lucullus, who had held the command against Mithridates before Pompey, and who considered that the victory was his, since he had left the king for Pompey in a state of extreme weakness. Crassus co-operated with Lucullus in this matter. Pompey was indignant and made friends with Caesar and promised under oath to support him for the consulship. The latter thereupon brought Crassus into friendly relations with Pompey. So these three most powerful men pooled their interests. This coalition the Roman writer Varro treated of in a book entitled *Tricaranus* (the three-headed monster).

Source: Appian, *The Civil Wars*, translated by H White, 1913.

Context statement

Appian of Alexandria (c. 95 CE – c. 165 CE) was a Greek official and historian with Roman citizenship who lived during the Roman Empire. He wrote *The Civil Wars* in the early to mid-second century CE, and the text survives in its entirety, although his sources are unclear. Appian believed the transition from Republic to Empire was of benefit to the Roman people.

Source 6

Excerpt from Scullard's *From the Gracchi to Nero*

Whatever [Caesar's] future plans may have been, his present power and conduct were sufficient to bring about his death. Many nobles were not reconciled to the overshadowing of their traditional powers in the Senate and resented his autocratic behaviour. They will have disliked the oath, by which the Senate bound itself to protect his life, while his dismissal of his personal bodyguard of Spanish horsemen enabled them to break it with greater ease. They naturally took offence at any lack of courtesy on his part, as when he failed to stand up to greet members of the Senate who went in a body to inform him of a grant of honours: he will have appeared to some as a patron receiving his clients ...

A conspiracy was formed and since many of the conspirators were men who had served Caesar faithfully and could expect further support from him, it must be assumed that their motives were not mean or petty. They regarded him as a tyrant and tyrannicide² became a duty in the interest of Liberty and the Republic ...

The motives of the conspirators were no doubt mixed. Some had private [disagreements] with Caesar, and some (e.g. Q. Ligarius) were Pompeians³ who had suffered in the civil war, but the conspiracy was in no way a resurrection of the Pompeian cause. Ex-Pompeians, as M. Brutus and Cassius, were [driven] by loyalty to the Senate and constitution, Brutus being influenced by Greek ideas of the duty of tyrannicide.

Source: Scullard, HH 1979, *From the Gracchi to Nero: A History of Rome 133 BC to AD 68*.

Context statement

HH Scullard was Professor of Ancient History at Kings College, London. He was a British historian who published extensively on Republican Rome.

2 the act of killing a tyrant

3 supporters of Pompey

Source 7

Excerpt from Cicero's *On Duties*

Behold, I give you [Julius Caesar] who fervently desired to be king of the Roman people and master of all other peoples — and accomplished it! If someone says this longing is honorable, he is insane; for he approves of the destruction of the laws and of liberty, and thinks their foul and detestable suppression glorious. Moreover, he who confesses that it is not honorable to rule over a political community that was and ought to be free, but useful for him who can do it, with what rebuke, or rather with what outcry can I attempt to wrench him from so great an error? For how, by the immortal gods, can a most foul and loathsome [murderer] of the fatherland be useful to anyone, however much he devotes himself to being named 'Father' by oppressed political communities?

Source: Cicero, *On Duties*, translated by BP Newton, 2016.

Context statement

Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BCE – 43 BCE) lived during the late Republic. He was a conservative politician and active commentator on the political events and public figures of the time, including on Caesar's career and actions. *On Duties* is one of his philosophical works, written in 44 BCE.

At the time Cicero was writing, monarchies were viewed unfavourably by the Roman people, particularly the nobles, as they preferred the Republican system of self-government through the Senate and assemblies, rather than concentrated power in the hands of a single monarch.

Source 8

Excerpt from Parenti's *The Assassination of Julius Caesar*

Some historians seem to think that Caesar's assassination was the outcome of a clash of egos. Being so overshadowed by this remarkable individual, the uneasy aristocrats⁴ decided to cut him down ... While exchanges between Caesar and his opponents were often [harshly critical], such incidents hardly explain why the optimates opted for murder.

...

Caesar had sympathisers in the Senate, including some of the eclipsed patrician families. He had active supporters among the equestrians,⁵ some of whom served as officers in his army. But the optimates, that highly conservative inner circle of wealthy and powerful aristocrats, shut him out coldly ...

The optimates had opposed Caesar well before he assumed dictatorial power, even before he first ran for consul in 60 BC. They sought to [hinder] him during his proconsulship by attempting to confer on him a province from which he would have gleaned no advantage whatever. They resisted his efforts to forge a way to high office because they detested everything he stood for. Caesar was not just another *popularis* who rallied the commonality — which would have been bad enough — but a brilliant charismatic one ... who pursued a broad program of redistributive reform⁶ ...

His power greatly alarmed them because he used it to work against, rather than for, their interests ...

[The optimates] presented their violent retaliation [to Caesar's reforms] not as an ugly class expediency⁷ but as an honorable act on behalf of republican liberty.

Source: Parenti M 2004, *The Assassination of Julius Caesar: A People's History of Ancient Rome*.

Context statement

Michael Parenti is an American political scientist who writes on a variety of political topics from the ancient to the modern world.

The excerpt refers to *optimates*, conservatives who opposed Caesar and were supporters of the Republic, in which the nobles and Senate customarily held power and authority. Caesar is typically categorised as a *popularis*, associated with *populares*, who supported the interests of the people rather than the wealthy.

Parenti mentions both Caesar's proconsulship and his dictatorial power. A proconsulship was an extension of the powers of a consulship, which was the most important role in the Roman political system. The role of dictator was even more powerful than the role of consul, giving the holder of that title supreme power. Caesar became dictator in 49 BCE. While the role of dictator was only designed to be enacted as a temporary and extraordinary role, Caesar was named dictator for life in 44 BCE.

4 wealthy nobles who formed the ruling class of Rome

5 the second class of people in Rome, below the aristocrats

6 to redistribute wealth and rights from the wealthy to the broader population

7 something advantageous or self-interested, even if it's not morally right or fair

Source 9

Excerpt from Nicolaus of Damascus's *Life of Augustus*

Later, in the course of winter, a festival was held in Rome, called Lupercalia ... Caesar was sitting in a golden chair on the [stage], wearing a purple toga.⁸ At first [Crassus] advanced toward him carrying a laurel wreath, though inside it a [crown] was plainly visible ... Caesar kept rejecting it, and among the shouts of the people, Antonius suddenly rushed up ... and placed it on his head. But Caesar snatched it off, and threw it into the crowd. Those who were standing at some distance applauded this action, but those who were near at hand [demanded] that he should accept it and not repel the people's favour ... There were many who were quite willing that Caesar be made king openly ... When Antonius crowned Caesar a second time, the people shouted in chorus, 'Hail, King'; but Caesar, still refusing the crown, ordered it to be taken to the temple of Capitoline Jupiter,⁹ saying that it was more appropriate there.

Source: Nicolaus of Damascus, *Life of Augustus*, translated by CM Hall, 1923.

Context statement

Nicolaus of Damascus (c. 64 BCE – after 4 CE) was a court historian to Herod the Great of Judea in the time of Emperor Augustus. The festival of Lupercalia was held on 15 February 44 BCE, one month before Caesar's assassination.

8 the colour purple was associated with power

9 king of the gods

References

Source 1

Suetonius. *Lives of the Caesars, Volume I: Julius. Augustus. Tiberius. Gaius Caligula*. Translated by J. C. Rolfe. Introduction by K. R. Bradley. Loeb Classical Library 31. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914.

https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Suetonius/12Caesars/Julius*.html

Source 2

Gold coin image © The Trustees of the British Museum https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1867-0101-585 Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.

Source 3

CBR Pelling (2011) *Plutarch Caesar: Translated with an Introduction and Commentary*. United Kingdom: OUP Oxford.

Source 4

Vellius Paterculus, *The Roman History OR the Compendium of Roman History, Book 2* 1924 FW Shipley (Trans)

https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Velleius_Paterculus/2B*.html

Source 5

Appian: The Civil Wars — Book II. Loeb Classical Library, Book II, Chapter 9 (trans. Horace White 1913) https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/appian/civil_wars/2*.html

Source 6

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Source 7

Newton, B. P. (2016). Book Three. In *On Duties* (pp. 125–172). Cornell University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt20d8b21.8>

<https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.une.edu.au/stable/10.7591/j.ctt20d8b21>

Source 8

Excerpts from *The Assassination of Julius Caesar: A People's History of Ancient Rome* - Copyright © 2003 by Michael Parenti. Reprinted by permission of The New Press. www.thenewpress.org

Source 9

Excerpted from Nicolaus of Damascus 1923 C.M. Hall (Trans.) *Nicolaus of Damascus' Life of Augustus : a historical commentary embodying a translation* Publisher: [Smith College], Northampton, Mass., <https://www.attalus.org/translate/nicolaus1.html>



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