

Claudius the God and His Wife Messalina Study Guide

**Claudius the God and His Wife Messalina by Robert
Graves**

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Plot Summary

Claudius the God and his Wife Messalina by Robert Graves is the sequel to I, Claudius. It is an autobiography accounting the actions and misfortunes of the Roman emperor, Claudius. Graves portrays Claudius as a sympathetic character rather than the bumbling idiot that he is seen as throughout history. Claudius the God and his Wife Messalina provides an insight into ancient Roman politics through a sympathetic character who makes many mistakes but never maliciously.

Tiberius Claudius Drusus Nero Germanicus survives his relatives and is crowned emperor at fifty years old. His friend, Herod Agrippa, is sent to Rome when he is orphaned. Herod Agrippa is accused of plotting against Tiberius so he flees. He later returns to Rome and befriends Caligula. Caligula's coachman overhears a treasonous conversation that leads to Herod Agrippa's arrest. When Marco smothers Tiberius, Herod Agrippa is released and Caligula becomes emperor. Caligula goes crazy with his power and replaces statues of the gods with statues of himself. Caligula dies, and Claudius accedes to emperor. The Senate gathers and discusses restoring the Roman Republic. Claudius does not want to be emperor, but there is no one else to clean up the mess that Caligula left of Rome; he rules as the lesser of evils. After the Senate realizes that they cannot dissuade Claudius from ruling, they offer many signs of respect as means of an apology. Messalina, Claudius' wife, helps him choose ministers and advance security measures. Herod Agrippa's warning to be wary of assassins causes Claudius to avoid the Senate for a month. Claudius is not learned in the laws and makes many mistakes during his first year at court. All is quiet in Rome, and Rome's finances are secure.

A rebellion arises in Alexandria when the Greeks oppress the Jews. The Governor of Egypt appeals to Claudius who orders the release of all Jewish prisoners, restoring the peace. When Herod Agrippa departs, Claudius organizes a feast during which they reaffirm their friendship and promise to include personal letters with their official correspondence. Herod Agrippa offends Claudius when he advises him never to trust anyone. Claudius buys his former mistress, Calpurnia, a villa near Ostia, where she retires with her friend, Cleopatra. Claudius orders punitive campaigns against the Chatti and the Istaevonian raiders. He learns the whereabouts of the Eagle and has it retrieved from Germany. Messalina has two children, Drusus Germanicus and Octavia, within two years. Claudius considers the possibility of converting Ostia into a safe winter harbor to avoid famine. He also constructs aqueducts and orders a channel to be built to drain Fucine Lake. Because of Claudius' ill health, Herod Agrippa recommends that Claudius see a Greek doctor, Xenophon. Claudius learns from Marsus that Herod Agrippa is fortifying Jerusalem, causing Claudius to lose faith in his friend. Messalina asks to sleep in separate bedrooms in order to avoid another pregnancy; she moves to the New Palace and attempts to sleep with her mother's husband, Appius Silanus, resulting in his execution when he tries to assassinate Claudius. The Senate decides that they need a stronger emperor, and a rebellion ensues but is thwarted.



Claudius declares war against Britain. During the war, Claudius suspects Herod Agrippa of executing an uprising in the east. Claudius finds proof of Myron's fraud and has him executed the same day that Aulus summons Claudius to Britain. Claudius joins Aulus in London and inspires the troops with his speech. The Romans defeat the Britons at Weald Brook using the ruse of the Heron King, but Caractacus escapes. Claudius declares Caractacus' empire a Roman province under Aulus' government. Herod Agrippa's letter to Claudius convinces the emperor that his friend believes himself the Messiah. The Senate votes five honors for Claudius, but Claudius refuses to allow them to give Messalina the title of "Augusta". Claudius participates in the triumphal procession through the city. At Messalina's request, he commands Mnester to obey Messalina in everything. Claudius examines religions, banishing many Jews and arresting many Christians. Herod Agrippa plots against Rome, but when he reveals himself as the Messiah, he realizes his blasphemy and, though he repents, dies of Herod's Evil. Claudius adds three letters to the Roman alphabet, celebrates the Saecular Games, takes a census of Roman citizens, revives soothsaying, and passes many edicts. Caractacus is captured but sues for mercy and is released.

Messalina suggests a divorce in order to avoid a prophecy that ordains her husband's death within a month. Claudius agrees, and they choose Silius for her to marry. Calpurnia warns Claudius of a great danger to himself and Rome because Messalina and Silius plan to restore the Republic; she also informs him of Messalina's many infidelities. Claudius orders the arrest of the entire wedding party. Messalina pleads for her life, but Claudius realizes her manipulation and orders her death. Claudius learns that the Britons worship him as a god and is disconcerted with the knowledge. Claudius marries Agrippinilla as a matter of form but does not take her as a lover. He allows Agrippinilla to rule him because he is tired of being emperor. He adopts Lucius Domitius as Britannicus' joint-heir and betrothes Octavia to Lucius Domitius. Claudius' engineers announce that the channel to drain Fucine Lake is completed, but it is not so. It will take another two years. Claudius predicts that he will not live to see it. He plans to send Britannicus away, but Britannicus refuses to hide from Lucius Domitius. Agrippinilla poisons Claudius, and Lucius Domitius reigns. Claudius ascends to Heaven where the gods vote against his deification. Mars drags Claudius to hell where Narcissus greets him and Caligula claims him as a slave. In 55 AD, Britannicus is poisoned. Lucius Domitius has his mother killed and is killed himself in 68 AD. The next year is a year of anarchy and civil war; the Republic is never restored.



Section I, ch. 1-3

Section I, ch. 1-3 Summary

Claudius the God and his Wife Messalina by Robert Graves is the sequel to I, Claudius. It is an autobiography accounting the actions and misfortunes of the Roman emperor, Claudius. Graves portrays Claudius as a sympathetic character rather than the bumbling idiot that he is seen as throughout history. Claudius the God and his Wife Messalina provides an insight into ancient Roman politics through a sympathetic character who makes many mistakes but never maliciously.

Tiberius Claudius Drusus Nero Germanicus survives his relatives and is crowned sovereign of Rome at age fifty. Although he is reluctant to rule, refusal would mean the death of himself, his wife, Messalina, and their unborn child. His story is written to justify the course he has taken in his thirteen years of power. The story of Herod Agrippa, the Jewish King, runs parallel with Claudius' story. Herod Agrippa's family originally came from Edom; his grandfather, Herod, flees to the Roman Governor of Syria after putting Jewish citizens to death. Antony and Augustus crown him the King of the Jews. Herod takes ten wives, two of which are incestuous, and dies of the worst known disease, "Herod's Evil". Due to accusations of their infidelity, Herod put his wife, Mariamne, and a chamberlain to death, along with Mariamne's sons. Mariamne's eldest son has a son, Herod Agrippa, who is sent to Rome after being orphaned. He is a mischievous boy and sees himself as a rogue. Herod Agrippa's teacher, Athenodorus foresees Herod Agrippa ruling in his native land, regardless of the ruthlessness of the boy's family. After Postumus is banished, Herod Agrippa attaches himself to Castor, and both have bad reputations.

When Herod Agrippa is accused of plotting against the emperor, Tiberius, he flees to Edom where he is made a local magistrate at Tiberias and marries Cypros. Herod Agrippa argues with his Uncle Antipas and flees to Antioch where Governor Flaccus treats him kindly because Antonia, Claudius' mother, favors Herod Agrippa. The Orientals bribe Herod Agrippa to persuade Flaccus to give a verdict in their favor, and Aristobulus discovers this and tells Flaccus who banishes Herod Agrippa and Cypros with no where to go. Flaccus grieves that he was forced to banish Herod Agrippa, causing Aristobulus to fall out of favor. Aristobulus sends him money to Claudius to invest and returns to Galilee. Meanwhile, Herod Agrippa decides to go to Rome, and his friend, Silas, helps Cypros and her children out of Antioch. Due to being in debt in Rome, Herod Agrippa travels to Alexandria. Cypros begs for mercy when Alabarach hears of Herod Agrippa's debt in Rome. Alabarach agrees to loan them money on condition of receiving the bulk of it upon their arrival in Italy and educating their children in Jerusalem as good Jews.

Herod Agrippa writes Claudius and Antonia asking for money; Claudius says they have none, but his mother insists upon helping their friend. Herod Agrippa arrives at Claudius' home and relates his adventures, causing Antonia to chide him for his lies and



dishonorable actions. She convinces Claudius to loan Herod Agrippa the money that Aristobulus sent to be invested. Herod Agrippa gains respect and earns money. One day, Caligula's coachman overhears a treasonous conversation between Caligula and Herod Agrippa. The coachman is arrested for theft and reports the conversation to Tiberius. Tiberius instructs Gemullus, who is tutored by Herod Agrippa, to keep a close eye on the Jew, but Herod Agrippa notices and becomes eager to have the coachman tried and executed. With Antonia's help, Herod Agrippa convinces Tiberius to try the coachman, which results in Herod Agrippa's arrest.

Section I, ch. 1-3 Analysis

The fact that Claudius states that he is writing his autobiography as a justification of the course he has taken in his thirteen years of power foreshadows both his accession to emperor and his ill-advised actions. The mention of Herod Agrippa's grandfather dying from Herod's Evil in the history of Herod Agrippa foreshadows Herod Agrippa's death from the same disease. Athenodorus foresees Herod Agrippa ruling in his own land, foreshadowing Herod Agrippa's reign and possibly Herod Agrippa's belief that he is the Messiah. When Herod Agrippa is accused of plotting against Tiberius and flees to Edom, this both displays his potential for revolt and foreshadows his attempt at revolting against Rome. It is poetically just that Aristobulus' money assists Herod Agrippa's status in Rome since it is Aristobulus' fault that Herod Agrippa is exiled from Antioch. Cypros begs Alabarch for mercy when Alabarch learns of Herod Agrippa's death, demonstrating her loyalty to her husband. The treasonous conversation between Herod Agrippa and Caligula foreshadows Herod Agrippa's imprisonment and Tiberius' death. It is ironic that Herod Agrippa urges the trial of the coachman since the trial presents evidence that leads to Herod Agrippa's imprisonment.



Section II, ch. 4-5

Section II, ch. 4-5 Summary

Caligula's Greek slave brings Herod Agrippa wine, which Herod Agrippa takes as a symbol of Caligula's loyalty. The slave also asks Marco to make Herod Agrippa's imprisonment as comfortable as possible. A German prisoner sees owl droppings on Herod's Agrippa's shoulder, which is a symbol of good luck. Marco smothers and kills Tiberius, and Herod Agrippa is released from prison after Tiberius' funeral. Herod Agrippa has the German prisoner freed as well. Herod Agrippa and Cypros are reunited; they travel to Alexandria to pay their respects to Alabarch and then visit their children in Jerusalem. Herodias is unsuccessful in rousing Antipas to jealousy concerning Herod Agrippa's position as the ruler of Bashan until she threatens not to speak or sleep with Antipas. Herod Agrippa learns of his uncle's intent to journey to Caligula and his letter, which charges Antipas with treason and intentions of war, reaches Caligula first. Antipas is exiled to Lyons, and Caligula gives Antipas' money and army to Herod Agrippa who returns to Rome and repays his creditors. Caligula goes crazy with power and replaces the statues of the gods with statues of himself. He also declares the Jews aliens and intruders because of their refusal to swear by Caligula's godhead. Caligula imprisons Alabarch and many other Jewish officials and decides to have his statue placed in the Holy of Holies in the Temple of Jerusalem. Petronius intends to obey but writes Caligula begging him to reconsider after meeting with resistance from the Jews. Meanwhile, Herod Agrippa throw an extravagant feast for Caligula, causing Caligula to promise a boon which Herod Agrippa claims as the restraint of not placing Caligula's statue in the Holy of Holies. Caligula agrees and sends a letter to Petronius that crosses paths with Petronius' letter by which Caligula is greatly angered. Caligula writes Petronius, advising him to kill himself, but news of Caligula's death reaches Petronius first.

Claudius becomes emperor after Caligula's death. Herod Agrippa mourns for Caligula but still congratulates Claudius. Claudius is hopeless because he does not want to be emperor. Although the Senate asks to meet with Claudius, his guards forbid it. Lupus kills Caligula's wife and child and searches for Claudius but loses his courage when he sees the crowd cheering for Claudius in the marketplace, a sign of his popularity. At the Senate's meeting, Sentius speaks about the freedom reforming the Republic would bring. Vitellius suggests sending for Herod Agrippa who advises against reforming the Republic. The Senate promises great honors to Claudius if he resigns supreme power. Claudius is against violence and tells the Senate that while he acknowledges their authority, he cannot oppose the wishes of his military advisors. Rufrius Pollius is appointed as Claudius' commander. Vinicius offers himself as emperor but Senate denies his offer and decides against reforming the Republic. Cassius still refuses to have another tyrant as emperor and offers Eutyclus in Claudius' stead, but the colonels of the guard refuse this idea. Cassius, Lupus and the Tiger quarrel but reconcile when they are left alone. Claudius is unable to sustain his Republic ideologies while in power. Cassius and Lupus are executed, and the Tiger kills himself rather than salute Claudius as emperor.



Section II, ch. 4-5 Analysis

The wine that Caligula sends to Herod Agrippa while he is imprisoned demonstrates their friendship and Caligula's loyalty; it also foreshadows Herod Agrippa's release. The owl droppings and the German prisoner's prophecy foreshadows Herod Agrippa's reign in the east. Herod Agrippa's release from prison after Tiberius' death fulfills the foreshadowing that occurred when he received the wine from Caligula. Herod Agrippa shows his respect and loyalty both through obtaining the release of the German prisoner and in his visit to Alabarch. Caligula's craze with power foreshadows his death. His intent to deify himself introduces the religious theme that pervades the novel. Herod Agrippa throws a feast for Caligula; this symbolizes their friendship, but it also demonstrates Herod Agrippa's political savvy since he intends to ask Caligula to refrain from placing his statues in the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem. Caligula's death fulfills the foreshadowing that occurs when he begins to go power crazy.

Claudius becomes emperor, fulfilling the foreshadowing that occurred during his introduction. Herod Agrippa mourns for Caligula and congratulates Claudius, simultaneously demonstrating his friendship and loyalty to both. Claudius does not desire to be emperor because he has Republican ideologies and does not believe in a dictatorship. Lupus intends to kill Claudius, beginning the assassination attempts on the new emperor and foreshadowing the many additional attempts that occur throughout Claudius' life. The Senate's dissent about returning to a Republic foreshadows the many problems that Claudius will encounter with the Senate. Herod Agrippa's discouragement to the Senate in regard to restoring the public is a political move that insures his own power base. The offer of Vinicius as emperor foreshadows the many revolts that occur during Claudius' reign. Claudius begins to lose his Republican ideologies as he embraces his title of emperor.



Section III, ch. 6-8

Section III, ch. 6-8 Summary

Claudius takes the throne because Caligula left a mess of Rome and there is no one else to clean it up; he rules as the lesser of evils. He accepts the title of Caesar but not emperor because that is a title won in battle. Claudius gives himself the right to veto Senate who offers many signs of respect as an apology. Three statues of Claudius are made, and Claudius removes the statues of Caligula at Herod Agrippa's advice. When a coin is minted with Claudius' profile, he is disappointed in his ugliness, but Messalina assures him that it is accurate and she still loves him. Claudius burns Caligula's books and kills Protogenes. Claudius admits to Messalina that his Republic ideologies are becoming blunted. He appoints his ministers of state with Messalina's help, keeping some of Caligula's former advisers. Messalina also helps Claudius decide on security measures, such as searching women and employing armed guards at banquets, after Herod Agrippa warns them to be wary of potential assassins. Claudius avoids the Senate for a month while he establishes his reign. He expels idle knights and fixes Rome's finances. Claudius abolishes some of Caligula's taxes and laws, including the view of treason as a crime. He recalls all those exiled on charges of treason. Claudius is not learned in the law and refers to his not being Telegonius, a revered law teacher, when he is confused in court matters. Part of a prisoner's sentence depends on their appearance at court. Claudius displeases the lawyers by encouraging familiarity. He admits that he makes many mistakes in his first year of court. He confirms Herod Agrippa's kingdom of Bashan, Galilee and Gilead, and adds Judaea, Samaria and Edom to the provinces over which Herod Agrippa reigns.

Claudius also converts Caligula's temple back to an annex of Castor and Pollux, holds festivals for the gods, and rededicates the Theatre of Pompey to Pompey from Caligula. Claudius disapproves of Roman nobles acting amateurishly. One day, he has them perform without professional help; then he has the professionals perform. The nobles are so embarrassed that they never dare act again. Claudius holds a large feast, during which he introduces bullfights, which become very popular. Sword fights are also popular, and he uses slaves who turned on their masters during Tiberius and Caligula's reigns; however, he sets up laws to protect slaves. Although Claudius does not celebrate as many holidays as Caligula, he sometimes proclaims Sportula, an afternoon of random games, and adds three new holidays to the Roman calendar in honor of his and his parents' birthdays. He restores his mother's titles and submits an essay written by his brother, Germanicus, for a prize, which he dedicates to Germanicus at the temple of Apollo. Per a promise to his grandmother, Livia, on her deathbed, Claudius convinces Senate to deify Livia. All is quiet in Rome; Rome's finances are secure. The trouble abroad begins in Egypt where the Greeks oppress the Alexandrian Jews causing them to rebel. The Governor of Egypt appeals to Claudius who orders the release of the Jewish prisoners. Peace is restored, and Claudius restores privileges to all Jews. He also restores young Pompey's title and betroths his young daughter, Antonia, to him.



Section III, ch. 6-8 Analysis

The Senate begins to support Claudius as they offer many signs of respect as a means of apology. Messalina's influence in Claudius' rule can be seen through her assistance in choosing ministers and her ideas to enhance security measures. Claudius avoids Senate for a month after being crowned, showing his distrust for the Senate. Claudius shows his modesty by admitting that he made many mistakes in his first year at court. He jokingly defends himself by stating that he is not Telegonius, a revered law teacher. Claudius shows his friendship toward Herod Agrippa by confirming Herod Agrippa's leadership of Bashan, Galilee and Gilead; he also adds Judaea, Samaria and Edom to his friend's kingdom. The trouble abroad begins in Alexandria; this demonstrates Claudius' ability to assuage disputes as well as foreshadows many other problems abroad.

In this section, Claudius demonstrates many of his efforts to reform Rome. He removes the statues of Caligula. He expels idle knights and reforms Rome's finances. Claudius also ceases the celebration of many of Caligula's holidays. Through Claudius' efforts, the finances in Rome become more secure. Claudius also shows respect to the gods by converting Caligula's temple back into an annex to Castor and Pollux, as well as rededicating the Theatre of Pompey back to Pompey. He additionally shows respect to his family by celebrating his parents' birthdays as holidays and submitting an essay that his brother had written for a prize, which he dedicates to Germanicus in Apollo's temple. Claudius demonstrates his respect for ancient families by not only restoring young Pompey's title but also betrothing his daughter, Antonia, to young Pompey.



Section IV, ch. 9-11

Section IV, ch. 9-11 Summary

Before Herod Agrippa leaves Rome to return to Jerusalem, Claudius organizes a feast during which the two affirm their friendship, agreeing to include private letters with their business correspondence. Claudius is uncomfortable and offended when Herod Agrippa advises him never to trust anyone. Herod Agrippa returns to Palestine amidst a glorious welcome and many honors. He replaces the High Priest, Jonathan, after Jonathan offends him. Herod Agrippa resides in Jerusalem. He writes to Claudius concerning his disappointment in Silas, his Master of Horses. Silas is rude to Hasdrubal, the harbormaster of Sidon, and when Cypros rebukes Silas, he is rude to her as well, resulting in his imprisonment. Herod Agrippa punishes some young Greeks for placing Claudius' statue in the Jewish synagogue despite Claudius' edict forbidding any such thing.

Meanwhile, Claudius buys a villa near Ostia for his former mistress, Calpurnia; Calpurnia and her friend, Cleopatra, retire from prostitution and live in the villa comfortably. The Germans raid the Rhine border and Galba, the commander of Roman forces and a strict disciplinarian, deals with the situation. Claudius is pleased when he hears that Galba has a good opinion of him, and Claudius promises to give his generals a free hand in ordered campaigns. Galba begins a punitive campaign against the Chatti for failing to respect their borders while Gabinius initiates a punitive campaign against the Istaevonian raiders. Claudius bribes German slaves into revealing where in Germany the Eagle is hidden, increases Galba and Gabinius' forces and sends them on their expeditions; all campaigns are successful and the Eagle is retrieved. A ballad, "Claudius and the Eagle", is composed, and Claudius enjoys some of the verses though it is not flattering to him, portraying him as an idiot.

Messalina has a son by Claudius and names him Drusus Germanicus. Claudius learns the pride of fatherhood; though he has other children, he does not love his wives while he is passionately in love with Messalina. Messalina hires a nurse for her son and has a daughter, Octavia, only eleven months later. Claudius' engineers finish a report on the possibility of converting Ostia into a safe winter harbor to avoid famine, but they predict it will take ten years to complete and will be very expensive. Claudius checks the palace archives and finds plans from Julius Caesar's time for the same scheme that predict it will only take four years and will be much less expensive. Claudius frightens the local corn-factors into loaning him money for the conversion. Vitellius praises Egyptian architecture, emphasizing that it is the work of a dictatorship, not a republic, but Claudius refutes these ideas, clinging to his Republican ideologies. Messalina praises Vitellius when he retrieves her lost slipper. Claudius also works toward constructing aqueducts and draining Fucine Lake.



Section IV, ch. 9-11 Analysis

The feast that Claudius organizes before Herod Agrippa's departure demonstrates his loyalty and friendship. Their agreement to include private letters with their business correspondence further demonstrates their friendship, but it also foreshadows Claudius' discovery of Herod Agrippa's mutinous ways. It is ironic that Herod Agrippa advises Claudius never to trust anyone; it also foreshadows the truth of this statement because Claudius trusts Herod Agrippa and Messalina more than anyone, and both betray him. Herod Agrippa replaces the High Priest Jonathan for offending him, demonstrating his pride. He also demonstrates his pride by imprisoning his long-time friend, Silas.

Claudius shows his loyalty and respect for Calpurnia by buying her a villa near Ostia. Galba and Gabinius' military campaigns foreshadow the additional military campaigns that Claudius orders. Claudius demonstrates his intelligence and cunning in obtaining information about where in Germany the Eagle is located. He shows his good humor and simplicity by enjoying the ballad, "Claudius and the Eagle", even though it mocks him. Drusus Germanicus, or Brittanicus, and Octavia are born. Though they are not his first children, it is through them that Claudius learns the joy of fatherhood because of his love for their mother, Messalina. Claudius' plan to convert Ostia into a safe winter harbor provides more evidence of his plans for reform as well as demonstrates his concern for the Roman people. His research in the archives to find a less expensive and less time-consuming plan shows his intelligence. His intent to reform Rome is also seen in the construction of aqueducts and the draining of Fucine Lake. Although Vitellius praises the architecture that results from a dictatorship, Claudius refutes these ideas, showing that he still intends to restore the Roman Republic.



Section V, ch. 12-13

Section V, ch. 12-13 Summary

Herod Agrippa suggests that Claudius see a Greek doctor because of his fatigue. The doctor recommends rest to avoid death, causing Claudius to claim that no Greek can cure him. Herod Agrippa recommends consulting Xenophon of Cos. Claudius likes Xenophon who recommends that Claudius avoid reading and writing and attempt to rest one hour after his principal meal. He prescribes bryony, and Claudius is cured. Messalina becomes jealous and suspicious of Claudius' niece, Lesbia, who often visits Claudius to express her gratitude for the Calabrian estates. Claudius reassures Messalina of his love for her and promises to repeat all of his conversations with Lesbia. In these conversations, Messalina sees significance in many things that Claudius does not notice. For example, when Lesbia condemns Seneca, Messalina suspects Seneca is Lesbia's lover and finds proof of the matter. When Messalina interviews Lesbia, Lesbia admits to adultery, causing her banishment. Lesbia threatens Claudius and Messalina, and the night before her exile, a man attempts to assassinate Claudius. The man admits to being Lesbia's freedman but states that he did not intend to murder Claudius. He alludes to the Mystery, but he is forbidden to explain and refuses to do so even when subjected to torture. Finally, the man is executed, as is Lesbia while Seneca is banished to Corsica.

The Alexandrian Greeks and Jews send envoys to Claudius in order to do him honor and complain about one another. Claudius thanks both groups for the honors but refuses to blame either, insisting instead that both stop fighting. Herod Agrippa writes Claudius to congratulate him, stating that he heard from Alabarch that Claudius' letter made him very popular and is posted up for the Alexandrian Jews to read. A few days later, Marsus informs Claudius that Herod Agrippa is fortifying Jerusalem, making it impenetrable. Claudius' confidence in Herod Agrippa is shaken, and he commands Marsus to report further events. He also writes Herod Agrippa, advising him to cease fortifications because if Jerusalem were invaded, it would be impossible to evict the invaders. Herod Agrippa ceases fortifications.

Claudius is too busy for the Consulship, though he adds Morocco to the Roman Empire as a province due to Geta's efforts. He delegates many of his duties as Director of Public Morals to Messalina. Because of this, Senate wants to title her "Augustus", but Claudius refuses because of her youth; he wants her to have something to look forward to in middle age. The Alexandrians make a coin with Claudius' head on one side and Messalina's head on the other. Messalina approaches Claudius and asks to sleep in separate bedrooms to avoid another pregnancy, and Claudius reluctantly agrees. Messalina moves to the New Palace, but it is seven years before Claudius learns what occurs there. Before Octavia's birth, Messalina convinces Claudius to recall Appius Silanus as an advisor and to marry him to Messalina's mother, Domitia Lepida. Appius Silanus and Domitia Lepida's suite is directly next to Messalina's suite in the New Palace. Appius Silanus is ill at ease with Claudius, but Claudius does not guess the



cause: Messalina was in love with Appius Silanus when she was a girl and tells him that Claudius suggested that she becomes his mistress. Appius Silanus has morals and refuses to have sex with his daughter-in-law. Appius Silanus attempts to kill Claudius to avoid the situation, is caught, and executed without revealing Messalina's mandate that instigated the affair.

Section V, ch. 12-13 Analysis

Claudius' fatigue is the first of many examples of his ill health and the reason for the rumors that he is a cripple. Herod Agrippa's suggestion that Claudius see a doctor demonstrates his friendship. Messalina's suspicions and condemnation of Lesbia for her adultery is ironic since Messalina is the most adulterous character in the novel. Another instance of an attempted assassination is detailed when Lesbia's freedman attempts to murder Claudius. The envoys from the Alexandrian Greeks and Jews demonstrate that the contention between the two groups has not yet ceased despite Claudius' commands. This continued fighting foreshadows its further continuation throughout the novel.

Marsus' letter to Claudius conveying information about Herod Agrippa's fortification of Jerusalem shakes Claudius' confidence in his friend and foreshadows Herod Agrippa's revolt against Rome. Herod Agrippa ceases the fortifications when Claudius advises him to do so, showing himself to be politically savvy. The delegation of many of Claudius' duties as Director of Public Morals to Messalina shows his trust and confidence in his wife; it is also ironic that she is supposed to maintain public morals when she is extremely immoral herself. The honors that the Senate wants to bestow upon Messalina show that she is popular. Messalina's desire to sleep in separate bedrooms, as well as Claudius' statement that it is seven years before he learns what happens in the New Palace, foreshadows Messalina's infidelity.



Section VI, ch. 14-15

Section VI, ch. 14-15 Summary

Appius Silanus' execution spurns Vinicianus to insurrection. Many members of the Senate do not believe that Appius Silanus attempted to kill Claudius, and, shocked at many of Claudius' actions, they decide that they need a stronger emperor. The only way to get rid of Claudius is by force of arms, so Vinicianus writes Sarbonianus about what is occurring in Rome and asks for an army to oppose Claudius. Sarbonianus agrees. Claudius hears of the rebellion when Sarbonianus writes to terminate his allegiance to Claudius. Although Claudius is happy at the idea of renouncing the throne, he doubts Sarbonianus' promise of amnesty. Claudius reads the letter to the Senate, and Vinicius speaks out against Vinicianus. Claudius receives a unanimous vote of confidence and authorization to summon Sarbonianus to Rome. Sarbonianus' crew places him on an island, and he kills himself. Vinicianus, and most of the other rebels, also commit suicide. Claudius is nervous in the interim, and he rewards Sarbonianus' army for their refusal to revolt. Narcissus conducts the trials, but Claudius refutes the rumors that Narcissus was bribed to suppress evidence against certain noblemen. Fifteen rebellious noblemen are put to death, as well as a few women, including Claudius' niece, Julia.

Claudius is still emperor, and his dreams of a Republic are dashed since it is hard to resign in a moment of peace when there are no moments of peace. Senate suspects Claudius' good nature. The rebellion puts Claudius a few months behind schedule and confounds the finances. Claudius decides to return the charge of the Treasury to the original Treasury officials. He and Messalina make a thorough revision of the Roll of Citizens because a large number of unworthy people have obtained citizenship, but Claudius is unaware that Messalina accepts money for citizenship. He unwisely adheres to Messalina's advice about monopolies, empowering her to grant a large number of monopolies. Claudius pays close attention to the city's food supply and angrily offers a motion in Senate to maintain the good supply for the people of Rome. In fear, Senate agrees, and Claudius is later ashamed of his ill temper. Though he apologizes, his words are used against him by his enemies. Claudius is reconciled to the Senate. Because the revolt occurred due to Appis Silanus' execution, Claudius places his oldest son, Marcus Silanus, as Consul and promises to betroth Octavia to his youngest son, Lucius Silanus.

Section VI, ch. 14-15 Analysis

The execution of Appius Silanus leads to a revolt that is lead by Vinicianus. The Senate's distrust in Claudius' statement that Appius Silanus attempted to kill him leads many to decide that they need a stronger emperor. This demonstrates the instability of the Roman government. After Claudius receives Sarbonianus' letter, the Senate demonstrates their divided feelings as Claudius receives a unanimous vote of confidence from the Senate and the authorization to summon Sarbonianus to Rome.



Rumors about Narcissus circulate, but Claudius shoots them down because he reviewed all of the cases that Narcissus tried, showing his interest and concern for Rome. Claudius repeatedly reminds the reader that he desires a Republic, though it is hard for him to resign as emperor because there is never the necessary peace to relinquish his throne. It is ironic that Messalina assists Claudius in making a revision of the Roll of Citizens since she accepts bribes to grant citizenship. Claudius' attention to the city's food supply shows his love for his people, while his apology to the Senate for his ill temper concerning his plans to maintain the food supply demonstrates his temperament.



Section VII, ch. 16-18

Section VII, ch. 16-18 Summary

Britain is occupied by the aboriginals by the Celts. Julius Caesar first invaded Britain one hundred and eight years earlier than Claudius did when Cassivellaunus organized a resistance against him, and he attempted to civilize Britain while dealing with the French rebellions. During Claudius' reign, Togodumnus and Caractacus reign in Britain; Togodumnus demands the return of British exiles and sacred regalia, but Claudius refuses and makes war against Britain. Claudius described Druidism with its three levels of priests, Druids, Bards and Ovates. The Druids cause trouble in France, and Claudius determines to strike a bargain with the arch-Druid after conquering Britain. Claudius determines how to defeat the Britons and sends four regular infantry regiments, four regiments of auxiliaries and one thousand cavalry. Claudius sends Narcissus to the troops, but the troops are displeased because Narcissus is unpopular. The troops mock Narcissus until Aulus restores order. On Claudius' birthday, August 1, the expeditionary force sails. The expedition is not punitive, and Claudius wants prisoners. Colchester is the main objective because it is the Catuvellaunian capital.

Claudius intends to stay at Lyons, but he receives a letter from Vitellius, his understudy, accusing Myron, the legal secretary, of dishonesty. Marsus writes Claudius about an incident at Tiberias that resulted in Herod Agrippa sending a letter claiming to be Marsus' enemy because Marsus insulted his guests. Claudius suspects Herod Agrippa of planning a general uprising in the east, and he writes Herod Agrippa with a lie of cheerful news in Britain in order to learn whether Herod Agrippa thinks himself the Messiah, the prophesied ruler of the Jews. Herod Agrippa becomes more religious. Claudius receives no news from Marsus and no response from Herod Agrippa for three weeks. Three weeks after landing, Aulus sends for Claudius. At first, Aulus meets little resistance. He finds the enemy assembled in Medway and catches the Britons by surprise. Geta is the hero of the battle. Aulus crosses the Thames, and Togodumnus' death unifies the Britons under Caractacus. The day that Claudius has proof of Myron's fraud and has him executed, he receives the summons from Aulus. Claudius sails from Ostia to Marseilles. Then he goes to Boulogne, where he finds the troops in good spirits. Claudius bases his plans upon his historical knowledge of Julius Caesar's attacks on Britain.

Section VII, ch. 16-18 Analysis

Claudius' recital of the Celtic occupation of Britain and Julius Caesar's first invasion of the island is an example of his learning. He shows his pride in his decision to make war with Britain because of Togodumnus' command. Claudius also shows his knowledge of Druidism and his political intelligence in his determination to bargain with the arch-Druid after conquering Britain. Claudius studies the records in the archives in order to determine how best to defeat the Britons based on previous wars against them that



failed. Aulus' ability to restore order after the chaos of the mockery of Narcissus foreshadows his importance in the war against Britain. Herod Agrippa's declaration that he is Marsus' enemy foreshadows his revolt against Rome. Claudius' journey to Britain foreshadows his military victory, as does Aulus' initial success in battle. Claudius demonstrates his intelligence and ability to plan by basing his military strategies on his historical knowledge of Julius Caesar's attacks on Britain.



Section VIII, ch. 19-21

Section VIII, ch. 19-21 Summary

Aulus does well in Britain, but enemy reinforcements arrive daily. Posides uses elephants with munitions in the war, and Claudius promises Posides high honors if he helps Rome win the war. Claudius joins forces with Aulus in London on September 5. They are happy to see each other. Claudius calls a council of war, and all members agree on a frontal attack. Claudius insists upon finding a way around the enemy, but his generals state that it is impossible. Posides reveals a track through the marshes through which the troops can march. Claudius prepares a speech to inspire the troops, but when he delivers his speech, he deviates and speaks from his heart. The enemy withdraws from Weald Brook, and Claudius sends the ninth regiment after them. A French soldier dresses as the Heron King, causing dismay to the British soldiers. Claudius sacrifices to Mars, eats and prepares for battle. He orders the army to move forward, and the Romans attack in the mist, which causes the Britons to believe the Romans use magic against them. The British forces are thrown into chaos and confusion. Caractacus escapes, ending the battle.

The Romans kills four thousand, seven hundred Britons and capture eight thousand while they only lose three hundred, eighty men and only six hundred Romans are wounded. The Roman cavalry attempts to overtake Caractacus at Chelmsford, but Caractacus disappears to ask protection from the men of South Wales. Claudius offers an offering of thanks to Mars. Three Romans are executed for violating captured women against Claudius' mandate. Claudius' stomach cramps due to his excitement over Rome's victory. They capture Colchester and ally with the kings of Icenians, East Kent and East Sussex. Claudius declares Caractacus' empire a Roman province with Aulus as the governor. His only regret is missing out on the opportunity of battling Caractacus one on one.

A Roman general must obtain Senate's permission in order to celebrate a victory. Claudius sends a request to Senate who grants his request to march the Army into the city. Aulus sends Claudius regular reports of the occurrences in Britain. One such report details the death of the King of Parthia and his insolent son, Gotarzes' accession. Bardanes, Gotarzes' brother, is gifted and plans to dispute the throne. Aulus advises Claudius to restore Mithridates to the Armenian throne. Claudius hears rumors that Herod Agrippa plots against Rome, but he is unsure whether to bide his time or summon Herod Agrippa to answer the accusations. Herod Agrippa writes Claudius, answering his questions about the Messiah, congratulating Claudius on his British victory, and asking to send his son to Rome. This letter convinces Claudius that Herod Agrippa believes himself to be the Messiah. Claudius pays his vow to Venus upon his return to Italy by rebuilding her temple in Sicily. He also builds a shrine to the nymph, Egeria.



Section VIII, ch. 19-21 Analysis

Aulus does well in Britain, foreshadowing his appointment as governor once Britain is named a Roman province. Claudius and Aulus are happy to see each other; this emphasizes their friendship as well as Claudius' general public appeal. When Claudius promises Posides high honors if he helps Rome win the war, it foreshadows Posides' assistance and desire to help. Claudius' deviation from his prepared speech demonstrates his love for his country and his countrymen. The use of the French soldier dressed as the Heron King emphasizes the Britons' superstitious beliefs and Claudius' cunning. Caractacus' escape seems to foreshadow more fighting. The comparison of the Roman and British losses demonstrates the extent to which Rome won the war. Claudius' offering to Mars shows his respect to the gods. The execution of three Roman soldiers for violating captured women demonstrates Claudius' justice, even in war. Claudius' stomachache due to his excitement over their victory is another example of his ill health. Claudius obtains Senate's permission to march his army into the city, which foreshadows the triumphal march. The background provided about the dispute over the Parthian throne foreshadows the later trouble between Bardanes and Gotarzes. More rumors about Herod Agrippa's disloyalty circulate, foreshadowing his attempt to revolt from Rome. Claudius becomes convinced that Herod Agrippa believes himself to be the Messiah; this foreshadows Herod Agrippa's declaration in accordance with this idea.



Section IX, chapter 22-24

Section IX, chapter 22-24 Summary

Senate votes for five more honors for Claudius: the Civic Crown, the Naval Crown, Britannicus (a hereditary title, the erection of two arches to commemorate his victory and the establishment of an annual festival to celebrate the day of his triumph. Messalina receives all of the honors that Livia received in life; Claudius still opposes the title "Augusta". Claudius prepares for his march into the city by given ornaments to all of the senatorial ranked soldiers in the campaign. Messalina accuses Justus of planning a revolt, though in actuality he learned of her infidelities, and advises Claudius to kill Justus, so Lusius Geta is named the new Commander. Claudius is very happy with the day of his march. He begins with a decoration ceremony and then holds three audiences, for the governors of provinces, for ambassadors from his allies, and for exiles. He agrees to personally review all of the exiles' cases. The procession marches to the city through the Triumphal Gate and passes along the Sacred Way. The procession consists of the Senate, followed by trumpeters, spoils of war, flute-players, captured chiefs with their families, public slaves and twenty-four yeomen. Next comes a four-horse chariot carrying Claudius and his children, followed by Messalina in her own carriage. Behind them march the winners of the Olive Crown, ranked officers, elephants, camels, the Heron King and Posides. The Roman cavalry and infantry end the procession that is followed by a cheering rabble. Veterans sing songs mocking Claudius. At the end of the procession through the city, Claudius dismounts at Capitoline Hill and goes through the customary performance, including the sacrifice of white bulls to Jove. Peace reigns the entire day. That night, a torch lit procession guides Claudius to the Palace. His triumph lasts for three days.

Messalina complains to Claudius that Mnester was rude to her several times during his absence, so Claudius summons Mnester and commands him to obey Messalina in everything. Mnester believes that she should only be obeyed in some things but yields to the emperor's command. Claudius continues his reforms in Rome, dismissing the Governor of Southern Spain from the Senatorial Order and examining new cults and religions. He forbids Roman citizens to attend Jewish synagogues and expels a number of Jewish missionaries; Herod Agrippa agrees with Claudius' decision, stating that he would do the same to promoters of the Greek religion in his country. Meanwhile, Bardanes raises an army in Parthia and marches against Gotarzes in Medes. The brothers meet, and when Gotarzes concedes his right to the throne, Bardanes grants him his life. Herod Agrippa plots against Rome, gathering allies and revealing himself to the High Priest as the Messiah. Claudius mobilizes his forces.

Herod Agrippa plans a festival, pretending to honor Claudius' birthday but no Romans attend. Herod Agrippa positions himself as a god but realizes his blasphemy when an owl passes, reminding him of the old German's prophecy in jail. Herod Agrippa claims he is ill and predicts his death from Herod's Evil within five days. He admits his deception and writes Claudius, admitting his crimes and repenting. He sends Helcias,



Thaumastus and Herod Pollio to Silas with an apology and summons which Silas rebukes. Helcias kills Silas, and Herod Agrippa dies. The Greeks seize Cypros and her daughters, but Cypros kills herself. The Jews are unmanned and cursed.

After Herod Agrippa's death, Marsus restores order in Jerusalem, appointing Fadus as the emergency governor. All of Herod Agrippa's allies in the revolt, except Bardanes, resume allegiance to Rome per Herod Agrippa's dying advice. Bardanes is distracted from his revolt against Rome by a war with Gotarzes during which he is killed. Marsus' term ends, and he returns to Rome. Mithridates is restored to the Armenian throne. The Jewish hope for a Messiah is kindled again by Theudas. The Samaritans and the Galileans fight, Cumanus is exiled, and Felin is set up as governor. Many new rulers are set in power. There are disturbances again at Alexandria. Halicus wins in battle with his rivals, and there is trouble farther north. Corbulo crosses the Rhine to compel the Frisians to swear allegiance to Rome and is angered when Claudius commands him to desist from his mission.

Section IX, chapter 22-24 Analysis

The five honors that Senate votes for Claudius demonstrate their respect and pride in their emperor. Claudius' continued opposition of Messalina receiving the title "Augusta" shows that he does not believe that she earned it, though he allows her to receive all of the honors that his grandmother received during her lifetime. Messalina's accusations against Justus demonstrate her manipulation since she intends to have Justus executed because he discovers her affairs and intends to tell Claudius. The decoration ceremony and the triumphal march demonstrate Claudius' pride in his British victory. He agrees to personally review all of the exiles' cases, showing his mercy and empathy. The fact that Claudius and Messalina ride in separate carriages during the triumphal march is symbolic since they are emotionally separated, more than Claudius realizes.

It is ironic that Claudius commands Mnester to obey Messalina in everything, since in this particular instance, Claudius would not do so if he knew the specifics of Messalina's commands. Claudius commands Mnester to sleep with his wife. Claudius' religious reforms parallel Caligula's early religious fervor, but Claudius does not lose his mind and claim to be a god. The mention of Bardanes and Gotarzes further foreshadows their importance in the Roman Empire. Herod Agrippa allies with neighboring kingdoms against Rome, fulfilling the foreshadowing that occurs throughout the novel. The owl that Herod Agrippa sees during his ceremony when he claims he is the Messiah parallels the owl that he saw while he was imprisoned during Tiberius' reign. Herod Agrippa's death from Herod's Evil fulfills the foreshadowing that occurs when the disease is mentioned during the history of Herod Agrippa. Cypros' suicide demonstrates her honor and loyalty to her husband. Marsus' involvement in restoring order to Jerusalem and the way in which Claudius summarizes the occurrences in the east serves to conclude all action that occurs outside of Rome and focus the attention of the reader completely on Rome and Roman politics.



Section X, ch. 25-26

Section X, ch. 25-26 Summary

Claudius celebrates the first annual festival in honor of his British triumph by distributing money to the needy populace. The astrologer, Barbillus, predicts a solar eclipse, an unlucky omen, on Claudius' birthday. Claudius reveals this to the people in order to discourage assassination attempts. Asinius Gallus attempts a revolt but is caught and banished. Although the harbor at Ostia is not quite finished, it is progressing and everything is going well for Rome and Claudius. Aulus consolidates the British victory by the addition of many Belgic tribes. Claudius' children grow strong, and Claudius reforms Senate. Claudius restores Greece and Macedonia to the list of Senatorial provinces. Messalina enrages Claudius against Asiaticus, which is the reason for the reformation of the Senate. She tells her husband that the eldest Petra brother revealed to Asiaticus that he had a vision of Claudius' severed head. Asiaticus is arrested and tried. He begs for an acquittal, and Claudius adjourns the court for twenty-four hours. Messalina advises Asiaticus to commit suicide, so Asiaticus sets his household in order and kills himself. Claudius tries and executes the Petra brothers. When Vinicius refuses to sleep with Messalina, she poisons him.

Antonia, Claudius' daughter, has been married to young Pompey for several years, yet they have no children. When he discovers that Antonia is bored, Claudius advises her to have children because raising a family will cure boredom. Antonia reveals that her marriage has never been consummated, and Claudius vows vengeance, having young Pompey killed. He marries Antonia to Taustus. Claudius also executes Polybius, his Minister of Arts, on Messalina's proof that Polybius is selling citizenships. In reality, Polybius is one of Messalina's lovers and, becoming jealous, he insults Mnester, Messalina's favorite. Claudius chides himself on the stupidity of not noticing that Messalina's headaches coincide with days that Mnester refuses to perform. Aulus returns to Rome. Claudius arrests leading Christians in Rome. He also adds three letters to the Roman alphabet, celebrates the Saecular Games, takes census of the Roman citizens, revives the ancient religious art of soothsaying, and passes many edicts. Ostorius subdues Mid Wales and South Wales, capturing Caractacus. Caractacus is brought to Rome where he begs for mercy at his trial. Because Caractacus is an honorable enemy, Claudius agrees to release him.

Section X, ch. 25-26 Analysis

Claudius' distribution of money on the anniversary of his British triumph demonstrates his love for his countrymen and his selflessness. His despair when he discovers Barbillus' prediction of a solar eclipse on his birthday demonstrates Claudius' belief in soothsayers and superstition. Asinius Gallus' revolt is thwarted. Claudius refers to the harbor at Ostia, demonstrating that he is still working on reforming Rome. Aulus' success in Britain reinforces his usefulness. Messalina demonstrates her manipulation



again in her ability to enrage Claudius against Asiaticus. She also shows her immorality when she poisons Vinicius for refusing to sleep with her. There is homosexual insinuation in the fact that young Pompey has not consummated his marriage to Antonia since he is found in bed with a male servant. It is ironic that Messalina convinces Claudius to execute Polybius for selling citizenships when she is selling citizenships. Aulus' return to Rome foreshadows a reform in Roman politics because of his impressive work in Britain. Claudius continues his religious reform through the arrest of Christians. He is also proud of the many reformations he makes to the Roman culture. Claudius' release of Caractacus shows his mercy and justice.



Section XI, ch. 27-28

Section XI, ch. 27-28 Summary

The Saecular games are practiced every one hundred to one hundred, ten years. The next round falls on the seventh year of Claudius' reign, the year that he plans to finish his reformations and restore the Republic. The games begin with the traditional ceremonies, specifically honor to Apollo, the reason for the games. Claudius' grandnephew, Lucius Domitius, takes part in the games. Lucius Domitius' father is dead and his mother is indifferent. A prophecy proclaims his fate to be as emperor of Rome, which has resulted in several assassination attempts. Claudius adds three letters to the Roman alphabet, though no one seems to care about this as much as he does, and he finishes the aqueducts. He also passes a law that a woman who marries a slave without his master's consent becomes a slave herself, while a woman who marries a slave with his master's consent does not become a slave but her children do. Telegonius' practice shuts down after Alabarch arrives and proves that Telegonius is his runaway slave. Claudius extends the Roman citizenship and takes a census which number nearly six million. All in all, he does his best as emperor.

One morning in August the year of the census, Messalina wakes Claudius to tell him that Barbillus predicts a violent death for her husband within a month. She suggests they divorce for one month to avoid the prophecy. He notes that one of them must marry in the meantime before they can remarry each other. They discuss potential husbands for Messalina and agree on Silas because he is insolent to Claudius. Claudius divorces Messalina, and she courts Silas, tricking him into having sex with her. The day that Claudius dedicates a granary in Ostia, while Messalina is home in bed with a headache, Cleopatra delivers a note to him from Calpurnia warning him of great danger to himself and Rome. Claudius feigns illness and rushes to Calpurnia. Calpurnia, Cleopatra and Narcissus reveal that Messalina is marrying Silas though Claudius is supposed to preside over the wedding in a few days. Silas and Messalina plan to restore the Republic. Calpurnia, Cleopatra and Narcissus tell Claudius about Messalina's many infidelities and deceptions. Claudius weeps.

Section XI, ch. 27-28 Analysis

The introduction of Lucius Domitius foreshadows his involvement in the rest of Claudius' story, especially in light of the prophecy that declares Lucius Domitius will be the emperor of Rome. The addition of three letters to the Roman alphabet demonstrates Claudius' literary ambitions and pretensions. Claudius finishes the aqueducts, demonstrating that he is still working on reforming Rome. He passes a law to protect women from unjust slavery. The fact that Telegonius' practice is shut down after he is proved to be Alabarch's runaway slave is ironic since Claudius referred to the renowned legal teacher during his first year in court. It is also paradoxical that Claudius works several times to reform the Roll of Citizens, but at this point, he extends the Roman



citizenship and brags about his census nearly reaching six million. Messalina's revelation about Barbillus' prophecy and her scheme to divorce Claudius is a prime example of her manipulation and scheming. Claudius' naiveté is seen through his agreement with her plan. Calpurnia shows her loyalty by warning Claudius of Messalina's scheme. Claudius weeps when he learns of his wife's many infidelities; this shows how much he really loves Messalina.



Section XII, ch. 29-30

Section XII, ch. 29-30 Summary

Xenophon administers medicine to cure Claudius' fainting spell. Claudius summons Turranius and Lucius Geta who confirm the accusations against Messalina, citing their fear of Claudius' anger as the reason for not telling him sooner. Claudius sends Narcissus as the captain to arrest the entire wedding party. As the soldiers arrive, the party is just breaking up due to Vettius Valens, one of Messalina's lovers. During a comic performance, Vettius Valens sees the soldiers and warns the wedding party, enabling Messalina and Silas to escape. Vibidia Vestal, an honored old virgin, comes to beg forgiveness for Messalina. Messalina also attempts to approach Claudius to beg for forgiveness, but Narcissus will not let her near him. Vibidia Vestal does not know about Messalina's promiscuity but begs Claudius not to act rashly. Claudius agrees, and Narcissus worries that Claudius will be too lenient with Messalina. Messalina sends her children to plead for her, but Narcissus waves them away. Claudius peruses a list of Messalina's lovers that numbers one hundred, fifty-six. He goes to Silius' house. The house was formerly Asinius Gallus' home, but Messalina buys it privately after Asinius Gallus was banished and presents it to Silius as a wedding gift. The house contains many of Claudius' family heirlooms. He proclaims that Messalina is an adulterous liar.

Claudius asks his guards what he should do about the conspirators, and his guards advise death; Claudius executes the conspirators. Silius gives a vague defense in his trial and asks to die. His request is granted. Messalina writes to Claudius, insisting on her love for him. He responds formally. She writes again, admitting her faults but never confessing to her infidelities, as well as pleading for the sake of their children. Once again, Claudius replies formally. Finally, Messalina writes a threatening letter to which Claudius does not respond. Claudius orders Messalina's execution but sends a messenger to advise her to commit suicide first. She is frightened to commit suicide and is executed. Messalina is deleted from the archives. Claudius wakes, feeling oddly, and learns that the Britons worship him as a god. Xenophon's medications disorder Claudius' wits, and he keeps forgetting that Messalina is dead. Claudius writes a poem, condemning his own stupidity. He begins to fear that Britannicus and Octavia are not his children. Claudius' three chief ministers, Narcissus, Pallas and Callistus, vie to present Claudius with his next wife. Claudius marries his niece, Agrippinilla, as a matter of form after Vitellius obtains Senate's permission to ignore the incestuous marriage. Claudius explains the accident of his deification to the Senate. There is a plague of vipers the year that Claudius marries Agrippinilla.

Section XII, ch. 29-30 Analysis

Claudius' fainting spell is another example of his weak health, but it also demonstrates his extreme love for Messalina. Turranius and Lucius Geta's confirmation of Messalina's infidelities show that many people knew about her adultery but were afraid to tell



Claudius because everyone is aware of how much he loves Messalina. Claudius foreshadows breaking Messalina's hold over him when he orders the arrest of the entire wedding party. Messalina's attempt to beg forgiveness of Claudius demonstrates her pride and her awareness of the hold she has over him. Narcissus also acknowledges this hold by refusing to permit Messalina to approach the emperor. It is ironic and hypocritical that Messalina asks Vibidia Vestal to intercede for her. The fact that Silius' home contains many of Claudius' family heirlooms demonstrates Messalina's extreme betrayal and furthers Claudius' belief in his wife's immorality. Claudius refers to his guards concerning what to do with the conspirators; this is a wise move since it allows him to escape the condemnation of ruthlessness or pride. Silius' honor is shown when he requests to die. His vague defense shows that Messalina manipulated him as well. Messalina's letters show her attempt at manipulating Claudius, followed by her anger when she is unable to do so. She shows pride and cowardice when she refuses to commit suicide. The erasure of Messalina from the public archives shows the severity of her crimes. The fact that the Britons worship Claudius as a god parallels Caligula's attempt to deify himself. Paradoxically, Claudius is discontent with this fact and tries to justify the mistake to the Senate. His decision to marry is political; the plague of vipers the year that Claudius marries Agrippinilla foreshadows her ambition and her part in Claudius' demise.



Section XIII, ch. 31-32

Section XIII, ch. 31-32 Summary

Claudius is married to Agrippinilla for five years and allows her and his freedmen to rule him. Claudius and Agrippinilla are not lovers. She convinces him to betroth Octavia to Lucius Domitius, her son. Claudius is tired of being emperor and does not oppose Agrippinilla in anything. He adopts Lucius Domitius as Britannicus' joint-heir and provides tutors for both of his sons. According to Barbillus' prophecy at Lucius Domitius' birth, he will kill his mother. Agrippinilla asks for the title of "Augusta" and is shocked when Claudius agrees. Agrippinilla has her rivals banished and has Messalina's mother killed. Claudius is sad at only one of her actions: the murder of Calpurnia. Crop failure plagues Rome the year that Lucius Domitius marries Octavia. The granary supplies are exhausted, and the public regards Claudius as an enemy. Lucius Domitius becomes the Consul-Elect at Agrippinilla's insistence. There is a riot over the sale of bread, which Narcissus claims Agrippinilla instigates. Narcissus loathes Agrippinilla, and Claudius encourages this loathing. Agrippinilla convinces Claudius to sign a document stating that Lucius Domitius is capable of conducting public affairs under her guidance. Vitellius dies of a paralytic stroke when the Senate does not support his accusations against Agrippinilla of aiming at the monarchy.

The channel that Claudius orders to drain Fucine Lake is completed, and Claudius arranges a sham sea-fight. There are ten days of public holidays and sports. Agrippinilla mocks Claudius' running. When they discover that the channel is not quite finished, Agrippinilla blames Narcissus. Work continues, and the Romans attempt to drain the lake. Fucine Lake rushes back, destroying their dinner and killing several people. Agrippinilla chides Narcissus who predicts it will take two more years to dig a new channel. Claudius predicts that he will not live to see its completion. In September of the fourteenth year of Claudius' reign, Barbillus predicts that Claudius will die the next month. Lucius Domitius is seventeen years old at this point. Claudius thanks Xenophon for his service and enlists Xenophon and Narcissus' help in trying to persuade Britannicus to go into exile. Claudius intends for Britannicus to hide and restore the Republic after Lucius Domitius' rule. Claudius explains the plan to his son, but Britannicus refuses to hide.

Section XIII, ch. 31-32 Analysis

Claudius justifies his allowing Agrippinilla to rule him by his being tired of being emperor. Claudius and Agrippinilla's marriage is strictly politic, as evidenced by the fact that they are not lovers. Claudius demonstrates that no love is lost between himself and Agrippinilla by his revelry in the fact that it is prophesied that Lucius Domitius will kill his mother, as well as by encouraging Narcissus' dislike of the new empress. The crop failure in the year that Lucius Domitius marries Octavia symbolizes that he will not be a positive influence on the Roman Empire. Narcissus and Agrippinilla demonstrate their



dislike of one another by accusing each other of everything that goes wrong, such as the riot over bread and the incomplete draining of Fucine Lake. Agrippinilla shows her disdain of Claudius by mocking his running during the sports to celebrate the completion of the channel to drain Fucine Lake.

Agrippinilla shows her ambition in many ways. She convinces Claudius to betroth Octavia to her son, Lucius Domitius, and she convinces him to adopt Lucius Domitius as Britannicus' joint-heir. Agrippinilla requests the title of "Augusta", and Claudius agrees. This demonstrates his lack of interest in the empire since he refused the title to Messalina who he loved dearly. Agrippinilla disposes of her rivals, including Messalina's mother and Calpurnia. She also convinces Claudius to sign a document stating that Lucius Domitius is capable of conducting public affairs under her guidance; Claudius even recognizes that by doing this, he is signing his own death warrant. Vitellius accuses Agrippinilla of aiming at the monarchy, but the Senate does not support his accusations. Claudius' death is foreshadowed when he predicts he will not live two more years to see Fucine Lake drained. Barbillus' predicts that Claudius will die next month, also foreshadowing Claudius' death. Claudius shows his love for Britannicus in his hopes to hide his son in order to restore the Republic after Lucius Domitius' reign, but Britannicus shows his honor and pride by refusing to hide.



Section XIV, Three Accounts of Claudius' Death & Pumpkinification of Claudius, a Satire in Verse and Prose

Section XIV, Three Accounts of Claudius' Death & Pumpkinification of Claudius, a Satire in Verse and Prose Summary

The first account of Claudius' death claims that he writes his will before Agrippinilla poisons him. His death is a secret until Lucius Domitius sets things in order for his rule. Claudius is canonized as a saint in heaven due to the many tokens that predict his death. The second account claims that Claudius is attacked by illness and goes to Sinuessa to recover where Agrippinilla poisons him. The palace doors open on October 13, and Lucius Domitius is received by the public joyfully while Claudius is decreed divine honors. The third account claims that Agrippinilla angers Claudius, and he intends to dictate Britannicus as his sole heir. This causes Agrippinilla to hire a poison dealer, Locusta, to kill Claudius. Agrippinilla also slays Narcissus. Agrippinilla and Lucius Domitius pretend grief as he puts aside Britannicus and Claudius' daughters, assuming the crown.

In Heaven on October 13, Mercury watches Claudius begin to die. He begs the Fate, Clotho, to allow Claudius to die. Clotho also kills Augurinus and Baba so that Claudius will not be lonely during his travels. Claudius dies and is pleased to find himself amongst literary men in Heaven. He is angry when Goddess Fever accuses him of lying to Heracles. Heracles demands the truth, and Claudius claims that Heracles knows him; he judged cases in front of Heracles' temple. Heracles mocks Claudius' ignorance of Messalina's infidelities. The gods vote whether to deify Claudius and decide against it. Mercury drags Claudius to Hell. On the way to Hell, Claudius sees his funeral procession and realizes that he is dead. In Hell, Narcissus greets Claudius. Many others greet Claudius, and Claudius is tried for his many murders. Caligula claims that Claudius is his slave. Britannicus is poisoned in 55 AD, Lucius Domitius has his mother killed, and he is killed in 68 AD. There is a year of anarchy and civil war following Lucius Domitius' death, and the Republic is never restored.

Section XIV, Three Accounts of Claudius' Death & Pumpkinification of Claudius, a Satire in Verse and Prose Analysis

Although there are three accounts given of Claudius' death, all of the accounts agree that he was poisoned by Agrippinilla, which explains her ambitions to the throne in the



previous chapters. Claudius shows his literary pretensions in his happiness at finding himself amongst literary men in Heaven. He shows his pride through his anger at Goddess Fever when she accuses him of lying to Heracles. The cuckoldry of Claudius' life is mocked by Heracles who reminds Claudius of Messalina's many infidelities. The gods decide against deifying Claudius. This explains that he was in Heaven by the mistake of the Britons worshipping him as a god, but apparently the Britons were wrong and Claudius is sent to Hell. Narcissus shows his loyalty by greeting Claudius, but Claudius is tried and sentenced to serve as Caligula's slave. Britannicus is poisoned, which validates his father's fear for him. Lucius Domitius has his mother killed, fulfilling the prophecy at his birth. The Republic is never restored, indicating that maybe Claudius was its only chance, and he failed.



Characters

Claudius

Tiberius Claudius Drusus Nero Germanicus is the emperor of Rome who provides the voice of this novel. Before his accession, the public believes Claudius to be a crippled, stammering idiot; however, he reveals himself to have a sharp mind and intends to reform Rome. He abolishes many of Tiberius and Caligula's decrees and attempts to reform Rome, governmentally, financially and socially. Claudius is a very busy official and allows his wife, Messalina, to do many of his jobs. Claudius loves Messalina and is long unaware of her infidelities and immoral actions, such as accepting bribes for citizenships.

Claudius survives his relatives and becomes emperor at fifty years old. His friend, Herod Agrippa, congratulates him as he mourns the former emperor, Caligula. Claudius does not want to be emperor; he believes in restoring the Republic, but there is no one else to clean up the mess that Caligula left behind him. After he obtains the throne, Claudius chooses ministers, sets up security measures to avoid assassins, and avoids Senate for a month since they are interested in restoring the Republic and overthrowing Claudius as emperor. Claudius is not learned in laws and makes many mistakes during his first year in court. He recalls all exiles on charges of treason. Rome is quiet and the finances are secure for a while. When the Alexandrian Greeks oppress the Jews, Claudius orders the release of the Jewish prisoners, causing the restoration of peace in Alexandria.

Claudius throws a feast when Herod Agrippa leaves Rome, during which the pair reaffirms their friendship and agrees to include private letters within their business correspondence. Claudius is uncomfortable when his friend advises him against trusting anyone. Claudius buys his former mistress, Calpurnia, a villa near Ostia. Claudius orders punitive campaigns against the Chatti and Istaevonian raiders, as well as a campaign to retrieve the Eagle in Germany. Claudius learns the joy of fatherhood for the first time when Messalina gives birth to Drusus Germanicus. Claudius converts Ostia into a safe winter harbor to avoid famine, constructs aqueducts and drains Fucine Lake. His health makes it necessary for Claudius to see a Greek doctor, Xenophon of Cos. When Marsus informs Claudius that Herod Agrippa is fortifying Jerusalem, Claudius dissuades his friend from the act. Claudius agrees to let Messalina sleep in a separate bedroom after having two children within two years.

Claudius declares war against Britain, during which he begins to suspect Herod Agrippa of forming a general uprising in the east. Claudius and the Roman forces defeat the Britons and return to Rome where Senate agrees to allow a triumphal procession. Claudius receives many honors due to his victory in Britain. Claudius commands Mnester to obey Messalina in everything, not knowing the extent of Messalina's demands. He begins to examine religions and banishes many Jews. Claudius adds three letters to the Roman alphabet, celebrates the Saecular Games, takes a census of



Roman citizens, revives soothsaying and passes many edicts. When Caractacus is captured and sues for mercy, Claudius releases him because he is an honorable enemy.

Claudius divorces Messalina when she informs him of a prophecy foretelling the death of her husband within a month. As Claudius dedicates a granary, he receives a warning from Calpurnia and learns of Messalina's infidelities and betrayals. Claudius has the entire wedding party arrested. He also orders Messalina's death. Claudius marries his niece, Agrippinilla, as a matter of form, but they are not lovers. By this time, he is tired of ruling and allows Agrippinilla to control him. Claudius adopts Lucius Domitius as Britannicus' joint-heir. Claudius is only sad at one of Agrippinilla's actions, the murder of Calpurnia. Claudius is poisoned by Agrippinilla. In Heaven, the gods vote that Claudius should not be deified, and Mars drags him to Hell where Caligula claims him as a servant.

Messalina

Messalina is Claudius' third wife and the mother of Britannicus and Octavia. Although she is given many of the responsibilities as the Director of Public Morals, she participates in many immoral acts throughout her life. After Claudius takes the throne, Messalina assists him in choosing ministers; she also suggests increased security such as searching women who enter the palace and positioning armed guards at banquets. She reassures Claudius when he is disappointed with his profile on a new coin. Messalina has many political responsibilities, including assisting Claudius with reforming the Roll of Citizens and purging the Senate. She often manipulates Claudius for her own interest. Claudius is unaware that Messalina accepts bribes to grant citizenship.

Messalina has her two children only eleven months apart. Shortly afterwards, she convinces Claudius to allow her to sleep in a separate bedroom, and she moves to the New Palace. Messalina had previously convinced Claudius to recall Appius Silanus to Rome as an advisor and marry him to her mother. In the New Palace, Messalina attempts to seduce Appius Silanus, but her failure results in his death. After Claudius' victory in Britain, the Senate wants to give Messalina the title of "Augusta", but Claudius refuses. The Alexandrians, however, produce a coin with Claudius' face on one side and Messalina's face on the other. Messalina complains to Claudius that Mnester was rude to her during the war in Britain and Claudius' absence. Claudius commands Mnester to obey Messalina in everything, and Mnester becomes one of Messalina's lovers.

Messalina wakes Claudius early one morning to reveal a prophecy that stated her husband would die within a month. She suggests that they divorce and remarry in a month to avoid the fulfillment of the prophecy. Messalina and Claudius agree that she will marry Silius during that time since she must marry another before Claudius can remarry his divorced wife. Messalina marries Silius the day that Claudius is dedicating a granary, though Claudius is supposed to preside over the wedding several days hence. She and Silius plan to restore the Republic. When Calpurnia warns Claudius and Claudius arrests the wedding party, Messalina pleads for her life, but Claudius realizes



that she is a lying adulteress. Messalina writes three letters in an attempt to convince Claudius to spare her, but the letters are written in vain. Claudius orders her death, but he sends a messenger to advise her to commit suicide. Messalina is too frightened to commit suicide and is executed by a member of the guard instead. Messalina is erased from all of the archives.

Herod Agrippa

Herod Agrippa is a Jewish orphan who is sent to Rome after his parents are killed. He is Claudius' friend in their youth. In his youth, Herod Agrippa wanders from place to place, borrowing money to pay off his debts. Herod Agrippa is arrested when he and Caligula are overheard discussing treasonous ideas against Tiberius. However, Tiberius is killed shortly after Herod Agrippa's imprisonment, and Caligula releases his friend. After Caligula's death, Claudius gives Herod Agrippa control over Judaea, Samaria and Edom. Herod Agrippa attempts to fortify Jerusalem but is dissuaded by Claudius. Eventually, Herod Agrippa attempts to revolt against Rome and set up a Jewish empire, positioning himself as the Messiah. Herod Agrippa dies of Herod's Evil.

Calpurnia

Calpurnia, a prostitute, is Claudius' mistress before he marries Messalina. Claudius buys Calpurnia a villa in Ostia where she retires with her friend, Cleopatra. On the day that Claudius dedicates a granary, Calpurnia sends him a note warning him of great danger to his person and Rome. When Claudius visits her, Calpurnia reveals the truth about Messalina and her infidelities. After Claudius marries Agrippinilla, Calpurnia's home is burned to the ground with her in it. Although it is made to look like an accident, Claudius is aware that it is Agrippinilla's work.

Britannicus

Britannicus is Claudius' son by Messalina. It is with Britannicus' birth that Claudius first learns the joy of fatherhood. After learning of Messalina's infidelities, Claudius suspects that Caligula is actually Britannicus' father, but he overcomes this fear and attempts to save his son when he realizes that Lucius Domitius will reign after his death. Claudius wants Britannicus to exile himself until after Lucius Domitius' reign when Britannicus will return to Rome and restore the Republic; however, Britannicus refuses to hide from Lucius Domitius.

Barbillus

Barbillus is an astrologer whose predictions guide much of the action. He predicts a solar eclipse, an unlucky omen, on Claudius' birthday which Claudius informs everyone about in order to dissuade assassination attempts. Barbillus also predicts a violent death for Messalina's husband which results in her divorce from Claudius and marriage



to Silius. Barbillus also predicts that Lucius Domitius will become emperor, and he predicts Claudius' death.

Caractacus and Togodumnus

Caractacus and Togodumnus are brothers and joint-rulers of Britain. Togodumnus' haughty command to Claudius is what instigates the war between Rome and Britain. In the war, Togodumnus is slain in battle, and the troops unify under Caractacus. Caractacus escapes but is eventually captured and taken to Rome. During his trial, Caractacus sues for mercy which Claudius grants since Caractacus is an honorable enemy. Caractacus is released.

Senate

The Senate is a collection of Roman citizens of importance who vote to control the nation. When Claudius first begins his reign, they object, intending to reform the Republic. Eventually, they accept the new emperor, though they continually cause problems for him by disputing his mandates. Most of the revolts that arise against Claudius are instigated by members of the Senate.

Agrippinilla

Agrippinilla is Claudius' niece and fourth wife whom he marries after Messalina's death for political reasons. She rules her husband during their five years of marriage, convincing him to adopt her son Lucius Domitius and name him joint-heir with Britannicus. Agrippinilla poisons Claudius so that her son can succeed to emperor. Eventually, Lucius Domitius sends soldiers to kill Agrippinilla.

Lucius Domitius

Lucius Domitius is Agrippinilla's son and Claudius' grandnephew. After marrying Agrippinilla, Claudius adopts Lucius Domitius and names him joint-heir with Britannicus. Lucius Domitius is later named Nero and serves politically before Claudius' death. After Agrippinilla poisons Claudius, Lucius Domitius reigns in tyranny, even killing his own mother. He is killed in 68 AD.

Mnester

Mnester is an actor that Messalina lusts after. While Claudius is in Britain, she propositions Mnester, but he refuses. When Claudius returns, Messalina complains about Mnester's insolence, and Claudius commands the actor to obey Messalina in all things. Mnester becomes Messalina's lover and refuses to perform on nights when Messalina stays at home with a headache.



Silius

Silius is Messalina's former husband and a member of the Senate. Because he is insolent to Claudius, Claudius and Messalina choose him to be Messalina's husband after Barbillus' prediction that Messalina's husband will die within a month. Silius and Messalina plan to restore the Republic, but they are thwarted in their plans. Silius is executed.

Octavia

Octavia is Claudius' daughter by Messalina. She is born eleven months after Britannicus. After learning of Messalina's infidelities, Claudius suspects that Octavia is not actually his daughter. Claudius marries Octavia to Lucius Domitius, and Octavia dies a violent death after Lucius Domitius assumes the throne.

Caligula

Caligula is the emperor who reigns before Claudius. He plots against Tiberius with Herod Agrippa. After he accedes to the throne, Caligula goes mad with power and sets himself up as a god, punishing the Jews who refuse to worship him. He is assassinated.

Cypros

Cypros is Herod Agrippa's wife. She is faithful and loyal and tries to guide her husband to make wise choices, including attempting to dissuade him from revolting against Rome. After Herod Agrippa's death, she commits suicide rather than be captured by the Greeks.

Aulus Plautius

Aulus Plautius is the leader of Claudius' invasion forces in the war against Britain. After winning the war, Claudius ordains Aulus as the governor of Britain. Aulus reports regularly to Claudius until he returns to Rome.

Antonia

Antonia is Claudius' daughter who marries Pompey. She is bored in her marriage and reveals to her father that her marriage has never been consummated. After Claudius kills Pompey, Antonia marries Faustus.



Objects/Places

Rome

Rome is the capital and the seat of control of the Roman empire over which Claudius rules.

Alexandria

Alexandria, in Egypt, is a province of Rome. Herod Agrippa flees there in his youth in order to borrow money from Alabarch. Later, a rebellion arises in Alexandria when the Greeks attempt to oppress the Jews. Although the Governor of Egypt appeals to Claudius for help, peace is restored when Claudius orders the release of all Jewish prisoners and restores privileges to the Alexandrian Jews.

Jerusalem

Jerusalem is the seat of Judaism. Herod Agrippa lives in Jerusalem and uses it as his base from which to rule Bashan, Galilee, Gilead, Judaea, Samaria and Edom. When he contemplates war with the Romans, he fortifies Jerusalem.

Owl droppings

When Herod Agrippa is in prison, a German prisoner sees owl droppings on Herod Agrippa and foretells good luck as long as he serves God. Herod Agrippa realizes his blasphemy of allowing himself to be proclaimed as the Messiah after he sees an owl which reminds him of the old man's prediction.

Caligula's godhead

Caligula goes insane with power and replaces statues of the gods with statues of himself, proclaiming himself a god. He declares the Jews intruders and aliens for refusing to swear by his godhead. Caligula attempts to place his statue in the Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem until Herod Agrippa dissuades him.

Sportula

Sportula is an afternoon of random games that Claudius spontaneously declares after abolishing many of Caligula's holidays.



Herod Agrippa's letters

At their final parting, Herod Agrippa and Claudius agrees to include private letters with their business correspondence as an affirmation of their friendship.

Ostia

Ostia is the town that Claudius converts into a safe winter harbor in order to avoid famine. It is very expensive and takes ten years to convert Ostia. This is also where Calpurnia and Cleopatra live in a villa bought for them by Claudius.

Claudius' health

Claudius suffers from fatigue and claims that no Greek doctor can cure him. Herod Agrippa recommends that Claudius confer with Xenophon of Cos who recommends avoiding reading and writing and resting for one hour after his principal meal. Xenophon is successful in healing Claudius and administers to his health for the remainder of Claudius' life.

Augustus

Augustus is a title that Livia, Claudius' grandmother, is given after her death. The Senate wants to give the title to Messalina, but Claudius refuses because he wants her to have something to look forward to in middle age. Claudius allows Agrippina to take the title of Augustus.

New Palace

After giving birth to Octavia, Messalina asks to sleep in separate bedrooms to avoid another pregnancy. She moves to the New Palace where she indulges her promiscuous habits for seven years before Claudius learns anything about her infidelities.

Roll of Citizens

The Roll of Citizens is a record of Roman citizens. Claudius and Messalina make a thorough revision of the Roll of Citizens because a large number of unworthy people have inserted themselves into the list; Claudius is unaware that Messalina accepts bribes for citizenship.



Britain

At the time of Claudius' empire, Togodumnus and Caractacus reign in Britain. When Claudius refuses Togodumnus' demand for the return of exiles and sacred regalia, Rome goes to war with Britain. Britain is overpowered and becomes a province of Rome.

Druidism

Druidism is the religion commonly practiced in Britain and France. It contains three levels of priests: Druids, Bards and Ovates. The Druids cause trouble in France around the time that Rome goes to war with Britain, and Claudius determines to strike a bargain with the arch-Druid after conquering Britain.

Heron King

The Romans use the Britons' superstition of the Heron King by dressing a French soldier as the Heron King to distract the Britons and gain victory in the battle at Weald Brook.

Triumphal Procession

After Claudius' victory in Britain, he obtains Senate's permission to march into town. This triumphal procession passes through the Triumphal Gate, along the Sacred Way through the city. It consists of the Senate, trumpeters, spoils, flute-players, captured chiefs with the families, public slaves and twenty-four yeomen. Next comes Claudius and his children in a four-horse chariot, followed by Messalina in her carriage. Following the royal family are the winners of the Olive Crown, ranked officers, elephants, camels, the Heron King, Posides, the Roman cavalry and the Roman infantry. Veterans sing songs mocking Claudius while a cheering rabble trails after the official procession.

Messiah

The Messiah is the prophesied ruler of the Jews. Herod Agrippa claims to be the Messiah and dies of "Herod's Evil" after his realization that he has been blasphemous in his claims of godhead.

Saecular games

The Saecular games are practiced every one hundred to one hundred, ten years. The games fall on the seventh year of Claudius' reign and the year he intends to finish his reformations and restore the Republic. The games begin with traditional ceremonies, including a ceremony to offer honor to Apollo who is the reason for the games.



Asinius Gallus' home

After Asinius Gallus is banished, Messalina privately buys his home and presents it to Silius as a wedding gift. Claudius finds many of his family heirlooms in the house which convinces him that Messalina is an adulterous liar.

Messalina's Death

After his discovery that Messalina is adulterous, Claudius responds formally to her letters and finally orders her death. Messalina is too frightened to commit suicide and is executed. After her death, she is deleted from the archives. Claudius' mind is disordered by the medicines Xenophon gives to calm him, and Claudius often calls for Messalina, forgetting her death.



Themes

Empire versus Republic

Throughout the novel, there is a constant struggle between the ideologies of a Roman Empire and a Roman Republic. Claudius does not want to accede to the throne because he believes in a free Republic that promotes liberty. Unfortunately, the majority of the people feel more comfortable with an empire that offers stability. The Republic was unstable and constantly involved in civil wars whereas the empire grows and offers a certain amount of protection to the citizens of Rome, despite the potential tyranny of a dictator. Claudius is dissuaded from renouncing his throne by Messalina and Herod Agrippa. An adjunct theme that is introduced in this novel is the theme that absolute power corrupts absolutely. Every character that is provided with a large amount of power becomes corrupt, as in the examples of Tiberius, Caligula, Messalina, Herod Agrippa, Agrippinilla and Lucius Domitius. Even Claudius is partially corrupted by the power of ruling, as seen in his murder of young Pompey.

Another issue that arises in the attempt to restore the Republic is Claudius' objection that he determined to restore the Republic in a time of peace, but there is no time of peace. There is so much that he feels needs to be reformed before restoring the Republic that it never happens in his thirteen years of rule. Another problem is that the citizens have become so accustomed to living under a dictatorship that they do not know what to do when presented with freedom. When the Senate discusses restoring the Republic, they simultaneously offer alternate dictators. Vitellius praises the architecture of a dictatorship, stating that such beauty could never exist under a Republic. After Lucius Domitius is killed, the citizens of Rome have the chance to restore the Republic, but it only results in a year of civil war and chaos until another dictator takes control.

Women In Control

In this novel, women play a major role in controlling their husbands, sons, fathers and lovers. Livia, Claudius' grandmother, is represented as having contributed greatly to her husband's success in governing Rome. Claudius' motion for Senate to deify her is granted because of her many efforts during her lifetime.

The main female character who exerts control over the men in the novel is Messalina. Messalina uses her sexuality and intelligence to manipulate her husband and control the kingdom. Because of Claudius' love for his wife, he is blind to her many faults throughout most of the novel. Messalina is involved in choosing ministers and in enhancing security when Claudius first assumes the throne. She then is persistent in providing her opinion of various officials, often resulting in their execution or exile. Because Claudius loves and trusts her, Messalina is able to advance her own interests most of the time. She requests that they sleep in separate rooms after she has two



children by stressing her importance to the empire. She has many political duties, which she often abuses to obtain money, such as by selling citizenships. Messalina also uses her political standing to force men that she lusts after into having illicit affairs with her. Although many men know of Messalina's infidelities, it takes a woman to inform Claudius of her immorality. Calpurnia is able to save Claudius by revealing his deception in Messalina.

Agrippinilla is another woman who controls Claudius. In her case, she does not manipulate or trick Claudius; he is aware of her ambition and control, but he no longer cares to be emperor. Claudius allows Agrippinilla to rule him and Rome. She uses her power to further her son's political status in order to prepare him for the throne. Agrippinilla murders Calpurnia. This seems symbolic since Calpurnia is the woman who opened Claudius' eyes to Messalina's deception; with Calpurnia dead, Agrippinilla feels secure that no one else will dare oppose her. Eventually, Agrippinilla's plotting pays off when she poisons Claudius, and Lucius Domitius, her son, becomes emperor.

Religion

One theme throughout the novel is religion. Many different religions are introduced, and many of the disputes that arise throughout the novel are due to differences in religion. The main religions of the novel are the Roman religion and Judaism. Herod Agrippa is a Jew, and when Alabarch loans him money, it is under the condition that his children be raised in Jerusalem as good Jews. Claudius is of the Roman religion as evidenced by his sacrifices to the gods of the Pantheon, such as Mars, Venus and Jove. Additionally, there are other religions introduced. The Greek religion, which is very similar to the Roman religion, is mentioned, as is Christianity. Druidism is described as it pertains to problems in France during the war in Britain.

There are problems in Alexandria between the Greeks and Jews that can be seen as a derivative of their varying religions. Also, there is a problem between Druidism and the Roman religion, but Claudius decides to come to a bargain with the arch-Druid in order to alleviate these problems. At one point, Claudius examines different religions and decides to expel a number of Jews and to arrest a number of Christians. Herod Agrippa agrees with this action, stating he would do the same to his citizens if they practiced the Greek religion.

Another aspect of religion that arises in this novel is self-deification. Caligula claims that he is a god and rededicates many of the gods' temples to himself. He also attempts to place his statues in the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem. He exiles Jews who will not swear by his godhead. Claudius' grandmother, Livia, asks on her deathbed that he try to obtain her deification if he ever comes into power; Claudius does so. Herod Agrippa claims to be the Messiah but dies after realizing his blasphemy. Claudius is accidentally deified by the Britons after he defeats them in war. His deification is not his fault, and it does not continue because, after his death, the gods vote against his deification and he is sent to Hell.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of this novel is first person from Claudius' point of view. The story is told in the past tense, after Claudius' death. This makes the narrator appear omniscient since he is aware of later facts that serve to enhance the story as he tells it; however, the point of view is limited since he is not fully aware of the thoughts of all characters but only what he later learns. This is important in foreshadowing the events of the story and in demonstrating the narrator's innocence, naiveté and good intentions. The point of view serves to justify Claudius' actions since it enables him to show that even his most evil acts were done either with good intentions or through the misguidance of another, usually Messalina.

Exposition mostly pervades the story as Claudius explains his actions as emperor and attempts to justify his decisions. Little dialogue occurs, but when it does, it is mostly dialogue between Claudius and his advisors, including Messalina. The dialogue is also usually present in order to enable Messalina to betray someone or to manipulate Claudius. This serves to further demonstrate Claudius' manipulation by Messalina and his intentions to increase the general welfare of Rome. The dialogue that passes between Claudius and Messalina allows Claudius to be seen as a sympathetic character since he is truly in love with his wife and she uses his feelings for her to obtain her will. The point of view allows Claudius to highlight the important events that occur during his reign while skipping large periods of time during which nothing notable occurs. The events of the novel are seen through Claudius' eyes, which occasionally provide glimpses into other characters' thoughts as Claudius reveals his discoveries at the end of his life throughout the action of the novel as appropriate.

Setting

The novel is set in ancient Rome and details the events of the Roman Emperor Claudius' reign from his predecessor Caligula's death in 41 AD until Claudius' death in 54 AD. The world described is the world of that time period and the people are the people from the time period. Generally speaking, the geography and the people of the period are described accurately. Mainly, the people that are dealt with in a lot of detail are Roman Senators and military men of renown, as well as Claudius' own family.

During most of the novel, Claudius describes the events that occur in Rome and surrounding cities, such as Ostia. The beginning of the novel details the life of Claudius' friend, Herod Agrippa, and so includes Herod Agrippa's birth in Jerusalem and travels to Antioch and Alexandria. Finally, Herod settles in Jerusalem where his life ends. Another major setting of the novel is Britain where Claudius travels with the Roman forces in order to capture and subdue the Britains. Additionally, the Roman forces travel to



Germany to retrieve the Eagle. Several other campaigns take place throughout the novel, which causes the Roman forces to travel to other lands.

Within Rome, much action takes place at Claudius' palace, but action also occurs in many other places. The Senatorial meeting place records many of the events of the novel. While the events in the New Palace are not necessarily related in detail, these events lead to Messalina's death and the end of the novel. There are also many happenings in temples and shrines to the different Roman gods.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is very old-fashioned and formal; however, it is still easy to read. The language, especially the military jargon, allows the reader to understand Claudius' intentions opposed to the actuality of events. The language used also helps to portray Claudius as a sympathetic character by the frequent use of validating and apologetic words and phrases. Since the story is mostly exposition, the majority of the words are spoken by Claudius, providing evidence of his knowledge and education.

The language demonstrates Claudius' and others' intentions and feelings towards certain events, especially Claudius' unhappiness concerning his role as emperor. The characters are described by Claudius, and little dialogue is present to validate or disprove his opinions. In the novel, time passes inconsistently with years passing in one sentence while periods of minutes or days may take several chapters. The use of Claudius as a narrator facilitates the exclusion of many extensive passages concerning settings since Claudius is concerned with the action of an event more than the location.

Structure

The novel is composed of thirty-two chapters, plus three accounts of Claudius' death and the Pumpkinification of Claudius. Each chapter ranges from ten to thirty pages. The thirty-two chapters that comprise the action of the novel seen from Claudius' viewpoint are not titled. Most of the chapters are filled with details about Claudius' actions and ideas in governing Rome. The time passes inconsistently throughout the novel so short amounts of time may pass over a long chapter while a large amount of time may pass in a short paragraph or even sentence.

The plot of the novel is simplistic with few subplots. The few subplots that do exist are simply mentioned briefly in order to contribute to the main plot at a later point in the novel, such as Claudius' support of Calpurnia and the history of Lucius Domitius. The main plot focuses around Claudius' rule after Caligula's death, including Messalina's deceptions and infidelities, Claudius' attempts to improve life in Rome and restore the Republic, and campaigns undertaken by the Romans to secure or broaden their lands.

The pace of the novel is slow since many of the passages are concerned with detailing Claudius' ideas and reformation attempts. The story line is not linear. It is told in the past tense from the end of Claudius' life and details his reign, but he occasionally jumps



between points in time to further describe a character or to explain the real cause of one of his actions, specifically in cases where he was manipulated by Messalina. Overall, the novel is easy to read, and Claudius makes a sympathetic character that a reader is eager to learn more about.



Quotes

"Herod himself always insisted that he was congenitally a rogue. To which I would reply, "No, you are a fundamentally virtuous man wearing the mask of roguery." This would make him angry. A month or two before Caligula's death we had a conversation of this sort. At the end of it he said, 'Shall I tell you about yourself?' 'There's no need,' I answered, 'I'm the Official Fool of the Palace.' 'Well,' he said, 'there are fools who pretend to be wise men and wise men who pretend to be fools, but you are the first case I have yet encountered of a fool pretending to be a fool. And one day you'll see, my friend, what sort of a virtuous Jew you are dealing with.'" Chapter 1, p. 11

"Everyone at Rome who is anyone gets divorced sooner or later. (Nobody, for instance, could call me a profligate, and yet I have divorced three wives already and may come to divorcing the fourth.) Chapter 2, p. 18-19

"If you had been in my position you would undoubtedly have told the truth: but I lacked the courage. And, as I say, these seven years in the East away from you have greatly blunted my moral sensibilities." Chapter 3, p. 35

"Herod, who was still not sure whether the German's earnestness was real or assumed, answered, quite truthfully, 'The name of our God is too holy to be pronounced. We Jews are obliged to refer to it by periphrases, and even by periphrases of periphrases.'" Chapter 4, p. 48

"Well, tell the Senate that I don't blame them for not wanting another Emperor. The last one somehow lacked the gift of endearing himself to his people. But, on the other hand, the Imperial Guards insist on making me Emperor, and the officers have already sworn their allegiance to me and forced me to accept it - so what can I do? You may carry the Senate my respectful compliments and tell them that I shall do nothing unconstitutional and that they can trust me not to deceive them. I acknowledge their authority, but at the same time I must remind them that I am in no position to oppose the wishes of my military advisers." Chapter 5, p. 81

"I remembered with dull resentment the beautifully clean start that Caligula had been given: well-filled Treasury and Privy Purse, capable and trustworthy advisers, the goodwill of the entire nation. Well, the best choice of many evils was to remain in power myself, for a time at least, hoping to be relieved as soon as possible. I could trust myself better than I could trust others." Chapter 6, p. 91-92

"He could not understand, I suppose, that a reputation was, as my mother used to say, like an earthenware plate. 'The plat is cracked; the reputation is damaged by a criminal sentence. The plate is then mended with rivets and becomes "as good as new"; the reputation is mended by an official pardon. A mended plat or a mended reputation is better than a cracked plate or a damaged reputation. But a plate that has never been cracked and a reputation that has never been damaged are better still.'" Chapter 7, p. 113



"The fact is that the Greek mind and the Jewish mind work in quite different ways and are bound to come in conflict. The Jews are too serious and proud, the Greeks too vain and laughter-loving; the Jews hold too fast to the old, the Greeks are too restless in always seeking for something new; the Jews are too self-sufficient, the Greeks too accommodating. But though I might claim that we Romans understand the Greeks- we know their limitations and potentialities and can make them very useful servants- I should never claim that we understand the Jews. We have conquered them by our superior military strength but we have never felt ourselves their masters. We recognize that they retain the ancient virtues of their race, which goes back much farther in history than ours, and that we have lost our own ancient virtues; and the result is that we feel rather ashamed before them." Chapter 8, p. 138

"My advice to you, old fellow, is this: never trust anyone! Never trust your most grateful freedman, your most intimate friend, your dearest child, the wife of your bosom, or the ally joined to you by the most sacred oath. Trust yourself only. Or at least trust your own fool's luck, if you can't honestly trust yourself." Chapter 9, p. 141

"Claudius hit behind a curtain, Gratus twitched the thing away, 'Be our Leader,' said bold Gratus. 'All your orders we'll obey.' 'Be our Leader,' said bold Gratus, 'Learned Claudius, courage take! There's an Eagle to be rescued For the God Augustus's sake.' Learned Claudius, feeling thirsty, Drank a mighty pot of ink. 'Owl was it you said, or Eagle? I could rescue both, I think.'" Chapter 10, p. 164-165

"The man is a fool who puts good manners before health. If you are troubled with wind, never hold it in. It does great injury to the stomach. I knew a man who once nearly killed himself by holding in his wind. If for some reason or other you cannot conveniently leave the room- say you are sacrificing or addressing the Senate- don't be afraid to belch or break wind downwards where you stand. Better that the company should suffer some slight inconvenience than you should permanently injure yourself. And again, when you suffer from a cold, don't constantly blow your nose. That only increases the flow of rheum and inflames the delicate membranes of your nose. Let it run. Wipe, don't blow." Chapter 12, p. 185

"As for the question as to who must bear responsibility for the recent riot and the feud or-to speak frankly- the war that has been waged between you and the Jews, I have been unwilling to commit myself to a decision on this matter, thought your envoys, especially Dionysius, son of Theon, pleaded your cause with great spirit in the presence of their Jewish opponents. But I must reserve for myself a stern indignation against whichever party it was that started this new disturbance; and I wish you to understand that if both parties do not desist from this destructive and obstinate hostility I shall be compelled to show you what a benevolent ruler can do when roused to righteous anger." Chapter 13, p. 196-197

"If it's not too hard for you, would you- could you possibly- allow me to sleep in a bedroom apart from you for a little while? It isn't that I don't love you every bit as much as you love me, but now that we have had two children in less than two years of marriage, oughtn't we to wait a little before we risk having a third? It is a very



disagreeable thing to be pregnant: I have morning-sickness and heartburn and my digestion goes wrong, and I don't feel I could go through that again just yet. And, to be honest, quite apart from this dread, I somehow feel less passionately towards you than I did. I swear that I love you as much as ever but now it's rather as my dearest friend and as the father of my children than as my lover. Having children uses up a lot of a woman's emotions, I suppose. I'm not hiding anything from you. You do believe me, don't you?... And I'm not like any ordinary woman, and I, whose business is merely to have children and children and children until she wears out? I am your wife- the Emperor's wife- and I help him in his Imperial work, and that should take precedence over everything, shouldn't it? Pregnancy interferes with work terribly." Chapter 13, p. 207

"But I knew just what I was doing. I was, in fact, being rather clever. I had in the first place spoken extremely frankly, and unexpected frankness about oneself is never unacceptable. I was reminding the Senate what sort of a man I was- honest and devoted; not clever, but not self-seeking- and what sort of men they themselves were- clever but self-seeking, and neither honest nor devoted nor even courageous." Chapter 14, p. 225

"You all know the old patrician saying: *Aquila non captat mus cas*. The eagle is the noble soul and he does not hawk for flies which means that he does not pursue petty ends, or go out of his way to revenge himself on mean little men who have provoked him. But let me quote an enlargement made many years ago by my noble brother, Germanicus Caesar: '*Captat non muscas aquila; at quaeque advolat ultro Faucibus augustis, musca proterva perit.*' Bear all this in mind and we shall have no misunderstandings but remain bound in the mutual affection which we have so often protested to each other." Chapter 15, p. 250-251

"But it is nonetheless my opinion, my dearest Livia, that Britain must eventually be converted into a frontier province. it is unsafe to allow an island, so near to France and manned by so fierce and numerous a population, to remain independent. Looking into the future, I can see Britain becoming as civilized as Southern France is now; and I think that the islanders, who are racially akin to us, will become far better Romans than we shall ever succeed in making of the Germans, who in spite of their apparent docility and willingness to learn our arts, I find more alien-minded even than the Moors or the Jews. I cannot explain my feeling except by saying they have been much too quick in learning: you know the proverb, '*Quick to learn, quick to forget.*' You may think me rather foolish in writing of the British as if they were already Romans, but it is interesting to speculate on the future." Chapter 15, p. 258

"Romans, let no tongue among you wag and no voice bellow vainly, praising the days of old as days of true gold, and belittling the present age, of whose glories we should be the doughty champions, as a graveless age of gilded plaster. The Greek heroes before Troy, of whom the august Homer sang, bore, if we are to believe his record, this verse perpetually upon their lips: We pride ourselves as better men by far Than all our forbears who e'er marched to war. Be not overmodest Romans. Hold your heads high. Puff out your chests." Chapter 19, p. 304



"They cheered me till they were hoarse, and I knew then that Pollio was right and Livy wrong. A good general couldn't possibly deliver a studied oration on the eve of battle, even if he had one already prepared; for his lips would inevitably speak as his heart prompted." Chapter 19, p. 307

"My only regret was perhaps rather an ungrateful one. I was with the Ninth throughout the battle and, feeling very courageous at the moment that their two battalions went forward to help the Nubians, I had galloped excitedly ahead of them to join in the fighting. However, I changed my mind: I did not wish to get mixed up with the Nubians, who often in battle mistake friends for foe. I turned Penelope round behind them and pulled up on the flank. There I saw a British chief doubling back between me and the tangle of broken chariots and kicking horses. I drew my sword and spurred after him. I was nearly on him when a big body of chariots swept into view and I had to turn and gallop back. I know now that the chief was Caractacus. To think that I was cheated by a few seconds from a single combat with him! Since I had a horse and a sword and he had neither, I might easily have had the luck to kill him. And if I had done so, what immortal glory I would have won! Only two Roman generals in history have ever killed an enemy commander in single combat, and stripped him of his arms." Chapter 20, p. 319

"Claudius was a famous scholar, Claudius shed less blood than ink. When he came to fight the Britons From the fray he did not shrink, But the weapons of his choice were Rope and stilts and camel stink. O, O, Oh! Rope and stilts and stink of camel Made the British army shake. Off they ran with yells of horror And their cries the dead would wake- Cries as loud as Claudius utters When he's got the stomach-ache. O, O, Oh!" Chapter 22, p. 345

"Either I'm an utter imbecile or else I'm altogether too clever." Chapter 22, p. 350

"What I wish to emphasize most of all in this account of my activities as Emperor is that up to this point at least I acted, so far as I knew how, for the public good in the widest possible sense. I was no thoughtless revolutionary and no cruel tyrant and no obstinate reactionary: I tried to combine generosity with common sense wherever possible and nobody can accuse me of not having done my best." Chapter 28, p. 435

"I hate to hurt you Claudius. But I mean this. I mean that if Cypros had been a typical princess of the Herod family- if she had been bloodthirsty and ambitious and unscrupulous and without any moral restraint; and if Briseis had been a typical wardrobe-maid- if she had been thieving and base-minded and lazy and clever at covering up her tracks; and if you Calpurnia had been a typical prostitute- if I had been vain, lustful, promiscuous and greedy, and used my beauty as a means for dominating and ruining men- and if you were now listing the three worst types of women you knew and happened to pick on us as convenient examples... then, Claudius, you'd be right to add Messalina to us and to tell me, 'Messalina goes without saying.'" Chapter 28, p. 450



"So I'm a God, now, am I? Herod Agrippa always said that I'd end as a God, and I told him that he was talking nonsense. I suppose that I can't cancel the mistake, can I Narcissus, do you think?" Chapter 30, p. 470

"A harlot's love, a harlot's lie- Cast that ancient proverb by. Calpurnia's heart was cleaner far, Roman matrons, than yours are." Chapter 31, p. 491

"I quoted to him the Greek line that Augustus had quoted to me just before his death: 'Who wounded thee, shall make thee whole.' I told him of the prophecy and of my desire to save from the wreckage of Rome the person whom I most loved- himself. I reminded him of the fatal history of our family and begged him to fall in with my plan, in which lay his only chance of survival." Chapter 32, p. 505-506

"Write no more now, Tiberius Claudius, God of the Britons, write no more." Chapter 32, p. 507

"So the prisoner began working out his sentence at once, fumbling for the dice as they fell and never getting any further with the game. Ay, for so often as he shook that cup And ready sat to cast them on the board, The dice would vanish thurgh the hole beneath. Then would he gather them again, and seek To rattle them and cast them as before. But still they cheated him, and cheated him, Retiring through the bottom of the cup. And when once more he stooped to pick them up They slipped between his fingers and escaped, And endlessly continued to escape- As when his rock with labour infinite Sisyphus rolls unto Hell's mountain-peak But down it comes, rebounding on his neck." Pumpkinification of Claudius, p. 530



Topics for Discussion

Why does Claudius despair when he is declared emperor?

List and describe three ways in which Claudius is deceived by Messalina.

Herod Agrippa advises Claudius not to trust anyone; how is this ironic?

Why is Herod Agrippa's history, which is told in the beginning of the book, important to Claudius' history?

Describe the changes that occur in Claudius' mentality toward a republic throughout the book.

Caligula and Herod Agrippa both die shortly after their claim to godhead. Explain the significance of this.

Compare and contrast Claudius' style of ruling with Caligula's style of ruling.

What is the significance of Claudius' war against the Britains?