

# **Fall of the Roman Republic Study Guide**

## **Fall of the Roman Republic by Plutarch**

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## Plot Summary

Rex Warner, the translator, begins the story of Marius by saying that Plutarch's biography of Marius is the least satisfactory of the six lives covered because Plutarch writes little about Marius' political skill. Warner says the significance of Marius' marriage to Julia of the house of Caesar is obscured while his lack of education is greatly exaggerated. This begins a series of six historical accounts of men who played an important role in Rome's history. Marius, Crassus, Pompey, Cicero, Caesar and Sulla each have a chapter of their own. In each, details of the man's early life and his appearance are included, though the majority of each section is devoted to the political and military campaigns that made them great.

Marius is elected to several offices, including consul. He is a brilliant military leader. As his men march toward battle, Marius trains them, forcing long marches and even requiring that the men carry their own gear—prompting the saying that one is as capable as "Marius' mules" which refers to his men. However, he does not require anything of them that he is not willing to do himself, as is noted early in his military career. His men, though possibly complaining about the training, are thoroughly ready to meet their enemies and emerge victorious.

Sulla serves under Marius, gaining his initial military skills there. When Sulla himself comes to power in Rome, Marius is among those listed as exiles. Though Marius himself had previously been in control of Rome, Sulla's arrival heralds—at least for some—a calmer command. Cicero, who had fled the city under Marius' reign, returns when Sulla comes to power. Cicero is intelligent but his chief fault is that he touts his own victories over and over, until most are tired of listening to him. Cicero is in power when Caesar, just a youth himself, is likely involved in a plot against the senate. Cicero does not prosecute Caesar, knowing that the young man is so popular that the entire band of conspirators would be acquitted if Caesar is among them.

Caesar was popular—so much so that upon his death a group of people rush to burn the homes of the murderers and inadvertently kill a man who was not among the murderers at all. Caesar is also a brilliant military man, so much so that his men seek to serve him when they object that their bodies are beyond the ability to continue. Caesar is not the only one who inspires this kind of service. Crassus, upon being handed over to those who would soon kill him, call on the witnesses to take word back to Rome that he was killed not by the actions of his own countrymen but by his enemies. When he is led out and it is likely that he is to be killed, several of his loyal leaders refuse to allow him to go alone and are also killed.

Pompey also serves under Sulla and soon becomes known for his justice and humanity. He earns Sulla's respect though is soon at odds with other young men of power because of Sulla's tendency to defer to Pompey and to show him respect.

All six lives are intertwined, some so subtly that it is difficult to make the connection and some that remain so after death. For example, it is noted that Antony is at the heart of

the plot to kill Cicero. After Cicero's death, his son serves with the younger Caesar and it is during his reign that the senate takes down all honors to Antony—making Cicero's family responsible for the final act of punishment for Antony.



# Chapter 1, Marius

## Chapter 1, Marius Summary and Analysis

Rex Warner, the translator, begins the story of Marius by saying that Plutarch's biography of Marius is the least satisfactory of the six lives covered because Plutarch writes little about Marius' political skill. Warner says the significance of Marius' marriage to Julia of the house of Caesar is obscured while his lack of education is greatly exaggerated.

Based on a stone statue of Marius at Ravenna in Gaul, Gaius Marius' looks are in keeping with the personality presented—a man who devoted his life to war though he occasionally sought to show a gentler side that probably did not even exist. His parents were Marius and Fulcina and other than the fact of being parents of the famous Marius, their lives were undistinguished. Marius lived in the country as a child, was educated "in accordance with the ancient Roman standards," and it is said that he seldom spoke Greek, even when the occasion called for it.

Marius' first military service had him facing the Celtiberians under the command of Scipio Africanus. Marius excelled on the battlefield, attracting attention as a willing and able soldier. Scipio was once asked where could be found another general to equal his ability. He is said to have pointed out Marius, saying that the young man should not be overlooked. It is that remark that prompts Marius on to greater ambitions because Marius believes the remark to be prophetic.

With the backing of Caecilius Metellus, Marius is voted to the office of tribune. He almost immediately proposes a law weakening the power of the nobles, endearing him to the people, then refusing a mass distribution of corn, earning the reputation for standing for what is right rather than supporting either class.

Marius next stands for the aedileship—first as a curule of that office and then as the lesser plebian—and earns the dubious distinction of a political candidate who is defeated twice in a single day. He stands next for the praetorship, is the last of those elected, and is unsuccessfully prosecuted for bribery. His term in that office is undistinguished after the rocky beginning, but he is then sent to Hispania Ulterior where he battles bandits in the uncivilized province.

Marius next serves as legate to Metellus as the Romans wage war in Africa against Jugurtha. Marius proves himself as a soldier, taking on even menial tasks. He lives as the soldiers live, winning their hearts as no outpouring of honor or gifts could have done. The soldiers write letters home, swearing that the only successful conclusion to the war will be with Marius as consul. Metellus is not pleased. Then an event involving Metellus's chief engineer, Turpillius, makes the situation more intense yet. Turpillius had been in command of the city of Vaga. He treats the inhabitants kindly but they allow Jugurtha entrance to the city and he took control, expelling Turpillius who is charged



with treachery and it is Marius who speaks so bitterly against Turpillius that an uproar ensues and the man is put to death. When it becomes clear that the charges against Turpillius had been without foundation, everyone sympathizes with Metellus for having lost his friend and companion but Marius' s that he had "let loose on Metellus an avenging spirit who would punish the guilt of having put a friend to death." The two men are bitter enemies then and when Marius asks to be released from the fighting to return to Rome to seek the consulate, Metellus first declines. In Rome, Marius addresses the assembly, pledging to either kill or capture Jugurtha.

Upon his election as consul, Marius begins to raise troops, allowing the poor men of the country to serve which is against the traditional belief that only men who owned land could be truly loyal. By his own design, he becomes hated by the upper classes and urged on by the people. Upon his arrival in Africa, Metellus refuses to meet him, allowing his legate to hand over the army. Jugurtha is hiding with a relative who pledges to Marius that Jugurtha will be harbored, but then hands Jugurtha over to Sulla. In this way, Marius' opponents say that Metellus wins the greatest victories of the war and Sulla ends it. Before Marius can lose much ground with his men and the people over this situation, threats emerge from the West in the form of the Tuetones and Cimbri.

The Tuetones and Cimbri were thousands strong, included women and children, may have been German or exiles. The number also varies, depending on the source, but there is no doubt that they were daring and that they were not going to settle down until they had destroyed Rome and ravaged Italy. With this threat at hand, Marius is elected consul though he is not present in Rome as the law requires. This variation occurs once before—when Scipio was named consul to lead the overthrow of Carthage. Marius begins his reign by parading Jugurtha through the streets, then stripping him and throwing him in the dungeon where, deranged and broken, he dies.

Marius begins the trek toward battle, training his men along the way. The army is forced to march for long hours at times and soldiers carry their own packs. This is the basis for the saying, "one of Marius' mules," and the notation comes to be reserved for any soldier who is willing to do what is asked without grumbling about the duty.

Marius is named consul again, partly because of his good judgment in the case of a man named Trebonius and partly because of the impending war. Marius and his troops cross the Alps and build a fortified camp by the Rhone. Marius encourages his men to stand watch the formidable group with strange customs and habits that are initially frightening to Marius' men, but became a familiar enemy that can be defeated. With the growing attitude and the passage of time, the men—forgetting their initial reactions—ask if Marius thinks them cowards and if he has recruited them only to build and dig and work rather than to fight. The invaders eventually grow tired of waiting and pass by the garrison. The Romans, under Marius' command, wait the six days it takes for the invaders to pass by, then break camp and follow though they still do not engage.

It is actually a minor skirmish over water that prompts the first contact. The Ligurian forces charge first, attacking a force of invaders known as the Ambrones, and are joined by the Romans. As the Ambrones retreat, they face their own women, armed and killing



the men who betrayed them before facing the Roman soldiers with the same deadly intent.

In the next battle, the invaders rush the Romans who have the advantage of higher ground and troops hidden at the rear of the invaders who close in to complete the rout.

Meanwhile, Catulus is facing the Cimbri portion of the invaders at the River Adige where he builds a bridge so that his troops have easy movement from one side of the river to the other. The invaders dam up the river, making the bridge useless and scaring the Roman troops into fleeing. Catulus runs to the forefront, hoping to create the impression that the troops are retreating under his command and that he is covering their retreat. The invaders take the garrison on one side of the river and Marius is called back to Rome. Marius agrees to a request by Boerix, King of the Cimbri, to meet at an appointed time. The plain is so dusty that at one point, Marius wanders around unable to find his target. The sun is hot and the Cimbri—accustomed to cold temperatures and toned for frigid climates—are soon short of breath and unable to put up a fight. The Romans, tempered by Marius' grueling training, win. When the Roman victory is certain, the women kill their children and then themselves, sometimes slashing their throats or hanging themselves. Some men, unable to find a tree to hang themselves from, tie themselves to oxen, stampeding the beasts to as to be hanged or trampled. Despite the mass suicide, some six hundred thousand prisoners are taken along with their possessions. The standards are taken to Catulus and some use this as a way to say the battle is his victory. Marius takes credit based on his superior rank and the fact of his former victory over the invaders. While Marius could then have held a triumph of his own, he shares the glory with Catulus. Marius gains a sixth term as consul, though according to the account of Rutilius, Marius gains this term by spreading around a great deal of money among voters. Though it is unprecedented, Marius holds six consecutive consulships.

During the sixth, he is heavily involved with the evil doings of Saturninus, including the murder of Nonius because he stood against Saturninus during a tribune election. At one point, Saturninus is at one end of Marius' house and the nobles who are complaining about Saturninus' actions at the other. Pretending to have diarrhea, Marius runs from one party to the other, carrying stories back and forth and "making mischief." The nobles eventually "express their indignation at the way things were going," and Marius brings troops that "drive the rebels to take refuge on Capitol Hill." Marius cuts off their water supply and they surrender but Marius is unable to stop a slaughter of the men as they leave, prompting hatred in both the people and the nobles. It is in this situation that Marius decides not to seek another term, saying that he would have to carry out an investigation of certain people if he remained but actually fearing that he would be defeated.

Marius is pressured to decree that Metellus return from exile. He makes the decree, does his best to see that it does not come to fruition, and leaves Rome before Metellus can arrive. Marius says that he is going on a sacrificial pilgrimage, but is actually hoping to make the kings of Asia so angry that they will declare war on Rome so that Marius would have another war to fight as a military leader. He is unsuccessful and spends his



time in minor arguments, especially with Sulla, until the armies of Italy unite to fight against Rome. Marius is given a command and wins one major victory resulting in six thousand enemy deaths, but it is Sulla who shines in this war and Marius—now at sixty-five years of age—is considered uninspired on the battlefield. He gives up his command, citing ill health, and seeks the pro-consul position. Daily, he goes to the Field of Mars where he takes athletic exercises with the young men and then sets out to Cappadocia and the Euxine Sea to participate in a battle. Some cannot understand his reasoning but he says that he wants to be certain his son has the best possible military training.

Sulpicius overthrows the counsel and gives command of the army to Marius but he is driven out of Rome. Through a series of mishaps and bad weather, Marius is at one point traveling with his son, then his stepson, almost captured by cavalry in Italy, and is eventually turned over to Italian officials.

Marius should have been put to death upon capture, but he is the person who led successful battles against invaders so is in fact a savior of Italy and the people find they cannot kill him. They send a soldier to do the deed but he says Marius' eyes shine to him out of the darkness of his room and that a voice speaks to him, so that he also cannot. In the end, the people decide to send him away in exile and allow him to meet his fate elsewhere. They provide him what he needs for the trip, including a ship from a man named Belaeus who later commissions a painting of the event, and Marius makes his way to Aenaria where he finds his previous traveling companions. Marius is met with hostility wherever he goes and young Marius is held for a time by the King of Numidia before making his own escape and meeting with the elder Marius.

In Rome, Cinna is acting like a dictator and is against Sulla, which is why Marius asks to join forces. Marius gathers a small force himself and meets Cinna, accepting the position as pro-consul and begins a reign of slaughter, killing many who simply displease him.

Marius is elected to a seventh term as consul and is faced with the eminent return of Sulla—the same man who drove Marius from the city years earlier. By one account, Marius comes down with pleurisy. By another, he talks at length of his life, the good fortunes and the bad, and ends by saying that a man who has lived as long as he should not trust anymore of his life to fortune, then goes to bed and dies seven days later. By another account, Marius spent his final days in delusion, imagining that he is at the head of an army marching against Asia.

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After his term as a Tribune, Marius stands for the aedilship. There are two grades in this office —curule and plebian. The curule are the more important and it is this position that Marius hopes to achieve. When he is not elected as a curule, he quickly casts his intentions as a plebian but is defeated for that position as well. It is interesting that he does not take it as a major blow, but apparently looks around for what he can do next.





Though Marius is not wealthy and he does not have the eloquent speech of successful orators of the day, his confidence draws people and the fact that he lives without the opulence popular in the day makes him more popular. He then marries brilliantly. Julia is the aunt of Caesar, said to have been the greatest man of Rome. It is noted that Caesar seems to have molded himself after Marius and, considering the family connection, this could have been the case.

As an example of his ability to endure great hardships, Marius—afflicted by varicose veins—underwent an extremely painful surgery to correct the condition without anesthetic. He did, however, decline to have the procedure on his other leg. This is evidence of his willingness to do whatever he sees as necessary but also of his common sense that weighs outcomes against costs. That same sense of weighing his options will be seen as he prepares to lead his army into one particular battle.

Marius' demands may not have been received well at the beginning, but once he establishes a toughened fighting force the men understand his ways and believe in him. That belief is strengthened with the case of Trebonius, a young soldier who kills Marius' nephew, Gaius Lusius. Trebonius is about to be court-martialed but provides proof that he killed out of self-defense because Lusius had made advances to him and he had refused. Not only is Trebonius pardoned, he is rewarded for having "performed a most noble action."

Marius is recalled to Rome after the fall of Catulus' army to meet the renewed threat of the invaders. He had been named consul during his absence and everyone expects that he will participate in a "triumph," a grand event that includes a parade. However, he does not. He might have been reluctant because his soldiers would not have participated and he did not want to deny them their honor due for their victory. He may also have been intent on investing the spoils of his first victory in the coming battle rather than in the triumph.

It is during his sixth term that Marius claims to oppose a law that requires all officials take an oath that they "abide by the people's vote and not oppose it in any way." Marius says there is nothing wrong with the law but that he believes "no sensible man" would take the oath to uphold that law because it requires that senate members show approval "under restraint." When the time comes to take the oath, Marius is expected to stand against it but now says that he will take the oath and will submit to the law, but adds that he will do so if the law "really was a law," and apparently uses this as his basis for later flaunting the law.

Marius is a firm believer in omens and after his capture he is encouraged by what he considers a sign of his escape. He is standing outside Fannia's house when a gate opens and a donkey rushes out, pauses near Marius, frisks and brays with impudence, then rushes for a drink of water. Marius takes it as a sign that he will escape by way of water—the ocean. Marius continues to pay attention to signs—he and his son immediately leave one location when Marius sees scorpions locked in a battle with each other—and seems to be correct in his assumptions and decisions. Marius even has a prophetess who travels with him during his early days of warfare. Octavius is also

listening to soothsayers and prophets when all are saying that Rome is in no danger and that he will prevail over any threats. Octavius' information will prove incorrect and will be his downfall.

There is a comparison of Marius with Plato who, when faced with death, listed every favorable event in his life. Marius seemed to have forgotten any of the good things, seeking only those that eluded his grasp. The people of Rome rejoice at Marius' death, believing they have come to the end of a reign of tyranny but soon learn that they have traded an old tyrant for a young tyrant. Young Marius continues in his father's tradition but soon meets with Sulla's forces and, when it becomes evident that he cannot escape, commits suicide.



## Chapter 2, Sulla

### Chapter 2, Sulla Summary and Analysis

Sulla serves under Marius during the war in Africa and is the man who receives Jugurtha from his disgruntled relative. Sulla, naturally boastful, is credited with ending the war which does not sit well with Marius though Marius does not believe Sulla is a real threat at first. Sulla turns to politics, loses his first bid for praetorship but wins the second and is accused by Caesar of having "bought it." Sulla often seems to have the good fortune of being in the right place at the right time and is the first Roman approached by the Parthians for an alliance.

At fifty, he is appointed consul, has been married several times and is always focused on the future. An evil man named Sulpicius bands with Marius and the senate enacts a suspension of business. Sulpicius' armed "bodyguards" attack the assembly and Sulla, chased into Marius' house, emerges to say that the suspension of business is cancelled. Sulpicius, now in control of the city by a sheer show of force, hands control of the army over to Marius, though Sulla escapes from the city and reaches the army camp first. There begins a battle between the two that escalates into a full civil war. Sulla hesitates to attack Rome, but goes forward after advice from a soothsayer and a favorable dream. Sulla, angered at being met at the city walls by unarmed citizens hurling bricks at the troops, orders fire be set—completely disregarding the fact that friends and family will be just as heavily impacted as his enemies. As his first action upon taking the city, Sulla calls on the senate to issue the death sentence on Marius and Sulpicius. The servant who betrayed Sulpicius is rewarded and then thrown to his death from Tarpeian Rock.

The people reject Sulla's choices for office, electing those they think will anger Sulla but he pretends agreement, saying that the people would not have the power to choose if not for him. Meanwhile, the war is going well for Mithridates but bad omens concern him. Athens sides with Mithridates and Sulla marches against Athens. The city might have fallen for lack of supplies but Sulla is impatient and pushes forward, destroying a sacred forest, selling off many of his country's treasures and demanding the treasures of the god Delphi be brought to him. With the proceeds, Sulla—like other generals of the day—buys comfort for his soldiers in an effort to hold their loyalty and pays the costs of the war. Sulla does take Athens, kills many, then moves on to take Piraeus.

Sulla is joined by the forces of the Phocians under command of Hortensius and the two armies occupy Philoboetous—a lush place with ready water. Sulla's men are afraid of the awesome sight of the enemy and Sulla spends the next few days working them at manual labor until they are tired of the drudgery and ready for the action of battle, even though it means danger. Sulla moves to Chaeronea where a small number of troops hurl rocks from a high spot, prompting the enemy to rush down the hill, many of them falling on their own spears or driving their fellow soldiers over the precipice. Sulla's force then attacks, fighting their way through a line of slaves who hold for longer than



expected and at such close quarters that the chariots are ineffective. Sulla attributes the victory more to good fortune than good leadership, takes half the territory belonging to the Thebans and forces them to repay what Sulla himself took from the gods to wage the war.

Near Orchomenus, Sulla's men are attacked and almost flee until he rushes forward with a standard and rallies his men. The situation in Rome is deteriorating as many nobles flee the city and remain near Sulla's troops. Torn between finishing the war and returning to Rome, Mithridates sues for peace and Sulla agrees to several terms, largely favorable to Rome. Sulla then plans to march against Fimbria but Fimbria's men rush to meet Sulla, welcoming them and helping them with their preparations to make camp. Fimbria commits suicide in his own camp and Sulla's men lay waste to the countryside.

Sulla sails from Ephesus to Piraeus then to Aedepsus for the "hot water cures" and a time of rest as he exhibits signs of gout. As he prepares to enter Italy, Sulla fears his troops will go to their own homes, but they voluntarily pledge allegiance and go so far as to raise money among themselves to help fund the next phase of their efforts, though Sulla refuses the money. The signs continue to be that Sulla will be successful and Sulla's men entice soldiers from Scipio's camp to join their own. When this has been accomplished—by use of bribes and promises—Scipio is taken captive. Sulla wants to engage the younger Marius, having had a dream in which the older Marius warns the younger that something horrible is about to befall him. However circumstances—including a heavy rain that mires down Sulla's men—prevent Sulla from giving the command to fight. While Sulla's men are digging a rampart, Marius' men attack. It is said that Sulla's men feel rage at the situation and thoroughly defeat Marius. By some accounts, Marius leads the charge and then flees. By others, Marius is not even there when the attack occurred.

As Sulla nears Rome, he learns that enemy troops under the command of Telesinus are already at the city. Sulla pushes his men to the city, allows them to eat and rest for a short time, then—despite the advice of those who say the men are too tired for an all-out battle—attacks. He is almost killed, holds his men to the line of battle by entreaty or force, but the enemy take control and Sulla eventually finds refuge in his camp. Though Sulla's initial battle is not successful, others of his generals are and Sulla is soon approached by members of the enemy camps asking for mercy. Sulla tells one group that he will spare them if they first attack another enemy camp, which they do. Later, Sulla gathers six thousand of the enemy soldiers in the "circus" and has them slaughtered as he addresses the reconvened senate, continuing in a calm tone of voice even when he can barely be heard over the shrieks.

In control in Rome, Sulla publishes lists of men—some five hundred twenty in all—who will be punished. Anyone who harbors one of the condemned is executed. Anyone who kills one of those on the list is rewarded. Thousands are slaughtered. As self-proclaimed dictator, Sulla enacts a decree exonerating himself from all past acts and giving himself ultimate power. Among his acts is his decision to create a family connection with a man named Pompey the Great. Sulla requires that the man divorce his wife, then that his wife's daughter, Amelia, divorce her husband though she is pregnant with her husband's



child. The two are then married to each other but Amelia dies in childbirth. Sulla is so certain that good fortune continues to play an important role in his life that he gives up the dictatorship and allows the people to elect a consul. He seems to go about his life as an ordinary person at this point, not taking part in the elections but still planting seeds of enmity when it suits him.

Sulla is throwing a lavish banquet that lasts for days when his wife, Metella, falls ill. At the advice of his priests who forbid Metella's death to "pollute" Sulla's house and refuse to allow Sulla to visit her, Sulla has Metella moved to another house and divorces her. Though he himself enacts a law governing the maximum to be spent on specific things—including funerals and banquets—he spares no expense on Metella's funeral, indicating that he divorced her to follow the letter of the priests' instructions. Soon after, Sulla is watching the gladiators when a young woman, Valeria, plucks a piece of wool from his toga saying that he should not be surprised that she would want some of his good fortune for herself. They marry, though Sulla continues his excessive lifestyle, soon falls ill of worms and ulcers in his intestines. Just before his death, he oversees the reconciliation of two parties in Dicaerchia and drafts laws to govern that city. When a man named Granius refuses to pay a debt to the public treasury, Sulla summons him and then yells for his servants to strangle the man, yelling so loudly that one of the ulcers breaks and Sulla loses a lot of blood, dying the next day. Sulla is almost denied a funeral but Pompey—the only one of Sulla's friends not mentioned in his will—insists. Women donate so many spices that the remainder after anointing the body is used to build a statue. Rains threaten on the day of the funeral but holds off until the funeral pyre collapses, beginning just as the bones are being collected—prompting the idea that good fortune is again present. Sulla writes the inscription on his memorial stone which basically says that "he had not been outdone by any of the friends in doing good or by any of his enemies in doing harm." He leaves behind two young children from his wife Metella and one daughter—Postuma—born to Valeria after Sulla's death.

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Sulla lives in cheap lodgings as a young man and is sometimes criticized for having done so. As it is pointed out, he once lived poorly but gained more than was acceptable. People believe that to "forsake one's hereditary poverty" is just as disgraceful as squandering the family fortune. As a man, he is known to have a taste for the comedic and buffoonery. Though he can be serious, the moment he goes in to dinner there is nothing serious. He surrounds himself with those who think as he does, including actors and an "accessible" woman who eventually falls in love with him. Sulla does inherit a fortune from his stepmother who loves him as her own.

Sulla touts the role of Fortune in his life, saying that his most brilliant acts are typically spur-of-the-moment reactions to a situation. He tends to be inconsistent—promoting and insulting without apparent reason or cause. Though he seems unforgiving, he is capable of considering longer-range aspects of situations. For example, his troops once clubbed a legate to death but Sulla does not punish the action. Instead, he declares that he can now count on their fierce loyalty since they must atone for their action. It seems likely that he was trying to earn the favor of the troops as the war was nearing the end



and he wanted a generalship against Mithridates. The feud between Sulla and Marius will result in civil war and there are many portents—a trumpet blaring from a clear sky, a sparrow that drops a portion of a grasshopper at the feet of an assemblage of men but flies off with the rest, and ravens and mice that eat their young. Much later, as Sulla is fighting the final major battle of the civil war, two of the enemy soldiers see Sulla astride a white horse and prepare to throw their lances. Sulla does not see the attack but his groom touches the whip to Sulla's horse and the animal lunges ahead with the lances barely grazing the animal's tail before striking the ground. Sulla immediately pulls a small statue of a deity from inside his tunic, covers it with kisses and cries out to the god that he has made it through the wars to reach the gates of his own city, and asks whether it is here that he is to be allowed to die.

It is noted that there is a point at which Sulla rushes into Marius' home and is allowed to leave without being harmed. When Sulla takes over Rome, he has no such compassion for Marius but immediately decrees that Marius is to be killed, forcing Marius into exile.

After Sulla comes to terms with Mithridates, he learns that Mithridates has been chastised for his handling of the peace treaty and that he now does not intend to honor the terms. Sulla meets Mithridates who begins a speech regarding his reasons but Sulla says only that Mithridates has no choice and Mithridates does honor the agreement. Sulla encounters some anger from his own people regarding the agreement with Mithridates, based on the fact that Mithridates had killed one hundred fifty thousand Romans, but Sulla points out that the Romans would not have withstood the combined troops of Mithridates and Fimbria.

The description of Sulla's death is interesting. It is said that he has ulcers throughout his intestines and that this disease corrupts the flesh which then turns into worms. There are apparently many "employed day and night in removing these worms," but the worms multiply faster than they can be removed. The reader should remember that this is Plutarch's account of Sulla's illness and is based on the information that was available at the time. This account includes the fact that, though Sulla was newly married, he continued to have liaisons with many of his former friends, laying about on couches and drinking to excess. It is also noted that the female impersonator, Metrobius, is often in Sulla's company and that even though Metrobius was past his prime, Sulla "continued to insist that he was in love with him." It is noted that "by living this way," Sulla himself aggravates his health condition. It is also noted that he is not the first to die of these worms. Sulla apparently foresees his death as he says he sees his deceased son, motioning that Sulla should stop worrying about the cares of the world and join him and Metella in a place of perfect peace. Sulla completes his own memoirs two days before he died.

Plutarch includes a brief comparison of Sulla to Lysander, a Spartan leader. Sulla is leader by self-proclamation while Lysander is chosen by his people. Sulla uses the public's money for his own causes and keeps whatever he captures for himself. Lysander returns his spoils as public money though Plutarch notes that neither man's action on this point is particularly helpful to their cities. Lysander encourages his people to a greater passion for life while Sulla attempts to legislate spending, putting maximum

amounts on private endeavors such as banquets but then ignoring them himself. Sulla's victories far outweigh those of Lysander. Plutarch writes that Lysander should get "the prize for self-control and moderation, Sulla that for generalship and courage."



# Chapter 3, Crassus

## Chapter 3, Crassus Summary and Analysis

Crassus is well-mannered and temperate, likely because he had grown up having family meals with his parents, two brothers and their families, making family an important part of his life. His one vice seems to be avarice and he buys up land after Sulla's return to power, often with the houses burned or even on fire, making owners anxious to sell cheaply. He owns many slaves and oversees their education himself, often loans money at no interest but always requires repayment, owns silver mines and often throws dinner parties—noted not for the lavish fare but for the friendliness—for ordinary people.

When Marius and Cinna take over Rome, Crassus' brother and father are killed but the young Crassus is spared. With three friends and ten servants, he escapes to Spain but fears approaching anyone and hides in a cave until supplies run out. Then he sends a slave to approach the landowner, Vibius, who is pleased to know Crassus escaped, sends food every day and instructs two female slaves to remain with Crassus for his company. After eight months, Cinna dies, Crassus gathers a force and comes out of hiding, sacking the city of Malaca by some accounts though Crassus denies the charge. Crassus remains briefly in Africa then joins Sulla who sends him on an errand to raise forces. Crassus, fearing the enemy, asks for an escort and Sulla says that Crassus' father, brother and all others murdered without justice are his escorts, stinging Crassus into resolute action. Crassus is jealous of Sulla's deference to Pompey. While Pompey is continually more successful as a general, Crassus earns the love of the people by being involved in everything and always willing to help, even to the point of offering loans.

A war is prompted by a group of Spartans who escape a cruel leader, led by Spartacus, and successfully wage several battles. The senate recalls the current consuls and send Crassus as commander. With Spartacus bearing down on him, Crassus sends troops in an arc with specific instructions not to engage the Spartans but the leader, Mummius, fights and loses many men when his own men drop their weapons and run. Crassus separates five hundred of those who fled into groups of ten, then chooses by lot one of each group to be executed—an out-dated method of punishment revived by Crassus. Crassus meets Spartacus on a peninsula, digs a trench forty miles long fifteen feet wide and deep with a formidable wall on the banks, effectively cutting Spartacus off from fresh supplies until one snowy night, he fills a section of the ditch with timber and gets about a third of his army across. Crassus calls for reinforcements, regrets the decision because he knows that those who arrive on the scene will be credited with victory, wages all out attacks and is defeated several times. However, the Spartans, now overly confident, refuse to obey orders and meet Crassus but are defeated. The few survivors, fleeing the scene, run into Pompey who slaughters them and claims that Crassus ended the war but that he, Pompey, "dug the war up by the roots."





Pompey is asked to stand for consul and agrees to help Crassus in his own bid for the second seat of that office, knowing that to do so will mean Crassus is indebted. Crassus accomplishes little in the office but he and Pompey are constantly at odds. During a feast, a man of the equestrian order named Onatius Aurelius says he has had a vision in which Jupiter ordered that Crassus and Pompey must be friends before they leave office. Pompey does nothing but Crassus says he does not believe it demeans him at all to extend the hand of friendship.

Caesar wants the consulship but knows he needs either Pompey or Crassus behind him. Instead of attaining the support of one and the enmity of the other, Caesar convinces the two men that they make others stronger by their division and that by joining forces they will be the strongest power in Rome. Actually, Caesar is the one to benefit, becoming the strongest power by having the two men behind him. After some time, Caesar, Pompey and Crassus decide to take over control of the senate. Pompey and Crassus will stand for the consul seat and Caesar will support them. An attempted assassination of their opposition keeps most who would have voted against Pompey and Crassus stay inside their homes and means the two win the election. They immediately put Caesar in charge of troops in Gaul for the next five years and divide by lots provinces and armies—Syria for Crassus and Spain for Pompey. Crassus plans to make Syria the beginning point for his grand expansion scheme.

During the first winter, Crassus spends all his time on business affairs, never seeing to the need for training the troops. He is offered the opportunity by Arsaces to turn back but Crassus refuses, saying hair will grow on his palm before he turns back. Despite reports that the enemy has superior weapons and men to Crassus' own, and the ill omens, Crassus presses forward though his men are fearful. He receives help from the Armenian King Artavasdes in the form of cavalry, but the bad omens continue.

Crassus is taken in by information from Ariamnes, an Arab chieftain who assures them that they must advance in a specific direction. The soldiers are soon in sand with no water and difficult walking. Ariamnes is allowed to leave, Crassus still believing the information and that Ariamnes is going to sow discord among the enemy troops. The first sight of the enemy is awesome and Crassus changes his mind several times about their best defensive position, finally arranging a large square with a hollow center from which he will command. The Parthians first plan a frontal assault but see the depth of the Roman square and instead surround them before the Romans can react.

Crassus sends his son with a number of the cavalry to fight off a new attack but the men are slaughtered. The notables of the group fall upon their own swords or have their servants kill them to avoid capture. Crassus hears from his son that he is in trouble and wants to rush to his aid but is soon faced by the Parthians who have Crassus' son—Publius—on the point of a spear. The Romans are then very afraid but Crassus says that the grief is his own and that the men must fight for Rome. He then retreats to mourn, leaving the leadership to others.

During the night, Crassus and his troops leave, marching for Carrhae and leaving their dead and wounded behind. Though the Parthians know the Romans are leaving, they



make no effort to stop them. Crassus is met by the soldiers of Carrhae and escorted into the city but the Parthians demand that Crassus be turned over to them. Crassus and his men make plans to leave during the night but Andromachus—an untrustworthy individual at best—knows of the plan and alerts the Parthians. Andromachus leads them on a circuitous path though some realize the treachery and strike out on their own. With the mountains in sight, Crassus' men are faced with the Parthians again and demand that Crassus accept an offer of peace. Crassus and several of his trusted advisors and leaders go to meet the Parthians, though Crassus issues a final appeal that the message taken to Rome should be that he died at the hands of his enemy, not because of the demands of his own countrymen. He is killed and beheaded, along with the Romans who have accompanied him and with only a few exceptions, the Roman soldiers are slaughtered. A mock tribute is arranged with a Parthian who resembles Crassus dressed in a gown and the heads of Roman soldiers displayed on spikes, while Crassus' head is sent to the king and bears the brunt of great ridicule.

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Crassus' avarice is well-known and earns him the anger of Sulla when Crassus adds a man's name to the proscription list in order to gain the man's holdings. It is also noted that Crassus, a normally tolerant man, cannot stand avarice in others. His jealousy toward others does not prompt malice. Though he is jealous of Caesar's fame, he once rescues Caesar from creditors who are literally repossessing luggage.

As Crassus is preparing to leave Rome bound for Syria, there is a contingent set on stopping him. Pompey arrives to see Crassus off which dispels some of the anger but does not appease Ateius who issues first an appeal for Crassus' arrest. With no cooperation on that front, Ateius calls down a series of curses—one so severe that it is never used lightly because the man who utters the curse will also be cursed. The people of Rome are then unhappy with Ateius whom they believe has involved Rome in the curse. The people understand that Ateius was angry for the sake of Rome, but that he has now surely caused the country great troubles.

Crassus himself finds a bad omen as he winters the first season of the campaign from Syria. He has been joined by his son who distinguished himself in other battles. Upon a visit to the temple of Aphrodite, young Crassus stumbles and falls down. His father stumbles as well and fall down on his son. It is interesting that so many of the leaders put great stock in fortune and in omens, but Crassus seemed to ignore them. When Crassus makes a mistake in his speech that worries his soldiers, he could have explained what he meant, but does not, seeming to expect that they would also pay no attention to that which had been so important in their lives.

There follows Plutarch's comparison of Crassus and Nicias. Nicias tried to avoid military command but the people, believing him to be ultimately qualified, continue to elect him to the positions of military command. Crassus continually seeks military leadership positions. Plutarch does say that Crassus does not give up at the end of this life but gives in to the demands of his friends and is betrayed and killed by his enemies.

Nicais trusts the enemy, a fatal mistake that led to his death and, according to Plutarch, was the source of his final disgrace.



# Chapter 4, Pompey

## Chapter 4, Pompey Summary and Analysis

Pompey's father, Strabo, is hated but Pompey is loved consistently throughout his life as a generous and dignified man. Pompey once learns of a murder plot, puts a guard on his father's tent and waits until a man named Terentius first stabs Pompey's bed thinking the young man is asleep, then rushes Strabo. Strabo, afraid to show himself, remains inside as Pompey pleads for a reconciliation, gaining it when he throws himself at the feet of the soldiers, inviting them to trample him on their way out of camp.

Pompey marries then joins Cinna's army but flees as accusations fly. Some believe that Cinna killed Pompey, so quickly does he disappear, and Cinna is soon at the heart of an uprising and killed. At a time when many nobles flee to the relative safety of Sulla's military camp, Pompey—living in Picenum—gathers an army to join Sulla in an effort to gain honor for himself rather than becoming another refugee. He does raise the military troop and meets three enemy forces along the way and routs them all through various means. Sulla shows deference to Pompey and proposes to send him to the aid of Metellus but Pompey says that he will not presume to take over from a military leader of Metellus' stature. Pompey does not go until Metellus himself asks for aid. Plutarch notes that Pompey's deeds are many and distinguished, from the beginning of his career.

Sulla sends Pompey on important missions where he is known for his deeds of humanity, sometimes showing mercy to those he captures and sometimes allowing notables to escape or even helping them. He does put some to death and is criticized for his handling of some of these cases. Pompey meets Domitius during a great storm and is almost killed because a soldier does not recognize him in the heavy rain and Pompey is slow at giving the password. Nonetheless, the battle is a slaughter, with Pompey emerging the victor. Over only forty days, Pompey wins the war in Africa, then allows his soldiers several days for hunting African wildlife. When Sulla orders Pompey's soldiers back to Rome with Pompey to remain in Africa with one legion until he is relieved, the soldiers nearly revolt until Pompey swears he will kill himself before he allows the soldiers to disobey on his behalf. Upon reaching Rome, Pompey is greeted warmly and Sulla calls him "the Great." Sulla objects when Pompey wants a triumph but Pompey insists and plans to enter the city in a chariot pulled by elephants, though he has to discard the idea because the city gates are too narrow for the animals.

Pompey helps Lepidus gain the consul, prompting Sulla to say that Pompey had helped his enemy become too powerful. Sulla does not name Pompey in his will but Pompey ensures that Sulla has a proper burial despite popular opinion to the contrary. Lepidus instigates a revolt, Pompey fights Brutus' forces and wins, then kills Brutus, and tells the people of Rome he has won the war. Lepidus is driven out of Italy and then, finding a letter indicating that his wife was unfaithful, dies of despair. Pompey is then sent to Spain where he fights the brilliant tactician Sertorius. At one point, Pompey attempts to fight Sertorius on his own, hoping for a decisive victory, but the battle ends when



Metellus approaches and Sertorius runs. Sertorius is then assassinated by his own men and Pompey easily defeats his successor, Perpenna, who has in his possession Sertorius' correspondence—letters which could have begun a rebellion in Rome. Pompey has Perpenna killed and burns the letters without reading them.

Upon his return to Rome, Pompey is encouraged to stand for consul and agrees to support Crassus, saying that he will be pleased if the people give him Crassus as a colleague. The two disagree on every point. Then comes the day when the man of the equestrian order stands, saying he has been given a vision by Jupiter that Crassus and Pompey must make up their differences before they leave office. Crassus makes the first move and the two appear to have made up their differences.

Pompey is then elected to oversee a battle at sea against the increasing threat of pirates, though there is an uproar in the senate over the great power Pompey will have under this law. Only Caesar speaks for the law and he has ulterior motives. Some give up and Pompey's tendency toward mercy encourages other to surrender as well. However, the majority move their families into fortified castles in Cilicia but eventually give in to Pompey's siege. Pompey does not want to simply turn the pirates loose to reorganize and hopes that a taste of civilization will change them, so hands them over to places with farming land available.

While Pompey is still away from Rome, the Romans enact a law granting him additional authority and sending him to fight Mithridates. Though Pompey says he wishes he were an insignificant person no one had heard of so that he could live quietly in the country with his wife, everyone knows he is pleased at the appointment. In taking over command from Lucullus, Pompey changes many of Lucullus' actions, making it clear that Pompey is now in power. Pompey meets Mithridates in the dark and routs the opposition, though Mithridates escapes. Pompey follows, fighting battles along the way and accepting the surrender of King Tigranes. When a number of Mithridates' concubines are brought to Pompey, he sends them all home except Stratonice, who captures his attention with her harp playing so that he takes her immediately off to bed then bestows the estate of a wealthy man on her poor father. When the King of the Iberians sends Pompey furniture of gold, he hands them over to the public treasure. Pompey again sets out, this time heading for the Red Sea to "round off the circuit of his military expeditions," leaving behind a blockade to prevent food from reaching Mithridates. Soon, Pompey receives word that Mithridates has killed himself upon learning of the treachery of his son, and that the son, Pharnaces, now holds power in the region and is ready for surrender to end the fighting. Mithridates' head is among the gifts left for Pompey but he refuses to look upon the corpse since the embalmers neglected to remove the brain. Pompey's trip home is a series of stops, often doing good deeds, as in Athens where he gives money to help with the rebuilding of the city. Pompey's wife has led a "loose life" while he was away but he ignores it until his return, sending her a letter of divorce though never publicly announcing his reasons. In Rome, people both look forward to Pompey's return and fear that he will seize control. Once in Italy, Pompey disbands his army, reminding them to return for his triumph and so inspires the people to rush to him, providing an escort in the city that is larger than if he had been accompanied by his army.



Pompey, now firmly allied with Caesar, marries Caesar's daughter, Julia, though she had been pledged to someone else. At one point, Bibulus is attacked and does not come out of his house for the final eight months of his consulship, though he continues to issue edicts. Pompey soon falls out of favor—a situation to which he is not accustomed. Caesar works toward establishing himself as a major power, convincing Pompey and Crassus to stand for the consulship and pledging that he will send his troops to Rome to vote, ensuring victory. The agreement is that Crassus and Pompey will then make arrangements for Caesar's continued command of the army and will divide provinces among them. They do this, further corrupting the election by buying votes to put their own allies into other offices. At the end of the term, Crassus leaves but Pompey opens a theater, based on plans from abroad and home to many animal fights—including elephants. Pompey and Caesar do not like each other but fear Crassus and so hide their true feelings. Then Crassus dies, as does Pompey's young wife, Caesar's daughter Julia.

At a time of upheaval in Rome when there is no cohesive leadership, a motion is made to appoint Pompey dictator. He declines and the motion is amended to make Pompey sole consul giving him the right to appoint a counselor as he sees fit. He accepts and asks Cato to act as advisor. Pompey is accused of favoritism with regard to the courts and is then criticized for marrying Cornelia, daughter-in-law of Crassus, who is widowed when her husband, Publius, is killed at Partha. Other than these incidents, Pompey is popular and when Pompey falls ill in Naples, the people of many cities offer up sacrifices upon his recovery.

Caesar, ordered to disband his troops, refuses unless Pompey gives up his own military status. Pompey, however, is under orders to raise troops and can scarcely raise enough men to march against Caesar, prompting chaos and a series of controversial reports on Caesar's movements. These are filled with discrepancies so that Pompey has no real information on Caesar. He does declare a state of civil war and orders the senate to follow him or be declared a supporter of Caesar. Many flee the city with some saying they simply fear forsaking Pompey. Caesar returns, does his best to calm fears and prompting Pompey's escape—a move that garners acclaim from some and criticism from others. Pompey gathers a large force and, just shy of sixty himself, partakes in the vigorous training as many show their support for him. At one point, Caesar and Pompey do battle and Pompey routs Caesar's troops but does not follow, prompting Caesar to say that this was the day Pompey's army would have claimed victory if their leader had been a winner. Pompey refuses to pursue Caesar but is urged to this action and finally agrees, though he finds himself attacked for his decisions, often by those who believe his ultimate goal is to retain power for himself into perpetuity. Pompey and Caesar ultimately clash and Pompey is thoroughly defeated. Caesar's soldiers, upon rushing Pompey's camp, find elaborate preparations for their return, including wreaths, lounging couches and goblets. There is no indication of soldiers, hardened and ready for battle. Pompey himself flees with only a few freed men, encounters the merchant ship of the Roman citizen Peticius who has had a dream in which Pompey was pleading for help. Peticius recognizes Pompey and takes him and all his companions aboard, making the accommodations as acceptable as possible. When Favonius sees Pompey removing his own shoes, he rushes forward and takes over the duties of a servant. Pompey



travels to Mitylene for Cornelia and is invited into the city though he refuses, telling the citizens that they must submit to Caesar the conqueror for he is a just man.

Pompey, accompanied by his wife and her servants, is soon joined by about sixty of the senators and continues to sail, avoiding harbors except to take on supplies. He then learns that his navy is intact and under the command of Cato and laments the fact that he allowed the battle to take place so far inland that his formidable naval forces were useless as backup. After much discussion, Pompey decides to seek refuge in Egypt. The powers there are torn as to whether to accept Pompey—if they accept him, Pompey will become their master and Caesar their enemy; if they refuse him Pompey will be their enemy and Caesar will not thank them for forcing him to continue his chase of Pompey. It is Theodotus who comes up with the idea to allow Pompey entry and then kill him, earning Caesar's gratitude and noting that "dead men don't bite" so that there will be nothing to fear from Pompey.

By the reception—a small group in a fishing boat sent to retrieve Pompey—it is expected that treachery is afoot but Pompey, noting the armed soldiers along the shoreline, knows there is no chance of escape. Though Cornelia is crying as if he were already dead, he goes with the party, his parting words an indication that he knows what is to come. Pompey is just stepping from the boat when he is run through with a sword, stabbed by several with daggers, beheaded, stripped and left in the water. The boats with Pompey's friends put to sea and, with the help of a favorable wind, escape. Pompey utters only a moan as he dies and his former slave, Philip, gathers wood for a funeral pyre aided by a man who had served with Pompey. When Caesar arrives, he turns from the sight of Pompey's head and cries at the sight of Pompey's signet ring, then orders the death of two of those who instigated the plot. Pompey, at sixty, was no longer a threat to Caesar's power.

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Pompey loves beautiful women. In an uncharacteristic action, he is rude to the widow of a slave because it is known that no man can resist and he wants to be certain that no one believes he is among those who succumb to her beauty. After the death of his father, Pompey is tried for misusing public money but even that turns to his favor with an arrangement of marriage to the daughter of the praetor, Antistius. Pompey and Antistia marry shortly after the trial. He is later required by Sulla to divorce Antistia, marry Sulla's stepdaughter Aemilia who had been divorced so that the marriage could take place. Aemilia is pregnant by her ex-husband at the time of the marriage and dies in childbirth.

Sulla has many notable people in his entourage but he grants special honor to Pompey, calling him Imperator which denotes a great military leader, and uncovering his head in deference to Pompey whenever he is near.

During his first term as consul, Pompey participates in a traditional military discharge ceremony though as leader he was not expected to do so. He leads his horse himself, appears before the two censors and, according to tradition, gives his own name as the person he served under. The show is met with loud approval by all gathered, including



the censors. It seems that these types of public displays are what makes Pompey so popular with the people, though after leaving office he largely withdraws from public life, appearing rarely and surrounded by people so that it is impossible for one to approach him.

After his return to Rome, Pompey is criticized for bribing votes. It is noted that he is named consul because of his great military deeds and that he now acts as though the consul is something to be bought by someone who cannot achieve it on his own. Pompey soon makes it clear that he will be used as Caesar, now holding the position of consul, wishes. Pompey pledges to march against Rome in support of the people if Caesar's proposed laws establishing new towns and dividing land among the poor are not upheld.

When Caesar is called upon to give up his military command, he insists that he either be allowed to retain the command or that Pompey also be required to give up his command. Caesar's argument is that as long as he and Pompey are military powers, they are evenly matched, but one without the balance of the other will be too strong to be a positive force for Rome. It is interesting that Caesar insists on this when he is called upon to give up his own command and one wonders whether he would have been so concerned had it been that Pompey was to give up his command, leaving Caesar with his military control.

When Cornelia meets with Pompey after his losses, she tells him that her life would have been better served had she killed herself before she heard of the death of her first husband. She then apologizes for having brought misfortune to Pompey as well. Pompey says that he must now leave it to fortune and see if he can be raised up as he was brought down. There is no real discussion of her reasons for making these statements and Plutarch says that he must not go too far into this subject but must return to the telling of the story of Pompey's fate.

There follows a brief comparison of Pompey and Agesilaus. One of the notable comparisons is that Pompey gives cities to those pirates who are willing to change their way of life while Agesilaus is intent on making slaves of all he could capture. Another point is that Agesilaus always avoids battle when his forces are inferior and forces battle when he has the upper hand, while Pompey does not always seem to be in control of the situations, thereby avoiding losses. Finally, Pompey trusts the Egyptians and is betrayed by them, but Agesilaus earns the trust of the Egyptians and abandons them.





# Chapter 5, Caesar

## Chapter 5, Caesar Summary and Analysis

When Caesar, though still very young, learns that Sulla has considered whether he should be put to death, he goes on the run. He moves around, is captured by Sulla's troops but bribes his way out of the situation, and is then captured by pirates who demand a ransom of twenty talents. Caesar laughingly says they do not know who they have captured and that he will pay fifty, sends his men to gather the ransom which is soon paid. While he is waiting, Caesar partakes of the exercises and games of the pirates and orders them around as if he is their leader, going so far as to tell them that he will someday order their deaths. When Caesar is released, he puts together a small fleet and captures the pirates, taking all their property for his own and eventually ordering their deaths by crucifixion. As Sulla's power declines, Caesar is urged to return to Rome and does so, though stops off to study some first.

Caesar is liked and there are many who believe his popularity will die once he stops spending money on banquets, but they soon discover that his popularity continues to grow. In fact, when Caesar's aunt Julia—wife of Marius—dies, Caesar displays images of Marius who is currently in exile. Some say Caesar is wrong for having done so, but the people cheer him on and approve of the fact that Marius is getting his just recognition. Though speeches at the funerals of older women like Julia are expected, Caesar breaks with tradition to offer speeches when his own young wife dies, making himself appear to be tender hearted to the people who love him for this human trait. He later marries Cornelia, has a daughter who marries Pompey, and Caesar marries Pompeia as his third wife. He later divorces her when she is accused of having an affair with a young man named Clodius who sneaks into Pompeia's quarters during a religious rite. Clodius has the popular support and Caesar refuses to condemn him, saying that he divorces his wife because she ought not have been in a position to be accused, but it is noted that he likely does not want to arouse the anger of the people who support Clodius.

Caesar revives the political party of Marius, who has been exiled, despite the fact that it is not acceptable. His daring brings the party supporters forward and earns him the support of many and the open enmity of Sulla's supporters. The people support Caesar and when one senate session lasts longer than normal, they fear that he is being held. They demand his release though he is not actually under arrest. In an effort to dispel the power Caesar is quickly gaining, Cato orders additional grain be given to all the people. The act has the desired effect. Caesar's term as praetor is uneventful though at one point when he is trying to leave for his province in Spain creditors stop him and Crassus pays his debts so that he can go. Caesar is successful in Spain, arranging an agreement between creditors and debtors, having several military successes and gaining a fortune for himself and his soldiers. Upon his return to Rome, Caesar foregoes a triumphal entry in order to put his name forward for the consulship, uniting Crassus and Pompey to have the two men back him for the office.



While in office, Caesar pits the people against the nobles and uses Pompey and Crassus as support to gain what he wants. Pompey marries Caesar's daughter, though she is already engaged to Servilius Caepio who is promised Pompey's daughter for marriage though she is also engaged. Through these and several other liaisons, important families are united and Cato protests that it is "an intolerable state of affairs" that government offices are being "prostituted" through these alliances. During this same time, Caesar's co-consul, Bibulus, shuts himself up in his house for fear that he will be killed. Caesar's support wanes among the nobility who are afraid of Caesar's armed guards, with the exception of Considius who says he is old with too little life left to be afraid.

Plutarch then turns to Caesar's military campaigns, saying that Caesar—for one reason or another—leads a more outstanding career than Sulla, Marius, Pompey, Fabius, Scipio or Metellus. He conquers, wins alliances, is kind to his soldiers, faces some three million men in battle, kills a million and takes another million captive. His soldiers love him, mostly because he undergoes every hardship they endure and faces every danger they face. Soldiers who are, at best, ordinary excel to gain honor for Caesar. He travels quickly, sometimes dictating from horseback, has epileptic fits and headaches but does not use them as excuses to take it easy. When his own generals fear attacking the Germans, tells them to go home, prompting their men to cry out and the entire army to follow Caesar willingly on a successful campaign. After waging a successful campaign in Gaul, Caesar begins holding meetings with Romans, giving each one something with promises of greater rewards later. Here, out of Pompey's sight, Caesar builds support for himself as a Roman leader, using the spoils of war to pay for it. However, the moment there is new fighting against the Roman allies in Gaul, Caesar rushes back to battle. At one point, Caesar is attacked while fortifying camp and his men would have been fully routed except that Caesar grabs a shield and pushes his way into the battle. His men, seeing their leader in danger, push themselves past their normal skill levels. Though the enemy never runs, the sixty thousand who attack are killed down to the last five hundred. Caesar again returns to the business of looking after his own interests in Rome, giving candidates money to bribe voters in order to win elections and arranging for Crassus and Pompey to share the consulship with Caesar to gain some specific benefits from their term.

Caesar continues to be involved in the wars, once pushing his men past the known boundaries into Britain, which scholars of the time were not even certain existed. Then Caesar hears of the death of his daughter Julia and her newborn child. Some worry that the bond between Caesar and Pompey would now be broken, and that this bond seems to have been what was holding the state together. The following winter, Caesar leaves his men quartered in several camps while he returns to camp near Italy, but then learns of a Gaul uprising that takes several of the camps by storm and currently holds Cicero in siege. Caesar hurries back with a force of only seven thousand men, builds a rampart and affects the signs of fear, waits for a disorganized attack and routs the enemy. Pompey loans Caesar two legions of men to replace those killed and Caesar learns of yet another uprising. Caesar ignores the harsh winter conditions and continues to march against the revolutionaries. He besieges the city of Alesia when a force of three hundred thousand men comes to the city's aid. With a hundred seventy thousand men inside the



city, Caesar builds fortifications that will protect his men from the army inside the city as well as those on their way to the city. Then Caesar, with the daring he is famous for, defeats the arriving troops though no one knew about the battle until Caesar's soldiers begin returning to their camps carrying the spoils of war. Vergentorix, commander of the Gaul forces, dons his most glorious armor and rides to Caesar, sitting on the ground at Caesar's feet until he is arrested and carried away.

Pompey and Caesar are the two remaining forces in Rome and both begin to consider how to put themselves in full control. Pompey demands that his troops—on loan to Caesar—be returned. Caesar gives each a monetary gift before sending them back. Pompey deludes himself into believing that Caesar is perched for a fall from power. Caesar has Curio propose that both Caesar and Pompey release their troops, each then seek office as a private citizen. Soon, matters escalate and Caesar and Pompey are fully at odds to the point that Caesar takes troops against Pompey. After a while, Caesar returns to Rome, is named dictator, gives back civil rights Sulla had denied and calls back many exiled under Sulla's rule.

Caesar at one point invites the Roman senators to contract Pompey for his terms of peace but they do not follow up on this. Plutarch notes that they might have feared Pompey whom they had abandoned in favor of Caesar, or they might have guessed that Caesar did not really intend to accept any terms for peace. When Caesar prepares to take money from the treasury to fund the war effort, Metellus objects until Caesar threatens his life.

Caesar eventually lays siege to Pompey though his own men are in dire need of food. Caesar's troops find some sort of root that, when mixed with milk, can be made into loaves that will sustain them. Pompey's men are disheartened at these toughen troops who are willing to do anything to gain victory. Caesar's men face illnesses and he is unable to find food for them until he captures the Thessalonian city of Gomphi where the men have food and wine. They walk the next days in a drunken state and are soon healthy again. Though Pompey has more troops, he has bad omens and wants to avoid fighting, but his troops want a battle. Caesar tells his men that there are reinforcements on the way but his troops want to fight without those additional men. Caesar wins a decisive victory though Pompey escapes only to die a short time later at the hands of the Egyptians. It is said that Caesar cried at the sight of Pompey's signet ring.

Caesar is soon caught up in a war against the Egyptians, is captivated by Cleopatra and arranges for her to take the throne with her brother. He has a court member killed when he plots to kill Caesar, finally defeats the Egyptian king in open warfare, and leaves behind a son born to Cleopatra call Caesarion.

Returning home during his second year as dictator, Caesar is criticized for many actions but—in the current political climate—feels he must use those willing to do his bidding. Caesar then goes to fight in Africa and celebrates three triumphs on his return—one each for Egypt, Pontus and Africa. Caesar is now declared consul rather than dictator, the census lists show a sharp decline in population as the result of the civil wars, and is forced to personally fight off a group intent on taking him captive or killing him—the first



time he is in the position to fight for his own life. His triumph for this battle is not well received, having cost well-loved families their children. However, they then appoint Caesar dictator for life. Some fear that there may be an attempt on his life and suggest that he have a bodyguard, but he refuses, saying it is better to simply die than to live in constant fear of death. He then sets out to put himself in favor by establishing colonies for the soldiers, giving grain allowances to the people and holding entertainment events, and by giving offices and honor to the nobles.

Many of Caesar's actions bring the hatred of the people. For example, he changes the Roman calendar to reconcile the calendar year to the lunar year and wants to be king rather than dictator. There begin to be grumblings against him and it is said that he sacrifices an animal that is found to be without a heart—a bad omen because in the natural world, no animal can exist without a heart. Then a soothsayer tells him to beware of the Ides of March and when the day comes, Caesar tells the soothsayer that the Ides have arrived, to which the soothsayer replies that it is true, but that they have not yet passed. Calpurnia has a dream in which she is holding Caesar's lifeless body. Caesar is on the verge of dismissing the senate and remaining at home when he is told that the senators plan to make him king of all provinces outside Italy and that the least he can do is to dismiss them personally.

On the senate floor, Caesar receives the first, tentative blow then is stabbed twenty-three times, those in on the plot to kill him having agreed that all must participate. As Brutus steps forward to explain the reason for the murders, the senators rush away without listening. The murderers march through the streets, looking pleased with their deed, while others hide or rush to see the site of the murder and then hide. Upon reading Caesar's will, it is learned that he has left a considerable legacy. The people gather wooden items inside the city and make the funeral pyre, then take the flaming boards and burn the houses of all the murderers, finally killing a man they think to have been one of the murderers and driving those responsible into hiding and out of the city.

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Caesar is just a boy when Sulla is in power and Sulla soon realizes the full potential in Caesar, though Sulla's advisors do not. Caesar puts himself forth as a candidate for the priesthood but Sulla ensures that he is not selected, then considers having Caesar put to death. When his advisors point out that he is just a boy, Sulla says he can see that Caesar is many times more dangerous than Marius—a man who Sulla had continually clashed with throughout his military and political career. At one point, Sulla tries to make Caesar divorce his wife, Cornelia, but Caesar refuses though Sulla offers bribes and makes threats. It seems likely that simply having someone stand up to him makes Sulla nervous.

Many believe Caesar is spending too much money in a quest to make himself liked, but in the end he proves that he has spent a relatively small amount of money to gain the position as the most powerful man in the Roman empire. He soon runs for the priesthood, turning down a bribe to take himself out of the running, and wins, proving his growing popularity.



As Caesar crosses the Ionian Gulf with his cavalry, he has actually left behind the majority of his fighting forces. These men, many the same who had fought with Caesar over many campaigns, gripe about the pace set and the fact that Caesar seems to think they never tire and their swords never wear out. They grumble and refuse to hurry as they follow him, but then they arrive at the gulf and discover that Caesar has crossed without them. Though he sends transportation back for them shortly thereafter, his men berate themselves for their laziness and their commanding officers for allowing them to tarry. It is interesting that they are all tired until they realize that Caesar has apparently gone into battle without them. It could very well be this extreme loyalty and protectiveness they feel for their leader that prompts them to be so concerned. At one point, Caesar, with nothing but the small number of forces he has at hand, attempts a sea crossing alone to seek additional troops but is driven back. The men he leaves behind are indignant, saying that he puts himself in danger without considering that the troops he has on hand are awaiting his orders.



# Chapter 6, Cicero

## Chapter 6, Cicero Summary and Analysis

Plutarch notes that Cicero's mother is from a good family and that little is known for certain about his father. The name, "Cicero," is also an enigma. "Cicer" is Latin for "chick-pea" and it is noted that Cicero, upon being urged to drop the name or change it, indicates that he plans to make it a noteworthy name. It seems that he has a sense of humor about the topic—the ancestor first so named had a dent in his nose that resembled a chick-pea. Cicero is said to have once had his first and second names, Marcus and Tullius, engraved on an offering to the gods, then had the engraver add the words, "chick-pea."

Cicero is bright, takes on all aspects of education, becomes a noted orator and poet, serves briefly in the military and exits from life in Rome when it becomes evident that one man will rise to complete power, then returns when Sulla seems to bring some order. He serves as a lawyer and says that oration and elocution are vital to persuasion, making fun of those who shout out their speeches. He serves as quaestor to Sicily at a time when Rome is short of grain and first incurs the anger of the Sicilians but later wins their devotion through his careful management and sense of justice.

Cicero lives modestly. Through the dowry from his wife, Teretia, and a small inheritance, he is able to maintain his lifestyle. He never makes a profit from his work for others and goes so far as to use gifts of livestock and grains to lessen the need for food in Rome. He gives his family home to his brother, takes care to learn the names of everyone he meets and to learn the friends, estate locations and important details of every important person in the city. As praetor, Cicero has the reputation of being ultimately fair and careful, gaining acquittals and convictions when he believes them necessary.

While Pompey is out of Rome, a man named Catiline raises a group of young men to revolt, giving them plenty of amusement and gaining their approval. Cicero puts down a plan by Catiline to interrupt the election. Then Crassus comes to Cicero with a series of letters from Catiline that outline a plot. It seems that Crassus wants to turn the letters over because he is known to be Catiline's friend and wants to distance himself from the threat. Cicero convenes the senate at dawn, who vote to put the consuls in charge of the security of the city—an act that happens rarely and only in the case of emergency. Cicero, now in control of the city, never goes out without armed guards and Catiline, tired of waiting, sends a group to pretend to pay their respects to Cicero with instructions to kill him. They are denied entrance and Cicero calls another meeting of the senate. No one will sit near Catiline and he is refused the chance to speak, then told to get out of the city by Cicero, which he does with the intention of raising a revolutionary force. Antonius is sent out with instructions to "fight it out to the end," while the remainder of Catiline's forces remain in the city under the direction of Cornelius Lentulus Sura. Lentulus was once accused of a crime and was acquitted by two votes,



to which he laughingly said that his money for bribing those two was wasted since one would have been sufficient.

The plan is to kill all the senators, burn the city and kill all the inhabitants with the exception of Pompey's children who are to be used to ensure a peaceful settlement with Pompey. While the conspiracy is being hatched, Cicero is gathering evidence, working with some inside the conspiracy who are actually loyal to Rome, and preparing his case against them. Cicero is torn, wanting to show mercy on the conspirators because he is naturally a forgiving man and because many of them belong to prominent Roman families. He also knows that if he does not impose the death penalty, many of these men will simply return to take some other action at some future date. Meanwhile, Cicero's wife sees a sign and tells him that he should take action to keep Rome safe. Caesar speaks out against the death penalty and several follow his lead. Though there is some indication that Caesar should be tried with the conspirators, the young Caesar is so popular that most know they will all be released if Caesar is among them. Both Lentulus and Cethegus are killed and the rest of the conspirators, upon learning the news, disperse.

Most people of Rome applaud Cicero for keeping their city safe without civil strife but some attack his decree. Cicero, upon leaving his office, changes the traditional wording of the exit oath to say, "I swear in very truth that I have saved my country and maintained her supremacy." The oath is affirmed though Caesar and some others object. Cicero speaks against Clodius when he is found in Caesar's house during a sacred rite from which men are barred, though it is likely that Cicero takes this stand to appease his wife who believes that Clodius' sister has designs on Cicero.

After Clodius is acquitted and named tribune, he begins gathering evidence to attack Cicero. He calls on Caesar to join in the attack and Cicero is soon called on to defend the death penalty imposed on Catiline's men. Cicero puts on poor clothes, lets his hair become unkempt and goes around the city in supplication but is beset by members of Clodius' sect wherever he goes. He is joined by some twenty thousand men who dress the same but it soon becomes clear that Cicero will either have to live in exile or meet Clodius with an armed force. Cicero calls on Pompey for support but Pompey, obeying an order from Caesar, declines to help. Some advise him to fight but others say that he should leave Rome because the people will soon tire of Clodius and want Cicero back. He slips away in the night, accompanied by friends and bound for Sicily. Clodius calls for a formal vote of exile and no one is to give Cicero aid, though few obey this decree. He is told he is not welcome in Sicily and turns to Dyrrhachium where he is well-received but always morose and looking toward Italy.

After only sixteen months, during which time Clodius burns Cicero's house and tries unsuccessfully to auction off his property, Clodius is prosecuted and Cicero asked to return to Rome. He serves a term as priest in Cilicia where he lives simply and executes justice fairly, returning to Rome on the eve of the civil war. He works to rectify the ill feelings between Pompey and Caesar but is not successful. Cicero eventually goes to Pompey's camp but is told by Cato that it is a mistake. When the government becomes a monarchy under Caesar's reign, Cicero retires from public life, spending his time at his



country estate where he translates or writes. He has plans to write a history of his country but continues to be pressed into public service and finds himself facing private troubles, such as divorce from his wife, Teretia, after she strips his house of its valuables and sends their young daughter on a journey without a proper escort or sufficient money for the trip. He marries a young virgin and it is said that she brings a large dowry which Cicero needs after Teretia's departure. His young daughter dies, Cicero is inconsolable and divorces his young wife because she seems pleased at his daughter's death.

Cicero is not involved with Caesar's murder though he is friends with the murderers, because they fear he lacks the daring to go through with it. Young Caesar comes to Rome and Cicero becomes attached to him though he says at one point that he knows he is supporting a tyrant, but that at least it is one who will be kind to him. Cicero is then at the height of his power though it does not last. There comes a point where Caesar is told to include Cicero's name on a list marked for death—Caesar refuses before finally giving in. Cicero and his brother, Quintus, learn of the plan and flee but Quintus stops the journey to return home to gather some possessions. He is betrayed by a servant and killed, leaving Cicero to travel on alone. Cicero eventually makes his way to his country estate in Caieta where he is met by flocks of crows—considered a bad omen. Cicero's servants make their way with him to the sea, Cicero at sixty-four being carried on a litter, but is intercepted when a young man schooled by Cicero tells his location. Hearing the murderers coming, he tells his servants to put him down and waits. His head and hands are cut off and sent to Rome.

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Cicero works hard at securing grain for Rome from Sicily and is quite proud of his achievements until someone asks where he has been. He suddenly realizes that his own actions are unimportant in the grand scheme of things and forces himself to modify his ambitions. It is noted, however, that he does always seek out glory and loves praise, meaning that those traits always impact his actions and decisions.

While Cicero is the most prominent figure in Rome, there are those who grow tired of him—not because of any action but because he is a great speaker and continually talks of himself and magnifies his achievements. He does, however, praise others freely which gains him some favor—and it seems some relief from listening to the repetitive stories of his dealings with Catiline and the conspirators. At one point, Cicero makes a glowing speech about Crassus then attacks him just a few days later, saying that it is good practice for an orator to make a speech on a bad topic.

Plutarch's information about Cicero is filled with one-line witticisms in which he thoroughly cuts down others, answers questions or criticisms with comments that could only have been possible with his dedication to full knowledge about everyone and everything in Rome. For example, when a man named Nepos asks Cicero about his father, Cicero says that he cannot ask the man the same question—it is well known that Nepos' mother is of questionable morals. Another time, talking of a man with three unattractive daughters, Cicero quotes the verse, "Apollo never meant him to beget."





Cicero's propensity toward these jokes at the expense of others earns him ill-favor of many.

Years after Cicero's death, the younger Caesar is visiting a grandson who is reading one of Cicero's books. The child hides the book, fearing his grandfather's wrath but Caesar says merely that the author of the book was a "learned man." After Antony's defeat in Rome, the young Caesar selectes Cicero's son as his colleague.

There follows a brief comparison of Cicero and Demosthenes. One of the more notable comparisons is the way the two men talk of themselves. As has been noted, Cicero is free with his praise of his own accomplishments to the point that some find his speeches utterly boring. Demosthenes, on the other hand, is careful on this point, even when the situation calls for him to tout his own accomplishments. On another point, Cicero often mocks his opponents and even his friends while Demosthenes has a perpetually serious look about him.



# Characters

## Marius

Marius was born to parents who are undistinguished other than being the parents of the famed Marius. He grows up in the country and is educated as most Romans. He joins the military and quickly distinguishes himself as a soldier. He accepts any duty without question. Marius later requires the same dedication from his own men, going so far as to work beside them when there are unpleasant duties to perform. Marius, in an attempt to hone his soldiers into a fighting regiment, pushes them on forced marches and requires that they carry their own packs, prompting the saying, "one of Marius' mules."

One of Marius' major victories actually occurs as a skirmish over water. Marius camps his own men in an area without a ready water supply while the enemy he faces are camped on the banks of a major water supply. Marius tells his own men that there is plenty of water at the enemy camp and that they must defeat the enemy in order to reach it. Some of the servants of Marius' men go for water from the river held by the enemy and Marius' men want to immediately attack but Marius holds them back. There is then, however, a skirmish involving Marius' allies and Marius rushes to their aid. The battle is a major victory for Marius.

Marius often touts an incident as a child in which seven eaglets were in a single nest as a sign that he would rise to power as a consul seven times. As it turns out, he is elected to a seventh term and is still in power as a military leader in his old age, prompting him to give up powers because of his age. He does not settle into the civilian life well and can often be seen as an old man of more than sixty training with the young men. During one of these terms, he allies himself with a man named Saturninus—known for his evil ways. Marius himself runs from one group to another, "making mischief" whenever possible.

## Sulla

Sulla and Marius are often at odds and Sulla is actually in exile during one of Marius' terms as consul. In fact, the problems between Marius and Sulla escalate into a full civil war with both men having control of military forces, both wanting full control and neither willing to give in on any of the points. Sulla shows a cruel side as he takes over control of Rome. One of his first decrees is to issue a death penalty for Marius and Sulpicius, prompting Marius to spend some time on the run, in exile from Rome. Sulla's action is in direct conflict with Marius' action when Sulla was once chased into Marius' home. In that instance, Marius allowed Sulla to leave unharmed.

When Sulla is involved in the war against Mithridates, he sells off his country's treasures in order to fund the war. Sulla also demands that the treasures of Delphi be brought to him for safekeeping. He pledges that if he spends any of them to fund the war he will



repay their value. In actuality, Sulla calls on some of the people he defeated to repay what he had "borrowed" as part of the terms of surrender.

Sulla uses deceit to enhance his own forces as he faces Scipio and has his soldiers help in this effort. As Sulla pretends to be considering terms of peace, his men are mingling with Scipio's men, offering them bribes and making promises to those who join Sulla's army. In the end, Scipio's forces move to Sulla's side, leaving Scipio alone in his tent where he is captured.

Sulla dies, according to Plutarch, of intestinal ulcers and worms caused by an excessive lifestyle. Several try to deny him a proper burial but Pompey insists. Sulla's memorial stone bears a verse written by Sulla in preparation of his death. It says that none of his friends have done more good than he and none of his enemies have done more harm.

## Crassus

Crassus was a well-mannered and temperate person; his one vice seems to have been avarice. He takes advantage of a fire in Rome to buy up land cheaply. While houses are still burning, Crassus makes offers for the property and the people are anxious to sell, making Crassus owner of a great deal of property in Rome. It is interesting that he often made loans to friends and—despite the desire to make money—did not charge interest. He did, however, demand repayment in a timely manner and it is noted that this sometimes meant that paying interest would have been less trouble for the borrower.

Crassus' father and brother are killed, leaving Crassus to escape with some of his slaves. He fears putting himself in front of anyone and instead hides in a cave with the servants until their supplies run out. He is then helped by a nearby landowner who is pleased to know he survived and provides meals daily.

While Crassus is known for his temperate manners in most things, he is strict as a leader. At one point, he sends troops out with specific instructions that are not obeyed. There are heavy losses and some of the troops run away from the battle. Crassus divides five hundred of those who ran into groups of ten and draws lots to punish one of each group with death as an example. Crassus is selected to military leadership despite the fact that he seems better suited for political roles. Crassus serves as consul at the same time as Pompey, Pompey having thrown his support behind Crassus with the knowledge that Crassus will now be indebted to him. Crassus, believing that he is attending a meeting to discuss peace with the Parthians, is beheaded along with all who accompanied him.

## Pompey

Pompey is a man who rises to fame in the Roman military at a very young age. In fact, he is popular enough to have won a senate election before he is of age to stand for the office. It is Sulla who sends Pompey on military missions and he becomes known for his tendency toward mercy, sometimes going so far as to help prisoners escape. He does,



however, do his duty when necessary and is known to have ordered some prisoners be put to death. Pompey is so popular with his men that when the military is being pulled back from Africa and Pompey is ordered to remain with one legion until his replacement can arrive, his men threaten to revolt, refusing to leave without Pompey. He pleads with them to obey, which they finally agree to do.

Though Pompey seems to have generally been a mild-natured man, he does occasionally stand up for himself as is the case of his return to Rome when he insists that he be given a triumph. He wins the request and makes it into an ostentatious affair. He plans to enter the city in a chariot pulled by elephants he has brought back from Rome, but the beasts are too large for the gates and his chariot is pulled by horses instead. Upon his next return to Rome, Pompey realizes that arriving with an army could aggravate the situation which has been tense. He disbands his army, reminding them to come to Rome for his triumph. Upon arrival at Rome without his army, he is greeted by many and makes his entrance into the city with larger numbers than if he had held his army for the occasion.

Pompey and Caesar clash and Pompey is killed at the hands of the Egyptians who do the deed in order to gain Caesar's approval. Pompey goes to the shore knowing that he is likely to be killed but says that he wants the Romans to know that he was killed at the hands of his enemies, not by the treachery of his own countrymen.

## Caesar

Caesar has a longing for greatness from early in his life, though Plutarch does not give an account as to the beginnings of these longings. It is noted, however, that on one occasion Caesar and his men are traveling through a small town in the Alps when someone notes that there are doubtless men in this village who put themselves forward for office and want to be leaders, though there is nothing worth leading there. Caesar says that he would rather be the most important leader in this small village than the second most important man in Rome. On another occasion, he bursts into tears, saying that Alexander the Great was already an important man at Caesar's age, and that he had accomplished nothing noteworthy.

Caesar is heavily involved in the intrigue of the day, using his powers of persuasion to convince two rivals—Pompey and Crassus—to set aside their differences, ostensibly for the good of Rome. However, Plutarch notes that it is actually a union that puts Caesar—with both men fully behind him—as arguably the most powerful man in Rome. He later buys favors freely, hands out gifts, money and honor to anyone who can help his cause. When Caesar first comes on the scene, there are those who believe that he will fall from favor as soon as he runs out of money. However, Caesar is not afraid to put himself in debt in order to gain what he wants and at one point is literally being hounded by creditors who are bought off by supporters. Caesar is so successful on the battlefield that he has the means to continue his extravagant lifestyle right to the end of his life. He dies at the hands of a group of murderers and his death so enrages the people that they



burn the houses of those involved and even kill one man who has simply come to pay his respects but is mistaken as one of the murderers.

## Cicero

Cicero is an intelligent man who gains notoriety for his intelligence at an early age. He excels in everything he does, though he seems to love poetry. It is noted that his poetry, though good, is eventually pushed into obscurity though his writings last. Cicero is a brilliant speaker and in many ways, is a true servant to Rome. When he is given gifts of livestock, for example, as payment for his services as a lawyer, he uses the gifts to help abate hunger in Rome rather than to expand his own coffers.

When Rome is in upheaval, he retires, returning only after it seems that Sulla is bringing some order. He pursues political greatness and is qualified, but spends so much time in praise of himself that many prefer not to listen to his magnificent speeches.

Cicero dies in his sixties, an exile from Rome and fleeing for his life. When he realizes that the murderers are at hand, he has his servants leave him for them and, it is said, stretches out his neck for the cut that ends his life.

## Sulpicius

A man who takes control of Rome by sheer force. He has a group of young men as his "body guards." He calls these the "Anti-Senate," and Sulpicius uses them to interrupt an assembly of the Roman government, killing several and taking control. When Sulla marches into Rome and takes over, Sulpicius is given the death penalty. He is betrayed by a servant who is first rewarded by Sulla and then killed.

## Ariamnes

An Arab chieftain who gives Crassus false information about his adversary, including that their king had completely disappeared and that the forces were gathering supplies for a retreat deeper into the countryside. None of this is true but Crassus accepts the information as fact and acts upon it.

## Publius

Son of Crassus who is leading a contingent against the Parthians when his troops are outnumbered and outmaneuvered. Wounded, he feels he has no choice and orders a servant to kill him rather to risk capture. The Parthians parade his head in front of the Romans, including Crassus, demoralizing them to the point of despair. However, Crassus says that the grief is his alone and that the troops must rally.



## Strabo

Pompey's father. It is noted that he is thoroughly hated and that his love of money is the reason for that hate. While the father is despised, no Roman leader is more loved than Pompey. Once, when a plot to kill Pompey and then his father on the battlefield fails, Strabo is afraid to come out of his tent but Pompey pleads with the soldiers and most are reconciled.

## Aemilia

Second wife of Pompey. Aemilia is married when her stepfather, Sulla, decrees that she will divorce her husband in order to marry Pompey. Pompey is also married and is divorced from his wife as well. Aemilia is pregnant by her ex-husband when she marries Pompey and dies in childbirth a short time after the marriage.

## Julia

Wife of Pompey and daughter of Caesar. Julia is completely devoted to her husband who, unlike most men of the day, remains faithful. Julia is Pompey's second wife and provides an alliance between the two great men. When Pompey is at the scene of a disturbance, he gets blood on his toga and it is sent home. Julia faints at the sight of it and though she is revived, she miscarries. She later dies in childbirth and the child dies a few days later.

## Rex Warner

The translator of Plutarch's work.



# Objects/Places

## Capite Censi

A measure that created the armies of the last century of the republic. These armies were dependent on their generals for rewards when their service complete and were ready to follow their leaders against Rome itself, though Marius never used it as such.

## Triumph

An elaborate procession, formal in nature and used to welcome a man who has accomplished some great deed. The triumph includes a parade, feasts and entertainment. Triumphs are traditionally reserved for office holders such as senators. However, Pompey achieved a triumph while he remained a member of the equestrian order.

## Cirrhaeaton

The village where Marius grew up, located near Arpinum.

## Vercellae

The Romans, led by Marius, met the Cimbri on the plain at Vercellae. This is where the Roman warriors won a thorough victory, prompting the mass suicide of thousands but ending with the capture of some sixty thousand people.

## Tarpeian Rock

A place near Rome where people were put to death by being thrown from a high place.

## Picenum

The area where Pompey lives, partly because he likes the region and partly because he has friends and attachments there. It is while in Picenum that people flee Rome, seeking the shelter of Sulla's army and that Pompey, rather than seeking shelter as well, raises an army and offers his cooperation to Sulla.

## Carthage

Where Pompey lands with his troops on orders from Sulla. Some of his men apparently come across treasure and for many days Pompey can do nothing with the troops



because they are so busy digging. He merely laughs and waits until they are tired and begging that he lead them wherever he wants.

## **Gaul**

Where Caesar spends several years at war over uprisings and revolts.

## **Caieta**

Where Cicero is killed.

## **Sinnaca**

Where Crassus is killed.





# Themes

## The Need for Connections

Caesar is one of the chief examples of this theme, though it obviously recurs in all six men as evidenced by the way their lives intertwine during this period of Rome's history. In Caesar's case, he knows that in order to rise to power in Rome he needs the support of either Crassus or Pompey behind him. He also knows that if he gains the support of one, he will immediately gain the enmity of the other because the two men are completely at odds. With this in mind, he sets forth a plan to gain the support of both. Toward this end, Caesar tells both men that they are empowering the other by remaining enemies. He points out to Pompey that every supporter of Crassus would be his own supporter if the two men were united—and does the same with Crassus. He convinces them of the rightness of his argument so much so that the two men do unite and then throw their support behind Caesar without realizing that what they have really done is to make Caesar the most powerful man in Rome.

This need to garner the goodwill of someone is not limited to the men seeking power as is evidenced when Egypt is faced with the request from Pompey to accept him into their country during his exile from Rome. The people of Egypt fear taking Pompey in because they know Caesar will be angry for this action. At the same time, they fear turning Pompey away, for he is also a formidable adversary. They also fear turning Pompey away because they fear Caesar will be angry that he has to continue to pursue Pompey. The Egyptians come to the conclusion that the correct move is to tell Pompey he is welcome then kill him. Dead, Pompey can pose no threat and they have not angered Caesar by giving Pompey refuge. They do not quite achieve the desired effect and it is noted that they are not loved for their treacherous act in this case.

## The Quest for Power

All six of the men in this book exhibit a quest for power and most of them go about it in very similar ways, though there are some unique points. For example, Marius makes a name for himself early through his own military actions. His daring soon gains the interest of his commanding officer, Scipio, who is one of the first to say that the people of Rome might find that Marius makes a great leader. Marius himself is willing to do any task set before him and even though he believes in himself, he is never too proud to do whatever is required. He carries over these traits during his own military leadership, endearing himself to the men in his command.

Cicero seems to set out to gain his power in a much different way. He lives simply and shares whatever bounty comes his way with the people, which earns him their support. However, he is anxious to tell people that he is a wonderful man, full of good deeds. After his confrontation with Catiline concerning the plot against the Roman senators, Cicero often interrupts his own speeches with the tale of his part in uncovering the plot



and his actions on behalf of Rome. He does this so often that people do not really want to hear it any more, but Cicero, so anxious for fame and power, continues to tout his own good deeds.

In some cases, those seeking power simply do away with those who oppose them. This seems to be the case with Sulla who, upon gaining power in Rome, declares Marius an exile and forces him to leave upon threat of death. Marius does eventually return, but it requires an all-out rout of Sulla and his men for that to happen.

## **Belief in Signs, Omens and Fortune**

As was true of this time period, all of the men pay attention to the signs and omens that are used as indications of coming successes or failures, in many cases using these to determine when—or even if—to take a particular action. When Cicero is faced with the decision of what to do with Catiline's men who were conspiring against the government, he is torn. On the one hand, he knows that some of these men are of important families in Rome. Imposing the death penalty could earn Cicero some enemies at a time when he needs all the support he can muster. However, he knows that allowing them to get away with no penalties at all will mean that they will simply recover and try it again. As he is debating what to do, his wife—involved in a ritual ceremony—witnesses a fire that has completely died down suddenly revive with a bright flame and is told that it means her husband should take the stand he believes is right for Rome. When she tells him this, he carries out the death sentence on two of the instigators.

Sulla believes that good fortune is on his side, so much so that he trusts in that more than his own leadership abilities. He is one of the few that trusts to this point, though most look for signs and omens, especially at times of impending battle. It is said that Marius once found an eagle's nest with seven eaglets inside, directly in conflict with the notion that eagles laid three eggs, hatched two and raised one. Marius uses this as a sign that he will be seven times in power and is elected to the consul for seven terms. When Cicero approaches his country home, he is met by a flock of crows which is taken as a bad omen. Later, a crow flies into his room and begins to pull the coverlet from his head which the servants take as another bad omen. The servants then ask themselves whether they plan to simply sit around and wait for their master's murder and are attempting to sneak him away when he is captured and killed.



# Style

## Perspective

The book is written in first person by Plutarch, who lived in the day of these happenings and had first-hand knowledge of many of the events as well as personal knowledge of the people. It should be noted that Plutarch seldom includes the word "I" in his writing, only occasionally inserting his personal observations as his own. More often, he tells these stories in an objective tone. However, the reader should be aware that there are introductions at every chapter that are not written by Plutarch but are an opinion on Plutarch's information. It is noted at some points that he ignores specific details that other writers of the period include in their own works. While it is noteworthy that Plutarch's writings should therefore not be the one and only source of information, it does give the book a more personal feel. These are one man's perspectives on events that change the course of Rome and of the history of the world.

## Tone

While the book is actually written in a fairly straightforward manner, some readers may have trouble keeping up. The places and people are often mentioned with no explanation as to that person's identity or the location of the place. Also, supernatural things are often told as stark fact. For example, one of Sulla's generals—Marcus Lucullus—is debating whether to take his troops into a particular battle because his men are not amply armed. However, there comes a wind that picks up wildflowers from a nearby field and deposits them among the men. While that in itself could be explained, it is further noted that the flowers are in the form of wreaths when they land among the men, and that they fall on the shields and helmets of the fighters, prompting them to believe that the gods are favorable to their cause and that they will be successful.

## Structure

The book is written in fairly straight-forward language with a forward and translator's introduction written by Rex Warner. Warner has also written a brief introduction to each of the six sections, typically outlining his own impressions of Plutarch's writings. These are helpful, providing the reader with an opinion of Plutarch's shortcomings and biases. For example, Warner says that he believes Plutarch's version of Marius's life to be the least satisfactory among his writings. Warner also points out discrepancies, such as points on which other writers have disagreed with Plutarch's account. There are also many footnotes, numbered and referring back to the author's own notes. These are typically not for explanation but merely give reference as to where the information was obtained.

There are six chapters, one for each of the six lives discussed. Within the chapter are bullet points, each covering a particular event or aspect of that person's life. These

range from two to three paragraphs in length to several pages, and actually resemble chapters to some degree. Warner's forwards begin each chapter, followed by the numbered sections that one assumes are from Plutarch's writings. Some readers may feel there is no real division between Warner's writings and that of Plutarch.



## Quotes

"So each revealed great natural gifts—Marius by showing himself to be great when he was still only a youth, Scipio by being able to see from the beginning what the end would be," Chapter 1, Marius, p. 6.

"For, though the age of pure and upright manners had passed and people had degenerated yet they still thought that to forsake one's hereditary poverty was just as disgraceful as to squander a fortune that one had inherited," Chapter 2, Sulla, p. 57.

"At the same time he ordered his archers to make use of their fire-arrows and shoot them at the tops of the houses. The action was quite unconsidered and the result of mere passion. In his anger he had lost control of his actions; all that he could see was his enemies and he gave no consideration to friends, relations and old acquaintances; no feeling of pity moved him as he made his entry into the city by means of fire, which knew no distinction between the innocent and the guilty," Chapter 2, Sulla, p. 69.

"For the capture of this place he allowed his soldiers to salute him as 'Imperator,' which was not an action that at all redounded to his credit. To be so pleased with such a trifling success seemed to show a very mean spirit and a lack of confidence for the greater exploits that lay ahead," Chapter 3, Crassus, p. 131.

"Romans, this grief is a private thing of my own. But in you abide the great fortune and glory of Rome, unbroken and undefeated. And now, if you feel any pity for me, who have lost the best son that any father has ever had, show it in the fury with which you face the enemy. Take away their joy; make them suffer for their cruelty; do not be downhearted at what has happened; remember that if one aims at great things, one must expect great sufferings," Crassus upon the death of his son, Chapter 3, Crassus, p. 145.

"No one ever asked for favours with less offence or granted them with more grace. For among his many charms he possessed the ability to give without arrogance and to receive without the loss of dignity," Chapter 4, Pompey, p. 161.

"Sulla, however, was approaching and most people longed for him to come, since things were so bad already that they thought that even a change of masters would be a positive benefit. The disasters that had fallen upon Rome had brought her to such a pass that, there being no hope of freedom, people longed only for a milder form of slavery," Chapter 4, Pompey, p. 165.



"On the other hand,' he said, 'when I notice how carefully arranged his hair is and when I watch him scratching his head with one finger, I cannot imagine that this man could conceive of such a wicked thing as to destroy the Roman constitution,'" - Cicero, Chapter 5, Caesar, p. 258.

"And when Caesar's friends advised him to have a bodyguard, many of them volunteering to serve it in themselves, Caesar refused to have anything to do with it. It was better, he said, to die once than always to be in fear of death. To surround himself with people's goodwill was, he thought, the best and the truest security, and so he again sought the favour of the people by giving them feasts and allowances of grain, and gratified his soldiers by founding new colonies, the most important of which were at Carthage and at Corinth," Chapter 5, Caesar, p. 309.

"He used to ridicule those who were given to shouting out their speeches and said that, just as lame men rode on horseback because they could not walk, so these orators shouted because they could not speak. This ready wit and jesting habit of his was regarded as a good and attractive quality in a lawyer; but he carried it too far, often caused offence, and so got the reputation of being malicious," Chapter 6, Cicero, p. 328.

"In a speech which he made to the people he so glorified Cicero's consulship that they voted him the greatest honors that had ever been conferred and called him the father of the fatherland. Cicero was the first, it seems, to receive this title," Chapter 6, Cicero, p. 328.

"It was thus in his consulship that the senate took down all the statues of Antony, cancelled all the other honors that had been given to him, and decreed that in the future no member of the family should bear the name of Marcus. In this way Heaven entrusted to the family of Cicero the final acts in the punishment of Antony," Chapter 6, Cicero, p. 373.



## Topics for Discussion

Compare the political quests of Caesar and Crassus. In what ways were their desires and goals similar?

Of the six men discussed by Plutarch, which does he say was the most incredible military leader? Why? What is your opinion?

Several of these men obtained divorces during their lives. Describe three of the divorces. What were the circumstances? Do you believe they were acceptable reasons for divorce?

Who among the six do you believe was likely the best orator? Who was likely the worst? Why?

What made men popular in this period of Roman history? How did each of these men attain that popularity? Were their means always honest? Compare the honest with the dishonest.

What role do signs and omens play in the lives of these six men? Which are prone to pay close attention to the signs? Which are less inclined to do so? What were some of the signs and omens cited? Can any of them be explained as natural phenomenon? Can all of them be explained as such?

How is it that men came to such great power that the feuds of two men could start a civil war? What could the people have done to change this?