

The Memoirs of Cleopatra: A Novel Study Guide

**The Memoirs of Cleopatra: A Novel by Margaret
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Plot Summary

Cleopatra is just seven years old when the Romans arrive in Egypt. She pleads with her father for the opportunity to attend a banquet in the honor of the Romans. When her father makes a fool of himself, she takes control of the situation and becomes the center of attention. Years pass and her father is exiled. Cleopatra's older sisters take advantage of his absence and take control of the throne. Cleopatra attempts to remain out of sight of her sisters, hoping that she won't be killed for being a threat to them. The two young women are in control only a short time when the older is murdered by the younger. The younger then marries and prepares to be ruler, but Cleopatra's father overthrows her and Cleopatra is forced to watch as her sister is publicly executed. Cleopatra becomes co-ruler with her father and remains in that role until her father's death. Then her younger sister and brother take the throne and Cleopatra is left outside the city of Alexandria.

The Romans return and Cleopatra finds herself ready to call on Caesar to help her regain her throne. Caesar obliges and the two rulers begin a love affair that lasts for years. Cleopatra's two younger siblings are eventually killed in later upheavals and she is left with only one younger brother. In keeping with tradition, she marries him in order that they be co-rulers, but they remain in fact chaste in their love for each other. Cleopatra has a son, fathered by Caesar, and the boy is soon known as Caesarion, or "Little Caesar." He is not acknowledged in Rome, a fact that haunts Cleopatra, so that she forces Caesar to publicly recognize Caesarion as his son, though the boy inherits nothing upon his father's death.

Caesar's death leaves Rome in an uproar, and Marc Antony soon emerges as a leader. He summons Cleopatra, but she refuses to comply for some time. Upon their first meeting, they begin an affair. Cleopatra delivers twins but doesn't tell Antony of her pregnancy. He marries the sister of a political ally but eventually leaves her to marry Cleopatra. The two join military forces and fight to gain control of a vast empire. The wealth of Egypt means that Antony can hire a great many troops but rumors cause many of those to defect.

As Cleopatra and Antony face the realization that they are to be overrun by Romans, they are forced to make some dramatic decisions. Cleopatra sends Caesarion away, hoping to keep him safe. Antony, fearing that he is about to be captured in battle, stabs himself but manages to make it back to the castle, where he dies in Cleopatra's arms. She knows that she's going to be taken to Rome where she'll be paraded in a triumphal parade celebrating the fall of Egypt and convinces her captors to allow her a feast in Antony's tomb, a ritual of importance to her culture. There she has arranged for an asp to be delivered in a basket. She holds to the snake so that it bites her. Her childhood friend and confidante Olympos picks up the story at her death and says that Caesarion is later captured and killed as well. The remaining three children are taken to Rome where they are marched in the triumphal parade and then taken into the home of their captor.



Chapters 1 through 12

Chapters 1 through 12 Summary

The story opens with Cleopatra's memories of her mother's drowning. Though she was only three, she recalls the horror and the hands that held her down after her mother's death, though she'd longed for comfort. Her nurse takes her to the throne of the goddess Isis, where she's told that she is now the daughter of Isis. In chapter two, Cleopatra has sisters, an older sister who is also named Cleopatra and an older sister named Bernice. After her mother's death, her father remarries and she has a daughter, Arisonoe and two sons.

When Cleopatra is seven, her father has a banquet for the Roman Pompey the Great. Cleopatra pleads for the opportunity to attend the banquet and her father finally agrees but tells Cleopatra that they must do everything correctly in order to make sure the Romans feel the family should remain in power in Egypt. Pompey notices Cleopatra who says that she's an "enchanted child." There's another child in attendance, nine-year-old Olympos, who becomes engaged in a conversation with some of the Romans about the ill-effects of a kind of wild honey. To Cleopatra's horror, her father drinks to excess because of his nervousness at the situation and calls for his "pipes." He plays, which prompts laughter from the Romans and, mistaking it for approval, ends his performance with a dance. Cleopatra desperately tries to find a way to allay the situation and approaches Pompey, suggesting that they go for a tour of the city the following day. In chapter three, Pompey, the king, Cleopatra and Olympos travel together the following day. Cleopatra depends on Olympos for information about the city because she is seldom allowed outside the palace grounds.

Over coming years, the Romans continue to be a part of the Egyptian life. Cleopatra's younger brothers, both named Ptolemy, are born. The king is threatened and has to leave the country. In chapter four, the older Cleopatra and Bernice taking control of the throne. During her father's exile, she meets a young boy named Mardian, who keeps animals that capture Cleopatra's interest. In chapter five, Cleopatra begins spending time with Mardian and Olympos, who teach her to swim and help her overcome her fear of the water, present since her mother's drowning.

In chapter six, Cleopatra and the boys, along with Mardian's uncle Nebamun, travel down the Nile in a boat to see the pyramids. In chapter seven, Cleopatra learns that her older sister, the older Cleopatra, has died and that Bernice believes the younger Cleopatra is gone. Cleopatra returns, tells Bernice where she's been and learns that Bernice has married. Bernice's husband is quickly killed, she's overthrown by her father's forces, aided by Rome, and is publicly executed. Cleopatra meets Marc Antony and is impressed at his manners.

In chapter eight, Cleopatra's father names her co-ruler and she begins working to learn the skills she needs to be a ruler. In chapter nine, Cleopatra is awakened to learn her



father has died and she is to be ruler with her brother and quickly realizes that she has to fear her brother's advisors. She chooses a woman named Charmian to oversee her wardrobe, Mardian to be the chief scribe and Olympos as her personal physician. In chapter ten, there is a famine threatening when the floodwaters of the Nile are too low to ensure healthy crops. Cleopatra sets out on a short trip and her brother overthrows her while she's away. She travels to Gaza with a new servant, a woman named Iras. It's soon known that Cleopatra is raising an army.

In chapter eleven, Cleopatra learns that her brother has killed Pompey. Caesar arrives, probably to exact revenge, though he sends word that he wants to talk to Cleopatra. In chapter twelve, she hides in a rug to be sneaked into Caesar's room. They make love and Caesar promises to return her to the throne. The following day he tells her and her brother that they are to be co-rulers and to present a united front to the world. Cleopatra agrees but feels betrayed until Caesar says it's only for the moment. Caesar announces that he returns ownership of Cyprus to Egypt and that Cleopatra's younger brother and sister would co-rule it.

Chapters 1 through 12 Analysis

The complex political and social situation between the Egyptians and Romans are an important aspect of the story. Egyptians seem at a disadvantage militarily, and this means that they are forced to be more accommodating than they might otherwise be. As Cleopatra is pleading for the opportunity to attend the banquet, she tells her father that it may be her only chance to do so under these circumstances. She says that if the Romans ever come back, it won't be a cause for lavish banquets. She seems to be pointing out that the only real reason the Romans might return would be if there was some kind of conflict, meaning the next visit from the Romans won't be an occasion for a banquet to show off their wealth.

Cleopatra's life is very cloistered. She notes envy that the boy named Olympos knows so much about the city. She isn't free to roam the city as he is, meaning she has little opportunity to explore. With this in mind, it seems completely likely that she grabs onto the offered friendship of Olympos and Mardian. Cleopatra and Mardian spend time together in what might have been typical children's activities of the period. They build small bricks and create cities in mud. They also build a small cart that can be pulled behind a goat. It's about this same time, when Cleopatra is twelve, that her body begins emerging into adulthood. She notes that she can now be forced to marry and bear children and laments that fact that her own childhood could so quickly be cut short.

In keeping with the custom of her family, the early plans are that the older Cleopatra will marry the older Ptolemy while Bernice will marry the younger Ptolemy. When the two older sisters take over, Cleopatra is forced to pledge allegiance to her sisters and she does, careful not to commit treason against her father through the wording of her pledge. Cleopatra then sets out to remain unobtrusive and to wait for her father to return.



It seems evident that Bernice is behind the older Cleopatra's death. She says that the older Cleopatra consumed mushrooms and that she'd gotten poisonous mushrooms. The young Cleopatra watches Bernice as she reveals the fate of her sister and notes that Bernice can't quite hide the smile. The young Cleopatra, safely outside the castle when her sisters took over the throne, may have been killed had she been inside the castle walls. She may also have faced serious trouble when she returned to the castle except that Bernice had been given time to contemplate Cleopatra's whereabouts. Upon finding that Cleopatra had been out on a foray with harmless friends, Bernice is obviously relieved, indicating that she'd probably been worried that Cleopatra was somehow in contact with their father and was looking for a way to counter her sisters' actions. This sibling rivalry, considering the prize to the winner is the throne of Egypt, is particularly brutal and takes over the family's lives.

The execution of Bernice is particularly brutal. Her hands are tied behind her back and she's grabbed by the neck and strangled by the executioner, who is so strong that he both cuts off Bernice's airways and lifts her feet off the ground. An interesting part of the execution is that all her siblings are forced to watch the execution as an example of what could befall them if they were to take similar actions. Even the youngest boy realizes the seriousness of the situation.



Chapters 13 through 20

Chapters 13 through 20 Summary

In chapter thirteen, there is a Roman civil war that spills over to Egypt, where Caesar is still in residence. Cleopatra tells Caesar that she's expecting his child and he's undeniably happy but continues to worry about the fighting. There's an uprising with Arisonoe and the elder Ptolemy at its heart. Ptolemy drowns and Caesar orders his body recovered. Arisonoe is arrested. In chapter fourteen, the couple take a trip across Egypt, much of it that Cleopatra hasn't yet seen either. They travel along the Nile by barge, stopping along the way to see various sites. As they talk, Caesar mentions the need to conquer the Parthians and the country of India. Cleopatra seems anxious about it, privately noting that he's more than fifty years old - too old to begin such a campaign. She knows this is reminiscent of the famous Alexander and cautiously says that having dreams such as this can be dangerous.

They arrive at the site of the pyramids and are walking alone one evening when Caesar falls to the ground and loses consciousness. When he revives, he tells Cleopatra that he has the "falling sickness." He says he sees bright lights then collapses and predicts that he'll some day hit his head on a rock or floor and die. They stop at Philae, where they repeat a series of sentences spoken by a priest. Caesar says that he didn't understand a word of it, having spoken in the Egyptian language, and Cleopatra says it was marriage vows. Caesar seems "amused" but "pleased," but it doesn't really change anything in their relationship. In chapter fifteen, Caesar says that he'll soon be leaving to fight in Rome and tells Cleopatra that a queen cannot rule alone. The elder Ptolemy had drowned and Caesar says that she has to marry the younger Ptolemy. She notes that he's nothing like his brother and seems to have no guile.

In chapter sixteen, Caesar has gone and Cleopatra calls for Olympos to help her calculate a due date. She finds a woman in the city who is praying for the return of her eyesight, having been injured in the recent war. Cleopatra has the woman return with her to the palace and calls on Olympos to treat her. Cleopatra says that she feels a responsibility to the woman who'd been injured defending Cleopatra's right to rule. The baby arrives early, a boy she named Ptolemy Caesar and who is immediately nicknamed Caesarion, or "Little Caesar," though Olympos questions her right to name the child this without Caesar's consent. Cleopatra's young brother and husband Ptolemy is more like her child than her husband and accepts Caesarion as a brother.

In chapter seventeen, the Nile threatens to flood and Cleopatra learns that there will be problems such as rodents, snakes and failed crops. She sets out to make plans for feeding her people through the crisis. In chapter eighteen, she meets a businessman named Epaphroditus and has him take over a portion of the accounting from Mardian. Cleopatra learns that Caesar has been having an affair with a woman, the husband of an ally in battle. Cleopatra then learns that there's a young man claiming to be the elder



Ptolemy in Nubia and that the Nubian queen wants her to come see the man to assure the people that he isn't her brother.

In chapter nineteen, she travels to Nubia and discredits the impostor, though she admits that it's a good imitation. The queen of Nubia then asks Cleopatra to join her in a plan to create a large empire consisting of both their nations and some additional lands. Cleopatra thanks her for the offer but declines, feeling that Rome is a better ally. In chapter twenty, she learns that Caesar has been victorious on the battlefield. A letter arrives from Caesar inviting Cleopatra to Rome for a series of tribunals, including one for his work in Egypt. She plans to leave to Rome and takes Caesarion with her.

Chapters 13 through 20 Analysis

Cleopatra wants to wait until the end of the upheaval to tell Caesar about the pregnancy but decides that she can't wait until the war is over because her body is beginning to show signs of the pregnancy. He has had only one daughter and she died years earlier. Cleopatra then broaches the subject of a name for the baby. She says that she wants to have a name that "confers membership" in Caesar's family. Caesar is somewhat noncommittal on this point but says that he can't formally recognize the child because Rome doesn't recognize foreign marriages.

It's interesting that Cleopatra is quickly holding to the idea that Caesar loves her as completely as she loves him, despite the fact that he's known as a womanizer. In fact, it was her knowledge of his sexual conquests that prompts her to be ready to take him to her bed for the first time. She has fallen into that ageless trap of hoping that he will change because of their relationship.

Epaphroditus is initially asked by Cleopatra to help with the accounting of the country's books because she knows that there will have to be a major relief effort put forth soon in order for the people to survive the season after the Nile floods. She's initially drawn to him because she sees the effects of his business management skills, even before she meets him in person. When that meeting occurs, she notes that he's one of the most handsome men she's ever met. Epaphroditus initially refuses her request, saying he hasn't time to take on any task on top of his business, but Cleopatra persuades him. Mardian isn't pleased with handing over a portion of his job to Epaphroditus, but Cleopatra soothes his ego by saying that he is spending entirely too much time on the accounting matters and that she needs him elsewhere.



Chapters 21 through 29

Chapters 21 through 29 Summary

In chapter twenty-one, Cleopatra heads for Rome. They are attacked by pirates and soon realize that the men know who she is and that she is the target, though they also reveal that they have some grievance with Caesar. Her men take two of the pirates captive and Cleopatra doesn't let her men kill them, instead planning to take them to Caesar. In chapter twenty-two, she is met at the dock by Gaius Oppius on Caesar's behalf and later introduces Caesar to his son. Caesar seems moved by the sight of the child.

In chapter twenty-three, Cleopatra has doubts that going to Rome is the right thing. She says that Caesar is a different man at the head of his own country than he had been as a guest in hers and she knows that she's at his mercy. During their first public, formal meeting, Cleopatra presents him with several gifts and then gives him the two pirates who'd attacked her ship. He knows both and sentences them to death. Cleopatra tours the city, seeing important places such as Caesar's building projects and the location of his home. In chapter twenty-four, Cleopatra admits to admiration for the engineering feats that allow hot and cold running water in the Roman baths. There's a feast and Cleopatra meets Caesar's wife, Calpurnia, who Cleopatra is dismayed to discover is quite pretty. She also meets Calpurnia's nephew, Gaius Octavian.

In chapter twenty-five, Cleopatra learns that her sister, Arinsoe, is being held in the Tullianum Prison. Caesar says that all prisoners will be executed after the triumphal march. Caesar announces that he's ordered a statue of Cleopatra to be placed in the temple, a fact that Cleopatra predicts will garner disapproval from the people and Calpurnia. Following the first of the triumphal marches, Caesar goes into a private celebration and Cleopatra and Caesarion are excluded. In chapter twenty-six, Cleopatra sees Arinsoe, who is being led in chains. The crowd is drawn to her in sympathy and sings of Cleopatra's affair with Caesar, angering Cleopatra. The entertainment later includes a mock battle in which men are actually killed. Cleopatra hates the loss of life and leaves, which angers Caesar. She says that the Romans take life too lightly. He later tells Cleopatra that he's changed Arsinoe's sentence from death to a life of exile and that she'll be sent to the Temple of Diana in Ephesus unless Cleopatra objects. She agrees. During another event, Cleopatra seizes the opportunity to place Caesarion at Caesar's feet, knowing the Roman tradition that if Caesar picks the child up, he is formally recognizing the boy as his son. He does so, though Cleopatra can tell that he's angry at having been manipulated into it. He later tells Cleopatra that Caesarion still has "no legal standing in Rome", but she cares only that Caesar has publicly acknowledged his son.

In chapter twenty-seven, there are two additional triumphs, and Cleopatra notes that there are many common citizens who speak against Caesar. In chapter twenty-eight, Caesar tells Cleopatra that he has more building plans and that he'll soon be leaving for



a military campaign in Spain. He asks that she remain in Rome until his return, and she allows herself to be persuaded. In chapter twenty-nine, Ptolemy is ill and predicts that he won't live to see the spring when they can safely sail for Egypt. Cleopatra calls for a doctor and Caesar leaves for Spain.

Chapters 21 through 29 Analysis

Cleopatra seems to have doubts about her relationship with Caesar, likely because she has fallen in love with him but has no real reassurances that he feels the same for her. When she arrives in Rome, she quickly accuses Caesar of having brought her to Rome for some personal political gain. The accusation seems to be prompted by her insecurity rather than any real belief this is true, and he tells her that having her in Rome is not a popular decision. Caesar does say that he loves her, a statement that he seems seldom ready to make and it may be that he sees it as a sign of weakness. When she confronts him about the rumors of his affair with an ally during his recent military campaign, he says that he was lonely and it had been a single night's interlude. Cleopatra believes him but admits that it's because she loves him. Calpurnia seems to be very accepting of Caesar's indiscretions but is clearly hurt by his actions. During a dinner in front of a large group of people, Calpurnia asks Caesar how he liked Alexandria, obviously referring to his affair with Cleopatra. She seems ready to press the issue, but Caesar's immediate anger apparently causes her to lose her nerve.

Cleopatra notes the differences between Rome and Egypt and these differences make her somewhat homesick. She says that the Tiber River seems a child's toy compared to her beloved Nile. She fears the harsh storms but is enchanted by the gentle rains, neither of which is typical in Egypt. She and Ptolemy also see their first snowfall while visiting Rome.

There is an exchange of ideals during Cleopatra's visit to Rome. For example, they discuss the idea of democracy and Ptolemy finds it an amusing thought. The Romans cite their democracy as an important concept, but Caesar later tells Cleopatra outright that he "bought" the election and that "everything is for sale."

Caesar says that he plans to create some Egyptian buildings on the Tiber. He says that with those buildings, it will be impossible for them to tell whether they are in Egypt or Rome. He also mentions to Cleopatra that the wealthy people seldom have time to spend privately, as they want. It seems that Caesar is feeling the pressure of keeping up public appearances, though he remains very willing to flaunt public opinion in order to do whatever he wants. This is a major difference between the two rulers. While Caesar seems focused on his own pleasure and achieving his own goals above the welfare of the people, Cleopatra tends to want to put the good of her country and its people above her own wishes. The notable exception to this is her willingness to take Romans as her lovers.



Chapters 30 through 38

Chapters 30 through 38 Summary

In chapter thirty, Cleopatra is heartened by Ptolemy's interest in a play, taking it as a positive sign with regard to his health. She learns that Caesar has been successful on the battlefield. When he returns to Rome, he talks about other military campaigns but promises to remain in Rome "for awhile" if she will also remain. She learns that Octavian is being sent away to learn military tactics. In chapter thirty-one, Ptolemy continues to grow worse and Cleopatra wishes she'd left while the weather permitted. There's a festival in which masters and slaves change roles for a day, and Cleopatra and Ptolemy visit several homes, including Marc Antony's.

In chapter thirty-two, there's the beginning of an upheaval as some call for Caesar to accept the creation of a higher power within the government. Cleopatra, watching the government's operations, longs to be home where she can take her own throne rather than remaining a bystander in Rome. In chapter thirty-three, Caesar says that he's leaving on another military campaign. He says that he'll need Egypt's support this time and Cleopatra realizes that he might not love her at all but could have courted her in order to gain this support.

In chapter thirty-four, Cleopatra learns from a young servant in Caesar's house that Caesar has been murdered on the Senate floor. The boy describes the scene in which a group of senators stabbed Caesar to death. Cleopatra goes to the Senate with Marc Antony and retrieves the body, taking it to Calpurnia. She learns that there were seventy men in on the murder plans and wonders how it could have been kept secret. Caesar's will is read and Cleopatra learns that he's claimed Octavian as his son, making him heir to all Caesar's holdings. Caesarion is not mentioned.

In chapter thirty-five, Cleopatra and her household sail for home and she discovers that she is pregnant. Back in Egypt, she learns that Octavian has been accepted by some. She meets with her advisors. In chapter thirty-six, Olympos examines Ptolemy and says that he has consumption, with little chance of survival. There is talk of the state of affairs in Rome and Cleopatra realizes that Caesarion could be in danger because Caesar had recognized him as his son. In chapter thirty-seven, Cleopatra learns that Marc Antony has "rebuffed" Octavian.

In chapter thirty-eight, Cleopatra's child is born early and dies. The appearance of a comet prompts speculation from astrologers. Olympos says that Ptolemy is going to have to go to Upper Egypt if he is to survive, citing the sunny days and climate that will be better for the boy's condition. They travel the Nile and she leaves him in the care of priests at a healing shrine, but doesn't return to Alexandria immediately. Days later she receives word that Ptolemy has worsened and rushes to his side. He soon dies.



Chapters 30 through 38 Analysis

Cleopatra hears a rumor that there's to be a law introduced to the Senate allowing Caesar to have multiple wives. Ostensibly, the law would be a way for Caesar to father an heir without divorcing his current wife. Cleopatra is furious and says that if Caesar wants a legal heir, he should divorce Calpurnia and marry someone who can give him one. Caesar says that he won't divorce Calpurnia because she's stood behind him as he's worked to achieve his current status. Caesar also denies having knowledge of the proposed law and says that it's nothing more than a rumor meant to undermine him.

Cleopatra talks at length with Epaphroditus about the Biblical prophecies of a Messiah. Cleopatra also talks to others and learns that this Messiah is thought by some to be a king, though some believe it might be a woman. She asks Epaphroditus his opinion, asking whether he also believes it could be a woman. Epaphroditus quickly guesses that Cleopatra is talking about herself. He asks her that outright and she says that she doesn't think that she's the Messiah but wonders if others might. Cleopatra seems interested in these prophecies, not only with regard to the Messiah. She has seen for herself that there are people who are tired of the current situation and that they seem to be seeking answers or change. Epaphroditus says that this Messiah mentioned in the prophecies is to "usher in a new age," though he isn't more specific than that.

Cleopatra's relationship with the Younger Ptolemy is interesting because he is, as a matter of fact, her husband in the eyes of Egyptian law. The Older Ptolemy had been self-centered and surly but the Younger Ptolemy is, in Cleopatra's eyes, more sweet-tempered from early childhood. Cleopatra says upon her marriage to him that he seems biddable but wonders if this might have been at least somewhat prompted by the fact that he'd seen several siblings executed for their political aspirations. However, it seems more likely that he - as the youngest child who no one ever expected to become king - had simply been allowed to develop at his own pace with no forced expectations. Cleopatra is sorry for his death and it seems that she truly loves the boy, almost as a son.



Chapters 39 through 48

Chapters 39 through 48 Summary

In chapter thirty-nine, Cleopatra begins building a fleet of ships to serve as a navy. She predicts that Cassius and Brutus, both exiled from Rome, will unite. That prediction comes true. Cleopatra knows that union means there will be war. The country battles famine, and fast on its heels comes a plague. Olympos says the disease could be airborne. Bodies are cremated because no one wants to touch them. A messenger comes on behalf of Cassius who demands the use of Cleopatra's navy. She tells him that there's a plague and that it's dangerous for anyone to enter the country, eventually convincing him of the truth of her statements and thus delaying her promise to deliver the fleet as soon as possible. The political upheaval in Rome draws Cleopatra in. She notes that Octavian has achieved in less than two years after Caesar's death what it took Caesar twenty years to accomplish in his own life.

In chapter forty, Cleopatra sets sail for Rome with part of the fleet, but a storm catches them and the fleet is destroyed. Cleopatra is relieved to find that many of the crew survive and says they'll begin building a new fleet immediately. In chapter forty-one, Mardian cites the fact that she must have a co-ruler and begins suggesting men who would make a suitable king. Cleopatra gives in only to a degree and gives Mardian a list of qualities that she believes will make his quest impossible. In chapter forty-two, Mardian produces a prince named Archalaus he believes could meet Cleopatra's requirements. The two meet, but Cleopatra notes that there is no attraction.

In chapter forty-two, Cleopatra receives several messages from Marc Antony. The first demand her appearance in Rome to answer charges indicating she'd played a role in Caesar's murder. Later, she is "invited" to talk, but she doesn't sail for Rome until the messages from Marc Antony stop coming altogether. She arrives and sends a message that he's invited to dine aboard her ship, refusing to come to him until he's come to her. After the formal meeting, Antony returns and takes Cleopatra to bed. In chapter forty-three, Cleopatra notes that nothing can come of the relationship.

In chapter forty-four, Cleopatra and Antony share dinner and she tells him it's to be their last unless he decides to come to Egypt. As they talk, Antony says that he believes Caesar left Cleopatra out of his will "as a tribute" to her ability to take care of herself. Cleopatra makes a request that Antony "destroy" everyone who is a threat to her throne. In chapter forty-five, Cleopatra learns that Antony is coming to Egypt and that he'd done as she'd requested in Rome by executing Arsinoe. He presents Caesarion a gift of a lizard and is amazed that the boy so clearly resembles Caesar, including in his walk. He loves the country and the people love him. Cleopatra throws a party in Antony's honor on his birthday. In chapter forty-six, Antony learns that his wife and brother have taken up arms against Octavian and that war threatens from other fronts as well. Cleopatra says that he should divorce his wife and marry her in order to unite their forces to retain what he's gained. He declines.



In chapter forty-seven, Cleopatra takes Antony on a tour of her warehouses and other holdings, showing the extent of her wealth. He's awed but still refuses her offer. She knows that she should tell him that she's expecting their child but doesn't, and she allows him to refuse her offer. In chapter forty-eight, Antony receives an offer from Pompey to join forces against Octavian. In chapter forty-eight, Antony makes plans to leave and Cleopatra is relieved, knowing that her body will soon begin to change and he'll know that she's expecting their child.

Chapters 39 through 48 Analysis

Cleopatra continues to study the Biblical prophecies. At one point she studies the story of Joseph and the famine in Egypt along with Joseph's role in helping the people lay aside grain for the coming famine. While she says she doesn't know whether a man named Joseph actually existed, she does say that this explains the Egyptian program of wheat storage, saving the grain for the years when crops fail. When the plague is in full force, she asks Epaphroditus what the scrolls say about plagues. She seems certain that there will be stories of plagues there and he tells her about the Biblical account of the plagues of Egypt.

Cleopatra's family tradition has been for siblings to marry in order to produce heirs of unquestionable royal lineage. However, she broke this tradition by her alliance with Caesar and was married in name only to her younger half-brother Ptolemy. After Ptolemy's death, Mardian begins urging her to marry, saying that she must have a co-ruler. When she says that Caesarion is her co-ruler, Mardian says that he is only five and that the people demand that she have a husband. Mardian then seems to strike a nerve with Cleopatra, saying that perhaps she is waiting for Caesarion to mature in order to father her next child. She is angry but takes his warning that people will be waiting for an occurrence of this nature and decides to at least make the public pretense of selecting a husband. Cleopatra notes that Mardian is a eunuch and, as such, can't possibly understand the emotions that pulled her into a love affair with Caesar and now leaves her detesting the thought of love.

It seems that Antony had wanted Cleopatra to come to Rome for a couple of reasons. First, he had changed documents written by Caesar before his death. These documents outlined various aspects of state, such as who was to take over particular offices upon Caesar's death. The changes seemed to have been minor, and Cleopatra says that she understands the reasons for Antony's actions. What's interesting about this is that Antony seems to feel guilty but is caught in the situation and is unable to tell anyone else about the changes without implicating himself in wrongdoing. The second reason for his request for Cleopatra's presence is to have the opportunity for a sexual encounter with her. He tells her that he's always remembered from that first meeting when she was just a girl.

Cleopatra seems immediately caught up in her affair with Antony. An interesting aspect of the situation is that she seems to want him to make a public display of their affair. Initially, she tells him not to rush off after their night of making love aboard her ship.



When they again meet for dinner with a group, Antony all but ignores Cleopatra, which angers her. She seems to expect that he's going to make overtures to her in front of an audience despite the fact that he's married and it would not sit well with the people. When Cleopatra evaluates her attitude on this point, she says that she is behaving "like a common camp follower."

The political upheaval in Rome is what interrupts the idyll created by Antony and Cleopatra in Egypt. He says that they are like their own little kingdom. They spend a great deal of time together, making love often. Cleopatra professes her love for Antony and they seem happy during this time . But when Antony learns that his wife had taken up arms against Octavian, Cleopatra says that his wife is now a liability and that he would be better off to divorce her. Cleopatra proposes that she and Antony marry, presenting their united forces as a considerable military front. Though Antony initially argues that the marriage wouldn't be recognized by Rome - no foreign marriage is - he also seems to believe it isn't a wise political move. Cleopatra says that his rejection "stings," and tells him that he has to be careful, or she'll make the same offer to Octavian. While Antony cites a truce with Octavian, he seems to recognize that Octavian probably wouldn't turn down an offer like this from Cleopatra.



Chapters 49 through 56

Chapters 49 through 56 Summary

In chapter forty-nine, Olympos urges Cleopatra to take a draught that will end her pregnancy. She agrees but then backs out and is relieved. Mardian brings her a letter from a friend, who says that the affair between Antony and Cleopatra has prompted a great deal of gossip and that Antony's wife is angry. In chapter fifty, Cleopatra continues to study prophecies and believes she is the widow of Caesar mentioned in the Sibylline Leaves. Cleopatra learns that Herod is traveling to Rome and will stop over in Egypt. She endures a difficult labor before her due date and delivers twins, a boy she names Alexander Helios and a girl named Cleopatra Selene. One day a messenger arrives with a letter from Antony announcing his marriage. The letter is formal and Cleopatra considers her answer only a few moments before giving the messenger two sentences to deliver to Antony as her reply. She offers her congratulations and announces the birth of his children. The messenger is shocked and doesn't know what to say, but Cleopatra waves him away, saying that he can certainly remember those two sentences. She soon receives another letter from Antony. He accuses her of cruelly withholding her pregnancy from him and says that it would have made a difference in his future plans. She says his letter makes her "almost" feel sorry for him.

In chapter fifty-two, Cleopatra sends Olympos to Rome, ostensibly to study medical techniques but also to learn what he can of Antony's actions. Cleopatra learns of Olympos' actions and through his letters that Antony's wife Octavia is pregnant. In another letter, Olympos says that Octavian, Antony's brother-in-law, was angry at Cleopatra's news and that Antony, in an apparent effort to get back in his good graces, began saying that he was trying to spread his "noble blood" throughout the world. Olympos is outraged and Cleopatra renews her decision to remain single and to rule alone, spending her time caring for her children. In another letter, Olympos says that Octavia gave birth to a son, rumors say that Antony wishes to divorce her and Herod has arrived in Rome.

In chapter fifty-three, Cleopatra and Caesarion travel to Dendera, where they visit a temple that includes depictions of both Cleopatra and Caesarion. He's disappointed that it looks nothing like him, but she says that all Egyptian rulers look the same so that people understand the meaning of pictures such as this. Caesarion is nearing his tenth birthday about the same time that Olympos announces his intention to marry. The Egyptian commodities of papyrus and glass are in high demand. She learns that the upheaval in Rome continues from a grain ship's captain who lost his ship in an apparent attempt to starve out Rome and its leaders. Cleopatra believes this means that Octavian will be floundering and will have to call on Antony for help. She then learns that Antony and Octavia had set sail and would soon arrive in the east, but that Antony had apparently had a change of heart and sent Octavia home. Mardian says that Antony is certain to summon Cleopatra and asks what she'll do what that happens. She knows he's right but doesn't know what she'll do.



In chapter fifty-four, Cleopatra meets Antony in Antioch. Antony says that he doesn't want her as an ally but as "one who wants you," and asks that she bring the twins for him to see. Cleopatra agrees but stops him before he kisses her, knowing that she won't be able to resist once he touches her. She tells him that she won't allow him back to her bed unless he is willing to marry her. He produces a gift that he says he'd brought as a wedding gift and proposes. He says that he won't ask Octavia for a divorce until after she gives birth, saying that it would be "cruel." She accepts that. She laughingly tells her servants that it's time for the marriage because the twins are now three years old. They marry at the Temple of Isis.

In chapter fifty-five, Cleopatra says that she is in something of a daze in the days following her marriage. Antony is soon planning a military campaign to Parthia. Antony presents Cleopatra with his plans and she seems skeptical until she learns that he'd taken them directly from Caesar's plans. Cleopatra realizes the "magnitude" of the campaign and agrees to go part way with him. Antony agrees, but tells her she'll have to turn back before they reach the treacherous mountains. He says that one of them has to survive the war.

In chapter fifty-six, the twins are developing their own personalities, with Alexander showing an exuberant personality much like Antony and Selene, with her pale coloring, often quiet without showing emotional displays. As part of her marriage contract with Antony, Cleopatra obtains control of a large section of land that had formerly belonged under Herod's rule. Now she knows that their relationship will be strained because of it. When Cleopatra plans to visit these lands, Mardian warns her to be careful. She says that she plans to be diplomatic with Herod and to point out that he doesn't want her for an enemy. Before Antony and Cleopatra part, he receives word that Octavia has given birth to another daughter. She notes that their night together, their last before he departs for the military campaign and she returns to Egypt, has the feeling of a permanent farewell.

Chapters 49 through 56 Analysis

Cleopatra is, to some degree, a very conniving person, and she goes to great lengths to get her way once her heart is involved with someone. In the case of Caesar, she'd put him on the spot by demanding that he publicly acknowledge his son. When she and Antony first connect, she is angry that he won't meet her eyes and seems to ignore her during a public event. After the news of his marriage reaches her, she plans to send Olympos to Rome, and he quickly realizes that while he's going there to study, he's really going to bring Cleopatra back news of Marc Antony. While Cleopatra seems tame compared to the siblings who sought to overthrow her father and later to overthrow her, she is also power hungry. She has ambitions for her children and knows that the Roman connection will be a benefit to them in garnering aid for military and political aspirations in the future.

As the time approaches for the military campaigns, Cleopatra demands to be present as Antony negotiates for allies. She notes that Egyptian money is paying for the campaign



and that she doesn't intend to turn Antony loose with the option to spend where and how he wants. This is interesting in that she seems ready to spend whatever he wants and to gamble on any campaign he dictates but tries to hold onto this appearance of control. Antony's military leaders will later say that Cleopatra's influence over him has made him a less effective leader because he has to stop and consider Egypt before making decisions. It seems that this works both ways and that Cleopatra has also spent a great deal of time and money on Antony's wants. This union seems to have been detrimental to both Antony and Cleopatra and to Egypt.



Chapters 57 through 62

Chapters 57 through 62 Summary

In chapter fifty-seven, Cleopatra reveals that she's pregnant with Antony's child. He promises that he'll be victorious on the battlefield. Antony prepares to leave and Cleopatra watches as the massive army picks up the necessities, including a large butt of a tree to be used as a battering ram. Cleopatra questions the need for this and Antony says that there won't be any timbers to use for battering rams upon their arrival in Parthia. Cleopatra says that it's an incredibly huge group of men and equipment and she worries about them making it over the mountains, let alone their ability to survive the Parthian campaign.

In chapter fifty-eight, Cleopatra travels to Jerusalem to meet with Herod before making her way home. He greets her upon her arrival, saying that he is "Herod, King of the Jews." Herod suggests that Cleopatra might be willing to lease him the land Antony gave her upon their marriage. He says that he'll oversee it and take care of it, saving Cleopatra the work of managing the property and the agricultural businesses there. She assures him that she'll think about it but admits to herself that it's a delaying tactic. She returns home and gives the children the gifts that she'd gathered during her trip. She has water from the Dead Sea as a gift for Caesar, saying that he can experiment on it, but warns him not to force any animals to drink it. She also brings him a horse, and he's soon spending a great deal of time riding. Cleopatra learns that Octavian has been victorious in a great battle and that another leader, Sextus, has thrown himself on Antony's mercy.

In chapter fifty-nine, Cleopatra gives birth to another son. She wants to name him for the victory she hopes Antony is about to achieve in Parthia but feels to do so would be premature. She names him Ptolemy Philadophos and says that he'll eventually be settled with a nickname as Caesarion was. Cleopatra continues to be ill, suffering the aftereffects of childbirth much longer than she had in the past. Cleopatra continues to wait but hears nothing from Antony. One night she has a dream in which Antony is alive but is surrounded by rotting corpses. She takes this to mean that he's surrounded by death but that he's at least survived. She knows that the news of his battle will come by messenger the next day. Antony's personal aide arrives the following morning. His name is Eros and he says that Antony is safe but that the army has taken a horrible beating. Eros says that Antony is in Leuce Come, a small fishing village in Syria. He says that Antony has requested that Cleopatra come to him and that she bring money to feed and clothe his soldiers. After Eros finishes telling his story, Cleopatra reads the note sent to her from Antony. The note indicates that he has eighteen thousand of the sixty thousand troops he'd begun with. In chapter sixty, Cleopatra travels to Antony's side and there discovers that he has an injury on his hand that is swollen, feverish and angry.

Antony's first question to Cleopatra is to ask how much money she'd brought. When she tells him, his first words are that it's not enough. She is angry at the attitude, pointing out



that she hasn't even recovered from childbirth yet and rushed to his side at a moment's notice. She reminds him that transporting money by sea is dangerous and that she'd split the money into thirds so that if any single ship went down the entire fortune wouldn't be lost.

In chapter sixty-one, Cleopatra insists that Antony allow Olympos to tend the wound. Olympos says the only way to do so is to cut away the rotten flesh and allow the wound to drain, which he does. Antony receives a letter from Rome indicating that Octavia is on her way to Syria to bring supplies and reinforcements to Antony. Cleopatra says that the correct thing for Antony to do is to send Octavia back to Rome. In the end, she refuses to try to argue him into her way of thinking and says that it's his decision. She then says that she's returning to Alexandria, obviously waiting for him to decide if he's going with her or is going to await Octavia's arrival. He remains behind when Cleopatra leaves. Time passes and then Cleopatra receives a letter from him, saying that she is his "dearest and only wife" and pledging that he'll return to her. He'd actually written the letter from the harbor upon his arrival and walks into her room as she's reading the letter. He swears that he will never again leave her side.

In chapter sixty-two, Antony settles back into life in Alexandria and with the children. Caesarion asks to go to Rome and Olympos volunteers to take him, citing his plans to return to Rome to study again anyway. Antony supports Caesarion's request. Cleopatra eventually agrees to allow the trip.

Chapters 57 through 62 Analysis

Cleopatra realizes that her last night with Antony before his departure to the battlefield at Parthia might very well be their last night together. As is typical of her flair for the dramatic, she says that she should have something important to say in case it is their final night together, but that she can't think what it should be and so lets the moment pass. She worries about the impact of what she does say - or what she fails to say.

As the time approaches for the military campaigns, Cleopatra demands to be present as Antony negotiates for allies. She notes that Egyptian money is paying for the campaign and that she doesn't intend to turn Antony loose with the option to spend where and how he wants. This is interesting in that she seems ready to spend whatever he wants and to gamble on any campaign he dictates but tries to hold onto this appearance of control. Antony's military leaders will later say that Cleopatra's influence over him has made him a less effective leader because he has to stop and consider Egypt before making decisions. It seems that this works both ways and that Cleopatra has also spent a great deal of time and money on Antony's wants. This union seems to have been detrimental to both Antony and Cleopatra and to Egypt.



Chapters 63 through 76

Chapters 63 through 76 Summary

In chapter sixty-three, Cleopatra receives letters from Olympos and Antony. She learns that Octavian is in the midst of public works projects, obviously aimed at garnering the support of the people, and that many are calling him "Caesar." Olympos writes to Cleopatra, telling her that Octavian had arrived at the small apartment where he and Caesarion are staying. Octavian had announced that he knows Caesarion's identity and demands that he leave Rome.

In chapter sixty-four, Cleopatra learns that the ambassador of Median wants so badly to befriend Egypt that he offers his daughter's betrothal to Alexander. Cleopatra notes that she's been fortunate to have chosen her own lovers but that her children might not be so lucky. The relationship between Cleopatra and Antony deteriorates and begins to show signs of depression. In chapter sixty-five, Antony is again away on a military campaign, this time to Armenia. Cleopatra faces the tasks for running the country, including testing new agricultural methods. At one point she fears that the country has been forsaken by the gods and believes that Egypt could not survive with them. An encounter with a soothsayer makes Cleopatra further fear that she is to be the last of the pharaohs to rule Egypt.

In chapter sixty-six, Antony has tremendous plans for increasing the area under Egypt's control and Cleopatra says that he's talking about a "dynasty," warning that he be careful when and how he announces these plans publicly. Antony's indicates his desire that Caesarion be recognized as rightful heir to Caesar's position in Rome, a fact that Cleopatra believes will prompt the Roman military leader Octavian to declare war. In chapter sixty-seven, Octavian responds, urging that Antony give up his role as "champion" of "the Queen's bastard son," obviously referring to Caesarion. With war inevitable, Cleopatra and Antony decide that they must have a navy to defend the country from sea-based attacks and that they must take advantage of those who remain faithful to Antony in Rome.

In chapter sixty-eight, Antony is again depressed, this time citing the fact that his former colleague Octavian had betrayed him. Antony continues to wish for approval from the Romans and to feel torn by his Roman roots and this newfound affinity with the Egyptian people. In chapter sixty-nine, additional upheaval in Rome prompts members of the Senate to flee. They soon come to Ephesus, and Cleopatra notes that they were "fugitives," evicted from Rome by Octavian. In chapter seventy, Cleopatra comes to the end of her patience with regard to Octavia and tells Antony that he must divorce her. She doesn't want to sound like a nagging, whining wife, so says that it's past time, that it's "confusing" to those would ally with Egypt and that it's hurting their cause. She thinks about the fact that she can't emotionally stand it any longer but doesn't say that, thinking that the political aspect is more likely to sway him. He has a letter of divorce drawn up the next morning and sends it to Octavia. There's immediate repercussions with some



saying that Octavia's continued support for Antony makes her appear the wronged wife. Antony is told that Antony's supporters who were befriended by Octavia are upset by the news. Cleopatra overhears two Roman men talking, and they say that her power over Antony is disturbing to them. The men say they are worried that Antony's strategy will be changed because of his concern for Egypt and that it will eventually prove his downfall.

In chapter seventy-one, several of the Romans leave Antony and move into Octavia's camp. Antony learns that his will has been stolen and that Octavia is using it against Antony, citing Antony's support of Caesarion's claim to Rome and of his own desire to be buried with Cleopatra in Egypt. In chapter seventy-two, there's a feast, and Antony celebrates by giving gifts to everyone. Cleopatra notes that each gift of thirty coins is a "small fortune" and that Antony's generosity continues to be a source of amazement. They are in the Gulf of Corinth, safe from attack for the moment but also far from the supplies they need from Egypt. In chapter seventy-three, Cleopatra and Antony learn that a portion of their army has fallen, and that with it went access to a harbor. Someone poisons Cleopatra's wine, but the taster dies before Cleopatra has a chance to drink it.

In chapter seventy-four, the battles continue and are not generally in Egypt's favor. Rumors of Antony's incompetence begin to surface and there are more defections, including a Calvary commander and his men. In chapter seventy-five, they decide to make a break for freedom by sea. There's another defection and they burn some of the boats in an attempt to keep them out of Roman hands. In chapter seventy-six, the escape attempt finally takes place after waiting for the right moment. Several of the ships are lost in the battle, though Antony and Cleopatra, on separate ships, escape. Antony tells Cleopatra that he can no longer lead. When she tries to encourage him, he grows angry and says that she will never understand defeat because she never sees anything but victory, even when a battle is lost.

Chapters 63 through 76 Analysis

At one point Cleopatra questions Antony about Caesar's will, and it seems obvious that she is hoping that something was wrong with the will and that Caesar hadn't really claimed Octavian as an adopted son above his own flesh-and-blood son. Antony realizes that this is what she's after and assures her that the will was true and correct and that it was Caesar's wish.

The misconceptions characters have about Egypt is interesting in that it is typical of the prejudices that are prevalent when different cultures have little exposure to each other. The Romans believe the Cleopatra has a "golden chamber pot" and that sexual misconduct runs rampant. They also see Egypt as a land of excess, a belief Cleopatra may well have helped foster upon a visit to Rome years earlier to meet Marc Antony. During that visit, she'd presented the golden dishes as gifts to her guests and had added a pearl necklace to Antony's gifts. In fact, Cleopatra's country does seem rich in comparison to situations in some countries of the time, but the Romans have gone overboard in their stories, as is often the case with rumors.



During a trip, Cleopatra encounters a man who is something of a guru, or a wise man. He is very old and seems to have been waiting for her visit in order to move on with his death. While she is in the room with him there are several snakes, crawling around on the man and apparently ignoring the people in the room. However, after talking to Cleopatra, the man picks up a snake and treats it roughly until the snake strikes him. The man describes the feeling as the poison travels through his body and he talks of the feeling of peace, saying that it's not at all painful. It's much later noted that asps are often used as a means of execution during this time because it is something of a humane end. On this occasion, Cleopatra has to wait for a long time before someone enters and she feels safe to get up and leave the room without fear that she'll step on a snake or get bitten herself. She's told that no one had known the old man's intentions and she seems to believe that. However, this seems to have planted the idea for her own death.



Chapters 77 through 87, Olympos' Scroll

Chapters 77 through 87, Olympos' Scroll Summary

In chapter seventy-seven, Antony and Cleopatra learn that Octavian surrounded a large force of Antony's men and that the men, rather than face certain annihilation at the hands of the Roman army, surrendered. The messenger who arrives with the news says that the men felt forced into it because Antony has no way to pay them. Antony feels that they surrendered because he wasn't there to lead them. Antony leaves Cleopatra's side, saying that he needs to go to Cyrenaica to inspect the troops there. In chapter seventy-eight, Cleopatra learns that the forces in Cyrenaica have defected to Octavian. She realizes that there's little she can do now to defeat Octavian and begins to make plans for the time when Octavian takes over her country. She calls for Caesarion and tells him that she has a plan for him to take the throne. She says that she will promise Octavian that she'll call off the fighting and kill herself if he will in turn promise to put Caesarion on the throne to rule in her place. She knows that Egypt will become a Roman province but says that having Caesarion on the throne in that case is still better than allowing the throne fall into other hands. Caesarion is immediately angry and says that he won't participate in a plan that includes Cleopatra's death. She reluctantly agrees and tells him that she won't kill herself if he'll leave the country for safety. He reluctantly agrees to this plan. Cleopatra then calls on Mardian and asks that he get poison for her. He refuses, saying that if he'd planned to let her die he would simply have done so when she had such a difficult birth with the twins.

In chapter seventy-nine, Cleopatra seeks places of peace and solace as she waits for the inevitable. Antony returns and says that he'll stay in Egypt but not with Cleopatra. Cleopatra gathers all the valuables she can find and sends word to Octavian that she has a great deal of wealth that she'll give him as part of her terms of surrender, citing along with that her request that Caesarion be allowed to rule. She also prepares to send Caesarion away and says this is the most difficult part of the entire situation. Antony asks if he can return to the palace to live with her and she says that his rooms are ready for him.

In chapter eighty, there's a feast and Caesarion is preparing to depart. Octavian, calling himself "Imperator G. Caesar," sends word to Cleopatra that he'll consider her offer of the wealth and Caesarion but not at the price of her death. He says that instead he wants a token of her loyalty and suggests Antony's head as that token. Cleopatra makes part of the trip to Caesarion, sending him on his way to what she believes to be a safe haven. In chapter eighty-one there's a series of banquets, each more elaborate than the last, with Antony at the heart of the merrymaking. In chapter eighty-two, Cleopatra envisions what Rome will become under Octavian's rule. She believes that Caesarion might be appointed to the throne or that the twins, Alexander and Selena, might find favor in Octavian's eyes, simply because of their youth and that fact that they'd seem to be easily manipulated. Antony challenges Octavian to a fight with the winner taking the



victory for the entire battle but Octavian declines, sending a message that there would be easier ways for Antony to die.

A messenger arrives from Octavian, who makes veiled comments about Octavian's desire for Cleopatra. The messenger seeks to flatter Cleopatra, though she believes that he goes too far overboard for it to be truly flattering. At one point, this man says that Cleopatra and Octavian are rulers of one class while Antony is a lower class altogether, and that Antony's role in the entire situation is negligible. Cleopatra takes the man to the tomb where all her wealth is piled in the hope that the man will be so overwhelmed that he'll try to convince Octavian of the advantages of taking Cleopatra's offer. Cleopatra is in the midst of selling the man on this idea when Antony walks in. Seeing the man kissing Cleopatra's hand, he grows angry and has the messenger whipped, though Cleopatra objects. She later puts salve on the man's wounds, hoping to regain some of the goodwill Antony's actions had cost.

In chapter eighty-three, Cleopatra learns that the agricultural harvest has been incredible and says she wishes Octavian would conquer nothing but empty warehouses. She dismisses Epaphroditus, telling him that he needs to sever ties with her and return to obscurity among his people in order to be safe. She then learns that Octavian is marching nearer, but that he doesn't have as many men as had been originally estimated. She says the discovery makes her "giddy with hope."

In chapter eighty-four, Antony rides off into battle. Cleopatra has instructed Olympos to carry her scrolls - the story of her life written in her own hand - away from Egypt for safekeeping, and he has agreed to do so upon her death. Cleopatra knows that Olympos will not be closely watched and will not be important among those taken captive upon Octavian's arrival. She now tells Mardian that she and two trusted servants have decided on a course of action and invites him to join their circle. Antony returns, briefly victorious, and there's a banquet. The next battle does not go well for Antony and he returns mortally wounded. Cleopatra learns that he stabbed himself rather than surrender. Cleopatra is taken captive by the Romans before she can commit suicide as well.

In chapter eighty-six, the palace is taken over by the Romans. Cleopatra learns that her three children by Antony are safe but that Antony's son, the young Marcus Antonius, was killed by Octavian upon his arrival in the city. It's during a conversation with Octavian that Cleopatra realizes he plans to take her back to Rome for the triumph, where she'll be marched through the streets in chains and then executed. In chapter eighty-seven, Cleopatra learns that she has three days before the departure from Egypt. Cleopatra urges Olympos to leave the city immediately. Cleopatra convinces Octavian to allow her the opportunity to hold a feast in Antony's honor and he grants the request, including several special requests such as "special oils" to be taken into the tomb as well. In the tomb, Cleopatra opens a heavy basket and finds the asp inside. She holds the snake and hits it on the head, forcing it to strike. She describes the feeling, saying that there's little pain and that she is freed.



In the "Scroll of Olympos" chapter one, Olympos describes the events that follow. Two of Cleopatra's trusted servants die with her and Mardian is also bitten but survives. In chapter two, he describes that Octavian finds Caesarion and has him executed. In chapter three, he describes Octavian's return to Rome and his triumphal march into the city. Without Cleopatra, he has the three children follow him and Olympos notes that all three were expected to be executed but that they had "vanished back into his household" instead.

Chapters 77 through 87, Olympos' Scroll Analysis

Octavian's demand that Cleopatra not kill herself as a token of her loyalty to him but that she send him Antony's head instead has a ring of truth in it. It will later be revealed that Octavian had fully planned what to do with Cleopatra. He'd actually decided that he was going to take her back to Rome and that he'd force her to march behind him in his triumphal march to celebrate the defeat of Egypt. Cleopatra figures this out well ahead of time and will deny him this option. An interesting point is that she admits to looking at Antony's head and wondering about cutting his head off. She never goes so far as to plot this but seems incredibly near making the decision. It seems that their relationship has simply gone through too many ups and downs over the years. It may also be that Cleopatra knows that Octavian might or might not stand by his word and take this as the only price exacted from her.

Antony's constant mood swings are evidenced throughout his career, though he seems to have been much more even as Caesar's right hand than as a leader in his own right. As he faces almost certain destruction when he faces the Roman army, he is buoyed by the coming fight. However, when they make their escape by ship, he is deeply depressed. Cleopatra notes that he seems to have expected that they'd escape with no loss of life or ship. When she tries to buoy him up, he is immediately angry. He says that she's never known true defeat. Somehow, Antony has forgotten the difficulty Cleopatra had in taking the throne. Cleopatra seems hurt at this but not unduly so.

Cleopatra travels for a short distance with Caesarion as he prepares to leave Egypt. She encounters some of her people along the trip, and it's here that she finds her people more than willing to fight on her behalf. This is evidence of their love for her, because it seems evident that she's made some poor decisions that brought her country to this point. Nonetheless, she finds that people say they are willing to fight and that they won't surrender to the Romans. Mardian also says that the city is well fortified and that they might be able to withstand the Roman onslaught. However, Cleopatra refuses to fight. She says that the Romans will certainly be able to win out in the end and that she won't put her people in danger fighting a losing battle.

The use of Olympos's words as the final chapter of the story is an interesting journalistic tool. Cleopatra uses the final seconds of her life to write about her feelings as she dies. Olympos writes about the happenings after Cleopatra's death. He tells about the death of Caesarion, saying that the only good part of it was the timing. He is killed after

Cleopatra dies, so that she doesn't know of her son's murder. The lack of closure on the part of the other children is somewhat annoying.



Characters

Cleopatra

A member of the Ptolemy family, she is the third daughter of her father and mother, not a good position to expect the opportunity to become ruler. However, she shows her sense of leadership and determination from an early age and is named co-ruler with her father while she is still young, coming to the throne in her own right upon his death. Cleopatra breaks with the tradition of mating with a sibling or half-sibling in order to produce an heir for the throne. While this can be partly attributed to the fact that her brothers are much younger than she, she also makes it clear that she has no desire for them and that her sexual desires are important in her choice of a sexual partner. She does take a younger brother as "husband" in order to satisfy the people that there are two of the same family on the throne, but never culminates that relationship and seems to love the child as a parent would. Cleopatra falls in love with Caesar and remains true to that relationship while Caesar lives. After his death, she believes for a time that she'll never desire another man but does eventually open her heart to other attractions and her body to other sexual encounters. She is vehemently protective of her son but instills in him from an early age the need to fight for power. She puts him in danger when she visits Rome for an extended stay and tricks Caesar into the position of acknowledging her son as his in a formal public display. While Cleopatra is driven in her quest for power and personal satisfaction, she is also extremely loyal to her friends and her country. She is also saddened by suffering she sees in her country and looks for a way to alleviate the pain of her citizens as much as possible.

Marc Antony

A Roman who serves with Caesar, Antony meets Cleopatra for the first time when she is just a child and admits that he never forgot her. Antony is somewhat self-centered and seems almost inept in Caesar's shadow. He rushes with Cleopatra to claim Caesar's body, though he has to disguise himself in order to carry out the mission. He seems brave enough in the face of danger but can't seem to manage to handle his affairs with the decisive nature necessary for an effective leader. Antony seduces Cleopatra on their first meeting after Caesar's death, but he is married at the time and Cleopatra knows that the relationship is doomed. Later, his wife dies and Cleopatra believes this might be the opportunity Antony needs to form a union with her, but she learns that he'd remarried, this time to the sister of a man he hopes to hold as an ally in the quest to rule Rome. He is never committed to the woman and wavers between doing what's right by his wife and being with Cleopatra. He ultimately decides to wed Cleopatra, but even then can't bring himself to divorce his wife, initially citing the fact that she's pregnant with his child but later putting it off repeatedly. His lack of action makes the relationship with Cleopatra rocky, and he seems to concede to her whenever he feels that he's pushed her so far to the edge so that she really is going to sever her relationship with him.



Caesar

Ruler of Rome and Cleopatra's first true love, Caesar arrives in Egypt when Cleopatra is fighting her siblings for the throne of Egypt. His power is evident in the fact that Cleopatra asks Caesar to intervene on her behalf. He fathers one child by Cleopatra, Caesarion.

Olympos

A childhood friend of Cleopatra, Olympos is interested in science and becomes Cleopatra's personal physician when she takes the throne. It's Olympos who tells Cleopatra that her young brother and co-ruler Ptolemy has consumption and probably won't survive.

Mardian

A childhood friend of Cleopatra, Mardian is a eunuch and becomes a personal advisor of Cleopatra. Cleopatra doesn't take his loyalty for granted and is quick to point out how fortunate she is to be surrounded by people such as Mardian. It's Mardian who begins suggesting that Cleopatra should marry after the death of the young Ptolemy.

Octavian

A Roman military leader, he becomes Antony's ally upon Caesar's death but later betrays that alliance and tries to take sole control of the country. He is the leader of the army that marches into Alexandria and takes Cleopatra captive.

The Older Cleopatra

Cleopatra's oldest sister, the Older Cleopatra is self-centered and fully expects to be heir to the throne. When a public upheaval forces their father from the country, the Older Cleopatra and a sister take over the power of the throne. The Older Cleopatra is killed, probably poisoned by her sister Bernice.

Bernice

Cleopatra's sister, Bernice is between the older and younger Cleopatras in age. Bernice is quick to grab the power of the throne when her father is forced out of the country. Cleopatra believes Bernice killed her older sister, leaving herself in sole control. Bernice and her followers are overthrown by her father's army upon his return to the country. She is taken prisoner and is executed in a public display.



The Older Ptolemy

Cleopatra's younger brother, he is the older of two sons named Ptolemy. He is destined to marry the older Cleopatra when she takes the throne as ruler, in keeping with the tradition of the rulers of the country. However, the older Cleopatra scorns this idea citing the boy's youth and inability to produce an heir. When Cleopatra takes over the throne, Ptolemy and his sister, Arinsoe, take over the country but is ousted by Caesar. Ptolemy drowns soon after the attempt to force Cleopatra from the throne.

Arinsoe

Cleopatra's younger half-sister, Arinsoe and the Older Ptolemy rise up against Cleopatra after she takes the throne. With Caesar's help, Arinsoe and Ptolemy are put out of power, though they are given a leadership role by Caesar. Arinsoe is later taken prisoner by the Romans and is initially exiled, though she is killed by Marc Antony at Cleopatra's request.

The Younger Ptolemy

The youngest of Cleopatra's siblings and half-siblings, he is a happy young boy. Cleopatra notes that he's eager to please, though she admits that some of that may be caused by having seen the penalties imposed on those who oppose the rulers of the family. He lives as Cleopatra's co-ruler and is husband in name only, seeming to rely on her more as a parent figure than either a sister or a wife. He goes with her to Rome but complains of being homesick and is ill much of the time. He dies of consumption soon after their return to Egypt.

Caesarion

The son of Caesar and Cleopatra. Caesarion's Roman heritage is not recognized by the Romans and Cleopatra fights to make certain that he will inherit power and prestige from his father. This power eventually costs Caesarion his life. When Octavian marches into Alexandria, he realizes that Caesarion could theoretically be a threat to his own power in Rome and orders Caesarion's death.

Calpurnia

Wife of Caesar, she is quite pretty, though Cleopatra had hoped that she's be plain. She has been married to Caesar for more than fourteen years at the time of his death, though she says that he has spent most of his time away, engaged in military campaigns. When Cleopatra asks why he doesn't divorce her, Caesar says that she's stood by him through the years of hard work and that he won't deny her the right to be with him as he reaps the benefits of that work.



Objects/Places

Alexandria, Egypt

Where Cleopatra lives and rules.

The Nile

The main river through Egypt, it is used as a route for travel.

Philae

Where Cleopatra and Caesar exchange wedding vows.

Rome

Where Caesar is ruler at the time of Cleopatra's first visit and where she later returns to meet with Marc Antony.

The Tiber

The river in Rome that Cleopatra says is like a child's toy compared to the Nile of Egypt.

Tullianum Prison

Where Arinsoe is held as a Roman prisoner.

Dendera

Where Caesarion sees a depiction of himself as an adult pharaoh.

Antioch

Where Cleopatra and Antony meet after the twins are born.

The Temple of Isis

Where Cleopatra and Antony are married.

Jerusalem

Where Cleopatra meets with Herod.

Themes

The Quest for Power

The quest for power is what drives the entire story. Cleopatra realizes this in herself and in others from a very early age. When she is thrown from the throne, she could easily have lived a life of luxury elsewhere but cannot give up her hope of regaining the throne. Toward that end, she has herself rolled up in a rug and taken to Caesar. Though she professes an abhorrence to the thought of having sex with Caesar, she prepares to offer herself to him if that's what it takes to garner his support in her quest for a return to the throne. Cleopatra's ambitions continue long after she is securely in control of Egypt, and it seems that her insatiability becomes her downfall. She supports Marc Antony in his own quest for power, and the two may have felt the need to achieve so much individually that their joint efforts were simply too large to accomplish.

Cleopatra and Antony are not the only ones to embark on this quest. When Cleopatra's father is exiled for about two years, his older two daughters take advantage of his absence to take control of the throne for themselves. They are initially content to be co-rulers, but the more ambitious of the two is soon evident because Bernice kills her sister in order to gain complete control. Others of Cleopatra's siblings also meet their deaths in their efforts to gain - and retain - this power. Finally, Octavian exemplifies his quest for power in his actions just before and just after Cleopatra's death. He arrives in the city and discovers Antony's son, who had lived with Cleopatra and Antony in Egypt for several years. Cleopatra learns of the young Antony's death and initially puts it down to an unfortunate accident, but later learns that Octavian had ordered his death, probably so that there's be no one set on avenging the elder Antony's death. Caesarion is safely away from Egypt at the time, but Octavian tracks him down and brings him back to the country. Then, probably because Caesarion is the son of the late Caesar, Octavian orders Caesarion killed as well.

An interesting aspect of this theme is that Cleopatra, when faced with her imminent defeat, offers to kill herself if Octavian will then leave Caesarion on the throne. Though Caesarion is not himself this hungry for power, Cleopatra wants it for him.

Attraction

Cleopatra has two great loves in her life, and both are very costly to her. When she throws herself on the mercy of Caesar, she knows little of sex and has never been with a man. She is reluctant to take this step initially, but finds herself attracted to him and admits to looking forward to the upcoming encounter. She says that he tells her that he won't demand sex, but that she finds herself longing for it. It could be that this first sexual encounter is at least part of the reason Cleopatra finds herself falling in love with Caesar, but that doesn't account for the fact that she remains true to him while he's away for months at a time. Caesar seems fond of Cleopatra but never seems to truly



love her with the same depth of emotion she holds for him. Cleopatra prepares herself to remain alone after Caesar's death, and she holds to that resolution for some time. She describes feelings of being frozen in time with little to interest her other than her son and her country. It's during this time that Mardian begins urging her to marry. She goes so far as to meet one young man but says the attraction isn't here. However, when she later meets Marc Antony again, she says that she realizes there has been a hidden attraction between them that only surfaces after Caesar's death and after Cleopatra has had time to heal.

The Importance of Cultures/Traditions

Cleopatra's culture is very important to her. She refers to herself as the "daughter of Isis," one of the many gods revered by the Romans of the day. She makes regular pilgrimages to various parts of the country, usually stopping to pray at the various temples along the way. When her younger brother and husband Ptolemy is ill, Cleopatra is advised to take him to another part of the country where he'll have more sunshine. She takes him to a temple of healing and leaves him there to pray while she does the same. These customs are vital to Cleopatra, and she worries greatly when it seems that the gods have forsaken Egypt. She says that she doesn't know what Egyptians will do without their gods.

Antony and Caesar are both Roman and the two cultures are vastly different. When Cleopatra is visiting in Rome, there's a display that's meant to be entertaining, but Cleopatra discovers that the men involved are actually dying, simply for the sake of entertaining the Roman elite. She's furious and leaves, an action that earns her Caesar's disfavor. She tells him that Romans don't place enough value on life and he counters, saying that Egyptians value life too much. Years later, Antony also tells Cleopatra that she doesn't understand the Roman culture. He says that she's making her decisions based on what Egyptians would do and that she's overlooking the cultural differences that mean Romans will make different decisions.



Style

Point of View

The story is written in first person from Cleopatra's perspective. This point of view is extremely limited and the reader is told only what Cleopatra knows. The story seems to be written as a diary, in keeping with the title, but it is not often that the writer drops back to the informal tone of addressing the reader directly. As a rule, the only real indication that the story is a diary is that Cleopatra occasionally says that she'll reveal more of a particular topic later. The story is written in past tense and from a period well past the events described in the story. This is evident by the author's use of foreshadowing. The scenes of foreshadowing are not overly dramatic and are used only occasionally. A deviation from the memoirs, or diary, that this story is supposed to represent is seen in the free use of quotations. The quotations are full quotes, not paraphrases as would be expected in a true book of memoirs. This isn't particularly important because the story is, in fact, fiction.

The fact that the story is told from Cleopatra's perspective means that she is not likely to reveal the less-flattering aspects of her true nature. Because the story is actually fiction based on historical events, the question of how much is skewed because of this perspective is irrelevant.

Setting

The majority of the story is set in Egypt, with the action centered around Alexandria, where Cleopatra rules and lives. The general settings are real, though the author has obviously taken some liberties with the details of the settings. These seem, at least for the most part, historically accurate and lend a level of credibility to the story. The settings in Egypt revolve around the Nile and its importance to the people of Egypt. There are stories of years when the Nile fails to rise sufficiently to provide water to the agricultural concerns along the river and stories of a flood of the Nile. The characters travel along the Nile, and the river and places along the river are described in great detail. A large segment of the story is set in Rome, where Cleopatra spends two years when Caesarion is a young child and where she visits later. These settings are also described in detail, including the people, events and buildings, some of which remain standing in Rome in modern times. The overall settings, such as the countries described, are generally in keeping with historical fact. The more specific settings, such as Cleopatra's bedroom or Caesar's villa, are figments of the author's imagination, but seem to be reasonable and believable considering the place and time period.

Language and Meaning

The story is written in a very straightforward, informal style. This makes it much easier for a reader to become engrossed in the story, the plot and the subplots. However, it



should be noted that the language is modern and is not in keeping with what would be expected of the time and place. The author seems to have chosen a less restrictive writing style in order to engage the reader, and the author achieves this aim. The quotes and language are acceptable and consistent. The story is divided into narrative and dialogue. In some cases, the speakers are not clearly defined other than a brief introduction. For example, if Cleopatra is talking to Olympos, the author mentions that the two of them are now in a particular room having a conversation. Then the dialogue will refer to them as "I" and "he" throughout the conversations. Considering the vast number of characters, this is sometimes confusing, and readers may find they have to backtrack in order to remember who is talking at any given time. The names are also confusing in that Cleopatra has a sister who is also named Cleopatra. For the sake of clarity in this guide, the main character Cleopatra is referred to simply as Cleopatra and her older sister is referred to as "the Older Cleopatra." The same situation arises when Cleopatra has two brothers, both named Ptolemy. These are separated by being identified as the older and younger.

Structure

The story is divided into eleven sections, referred to as the scrolls. The first ten are written by Cleopatra and are meant to be a diary of sorts. She sets out deliberately to tell her story, meaning that the story picks up from her earliest memory - the drowning of her mother when she was very young. The story then skips to a meeting with the Romans when she is seven. Each of the scrolls end with some event, typically a departure for some new setting or some change in Cleopatra's situation.

The first scroll consists of chapters one through fifteen. It covers Cleopatra's quest for the throne and ends as Caesar prepares to return to Rome, forcing Cleopatra to marry her younger half-brother Ptolemy. The second scroll begins with Cleopatra trying to move on with her life after Caesar's departure. Caesar tells Cleopatra that it's not safe for her to visit him in Rome, but she later receives word that the country is at peace and that she should join him. The second scroll ends as Cleopatra sets sail for Rome. The third picks up with the voyage to Rome. The third ends with Caesar's cremation, and the fourth picks up with Cleopatra sailing for Egypt. The fourth ends with Cleopatra, having begun an affair with Antony, coming to terms with the loss of Caesar. The fifth opens with her announcement to Mardian and Olympos that she's expecting Antony's child. The fifth ends with the arrival of Antony in the east and Cleopatra wrestling with the question of what she will do when he sends for her. The sixth opens with her waiting for that meeting with him. The sixth ends with Octavian and Antony clashing, and the seventh begins with preparations for a new assault. The seventh ends with Octavian getting the upper hand, and the eighth scroll opens with Antony and Cleopatra celebrating the new year by having a feast. The eighth ends with yet another victory for Octavian and the Roman invaders, and the ninth opens with Cleopatra arriving back in Egypt. The ninth ends with Cleopatra holding to a brief hope that Egypt might be able to hold out against Octavian, and the tenth opens with her realization that this is to be the last scroll because her death is imminent at Octavian's hands. The tenth scroll is the



final one written by Cleopatra, and it ends with her description of her impending death after being bitten by a snake.

The eleventh scroll is titled "Olympos' Scroll" and is written by her friend, Olympos, detailing those things that occur after Cleopatra's death, including the death of her son, Caesarion. The first ten scrolls are divided into eighty-seven chapters and Olympos' scroll is divided into four additional chapters, for a total of ninety-one.



Quotes

"His choices were those of a desperate man, between bad and worse. He chose bad. Would they have preferred worse?" Chap. 1, p. 5

"Common Roman soldiers had laid hands on the King of Egypt and treated him like any naughty village boy. I must not lose Caesar's favor, lest they do the same to me." Chap. 12, p. 100

"Indeed, before the day was over, Ptolemy had been received by his troops and raised up on a royal sedan chair, denounced Caesar and me in such vitriolic language that the spy who reported it had to stammer, 'The - word unfit for repetition - tyrannical, unprincipled, greedy Julius Caesar and his whore, the - another word unfit for repetition - pleasure-soaked, lustful Cleopatra must be destroyed, and the evil - yet another word unfit for repetition - gluttonous Romans stopped in their tracks as they seek to devour us,' the King said." Chap. 13, p. 118

"'Men are ever drawn to dangerous enterprises,' I said. 'No matter how dangerous a mission, someone will always volunteer for it.'" Chap. 25, p. 257

"Leave Parthia for Caesarion. After all, if you have conquered the entire world, what will be left for him?" Chap. 30, p. 312

"They surrounded him and stabbed him to death, there were lots of the, and then he covered his face and died at the foot of Pompey's statue." Chap. 34, p. 350

"I felt that I could lie forever on that foul bed, entombed in the dark. I was dead, as dead as Caesar." Chap. 35, p. 364

"He's a god now, he shouldn't want mortals. He should leave mortals to other mortals." Chap. 42, p. 445

"The only battle it is crucial not to lose is a defensive one, when your home territory is attacked. So we have lost Parthia? We never had it." Chap. 60, p. 617

"It was unlike me but I would say nothing further to sway him either way. It must be



entirely his own decision, originate in his own heart. Otherwise, it would mean nothing."
Chap. 61, p. 625

"There are always people who wish for change, who are dissatisfied with the king. I had once been told a very hard truth: There is no one whose death is not a relief to someone." Chap. 77, p. 824

"So quickly that I cannot follow it with my eyes, it strikes. It bites my arm, sinking its fangs in." Chap. 87, p. 944



Topics for Discussion

Describe Cleopatra's ascension to the throne. Compare her own taking of the throne to that of her sisters, the Older Cleopatra and Bernice. What are the similarities? The differences?

List Cleopatra's siblings. What was the fate of each? Compare the Younger Ptolemy to the Older Ptolemy. Compare Arinsoe to Bernice. How are each similar to Cleopatra? How are they different?

Who are the two men who father Cleopatra's children? How are the two men similar? How do they differ?

Cleopatra's two childhood friends, Olympos and Mardian, become important to her during her reign as queen. What are the roles of the two men in Egypt during Cleopatra's rule? What are the fates of the two men?

What is Cleopatra's attitude toward the people of Egypt? List at least three times she exhibits this attitude. What does this attitude say about her love and respect for the people of Egypt?

Antony is accused of being torn in his loyalty and of always having to consider Egypt in his decisions. Is this accusation true? Give examples to support your answer. Could Cleopatra also have been accused of spending too much money and too much of her country's resources on a Roman endeavor? Support your answer.

There are several descriptions of the settings of this story, including Egypt and Rome. Compare Cleopatra's attitude about Egypt to her attitude about Rome.

Where is Cleopatra when Caesar dies? What is her reaction? Where is she when Antony dies? What is her reaction? Where is she when Caesarion dies? What does Olympos say about the time of Cleopatra's death with regard to Caesarion's?

Describe Cleopatra's relationship to her brother, the Younger Ptolemy. What is his relationship to Caesarion? Describe Cleopatra's relationship to her father. Describe her relationship to her siblings. Describe the sibling's relationships to each other.