

Cleopatra: The Girl Who Would Be King

AUTHOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid Primary



THEMES

- **Determination:** From a young age, Cleopatra has been determined to learn as much as she can and to become the best ruler of Egypt that has ever reigned. Despite the machinations of various ruthless family relatives, she has outwitted any plots to dispose of her and continues her path.
- **Resilience:** Cleopatra does not allow setbacks to impede her progress towards her goals. She regards them merely as problems to be solved. If one plan fails, then she thinks of another. Cleopatra's resilience is aided by her self-confidence and the knowledge that she is smart and capable.
- **Loyalty:** Most leaders, even today, often fail to inspire loyalty in their followers or supporters. Cleopatra comes from a tradition where even slaves are treated kindly (although they are still slaves) and now, when she needs the help of others most, she is magnanimous in her unwavering loyalty and appreciation of those who are helping her.

STUDY NOTES

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- Most students will have already heard of Cleopatra. What have they heard about her?
 - Where has most of their information come from?
 - Based on this, how accurate do they think their knowledge is?
 - Have any students heard about Cleopatra's childhood?
- If possible, find a map of the ancient world and plot the locations and journeys included in the novel.
- Latin and the roots of modern language: "Thankfully I speak Latin perfectly" (p 16). There are many examples of Latin words throughout the narrative e.g. *domus*, *mammillare*.
 - Why is Latin referred to as a 'dead' language?
 - How has Latin shaped our own English language?
 - Choose examples from the text and create modern word families based on the root of each e.g., *domus*: domestic, domesticated, domicile, domain.
- Insult like a Roman: "Out of the way, you traumus putidas!..." (p 84). Have some fun devising some (school-appropriate) Roman insults by looking up the Latin for your choice of descriptive language.
- *Cleopatra: The Girl Who Would Be King* is written in first person. How does this affect your engagement with the story?
 - Rewrite the section of the novel when the storm hits the pirate ship that Cleopatra and Myra are imprisoned on (pp 178-79) in third person.
 - Compare what you have written with the original text. Which version is more engaging and gives you a greater

sense of what it was like to live through this event?

- Throughout the novel, there are many references to the Great Library of Alexandria. We become very aware that the author values reading, books, libraries and librarians as well as Cleopatra's views.
 - Identify phrases and paragraphs that inform the reader of this.
 - Was Cleopatra actually significantly involved with the library? Do some research to find out.
 - Research the Great Library and find out who founded it, what was it like, what happened to it?
- Worst Jobs Ever: "Slaves waft big feathered fans... to attract the flies and mosquitos to keep them from the diners" (p 153). Slaves, of course, had no choice but even those who were free, but poor, had little choice of work.
 - What other awful jobs were there in this era? Research to find out some others.
 - Which would be the worst? Which would you hope to do?