

Ancient Rome: CAESAR



EARLY LIFE

Gaius Julius Caesar was born in Rome in the year 100 B.C. to an aristocratic family who can be traced back to the founding of Rome. Caesar's parents were well-off, but not rich by Roman standards. He began his education around age six with a private tutor who taught him to read and write. He learned important skills needed as a leader, such as Roman law and public speaking. When Caesar was sixteen, his father died, making him the head of the family. He took responsibility for his mother, Aurelia, and his sister, Julia. Caesar married Cornelia, the daughter of a powerful politician in Rome at age 17.

POLITICAL CAREER

Caesar found himself in the middle of a power struggle between two sides in the government. Sulla, the current dictator of Rome, was enemies with both Caesar's uncle Marius and Caesar's father-in-law, Cinna. Caesar joined the army and left Rome to avoid Sulla and his allies. He returned to Rome after Sulla died. Caesar became a military hero who quickly rose in the ranks of the Roman government. He allied with powerful men, such as general Pompey the Great and Crassus. Romans loved Caesar because he was an excellent speaker and leader. They trusted him to fix the problems Rome had, such as crime. Julius Caesar was elected to consul, the highest-ranking position in the Roman Republic, at age 40. This position was like a president, but there were two consuls who only served a one-year term. Caesar became governor of the province of Gaul at the end of his year as consul. He oversaw four Roman legions. He was an effective leader and conquered all of Gaul, earning him the respect and honor of his army. He was soon considered, alongside Pompey, as the greatest general in the Roman army.

CIVIL WAR

While Caesar was in Gaul, the politics in Rome became increasingly hostile. Many leaders were jealous of him. He and Pompey became rivals. The people supported Caesar and Pompey had the backing of the aristocrats. Caesar announced he was going to return to Rome and run for consul again. The Roman Senate said he must give up the command of his army. Caesar refused and the Senate said he was a traitor. He marched his army to Rome and took control of the city in 49 BC. They spent the next 18 months fighting Pompey. Caesar eventually defeated him, driving him all the way to Egypt. Upon reaching Egypt, the young Pharaoh, Ptolemy VIII, had Pompey killed. His head was presented to Caesar as a gift.

ROME'S DICTATORS

Caesar returned to Rome in 46 BC, becoming the most powerful man in the world. He was made dictator for life by the Senate and ruled like a king. Caesar made many changes in Rome. His supporters were placed into the Senate. He built new buildings and temples in Rome and changed the calendar to the Julian calendar with 365 days and a leap year. The calendar was used widely for over 1,500 years. The month of July was named after Caesar. He was the first to have his head as an image on a coin.

MURDER!

Certain people in Rome felt Caesar became too powerful and worried his rule would put an end to the Roman Republic. They felt Caesar may make himself king. They had vowed to never be ruled by a king again. His friends, Cassius and Brutus, led a plot to kill Caesar. On March 15, 44 BC Caesar entered the Senate. Men quickly attacked and killed him, stabbing him 23 times. This day is known as the Ides of March. Two years after Caesar's death, he was declared a god.

IMPACT

Julius Caesar was important for many reasons. His death led to a series of civil wars within Rome. The Roman Republic began unraveling. Caesar's adopted son, Octavian, became the next leader of Rome. He is better known as Caesar Augustus. Octavian and Mark Antony defeated Caesar's assassins in 42 B.C. He rose to power within Rome. The Roman Empire eventually fell.