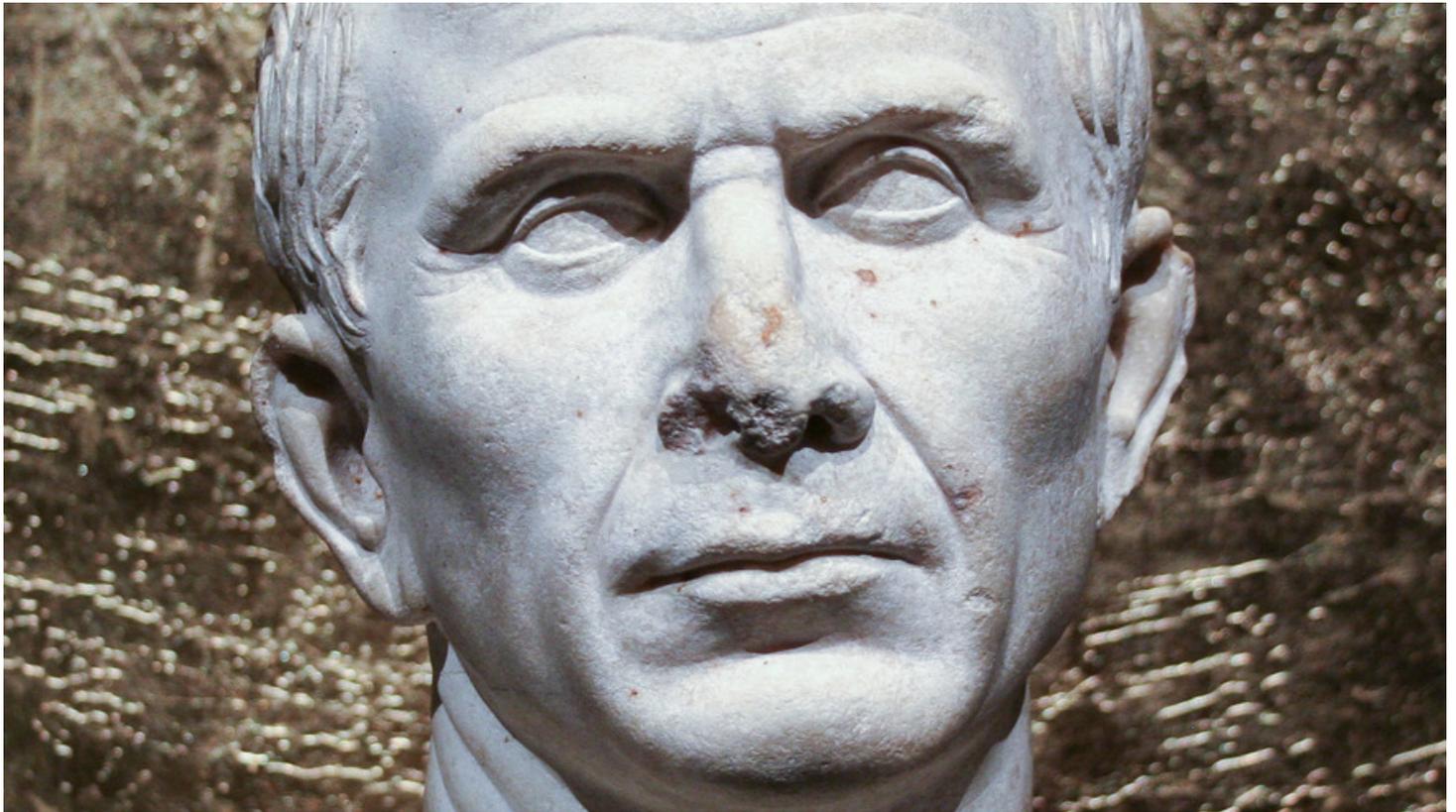


World Leaders: Julius Caesar

By Biography.com Editors and A+E Networks, adapted by Newsela staff on 08.17.16

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A statue of Julius Caesar in France. Wikimedia Commons

Synopsis: Julius Caesar was born around July 12 or 13, 100 B.C., about 2,100 years ago. His birth marked a new chapter in Roman history. Caesar fought in several wars and became the leader of the Roman Empire. A group of senators killed him on March 15, 44 B.C.

Early Years

Julius Caesar was a skillful and popular leader of the Roman Republic. He changed Rome and conquered many lands along the way.

Julius Caesar was likely born in Rome on July 12 or 13, 100 B.C. Although his family was important, they were not rich. When Caesar was 16, his father, Gaius Caesar, died, but he remained close to his mother, Aurelia.

He married a woman named Cornelia, the daughter of a noble. This angered Rome's dictator, Sulla, who ordered him to leave his wife or lose his property. He would not leave her. Caesar joined the military instead.

He went to the island of Rhodes but was kidnapped by pirates, who wanted a huge ransom. Caesar got naval ships to attack the pirates, and they were captured and killed.

Caesar returned to Rome and was elected to a low-level political job. He then moved on to other important government jobs.

His wife died. Two years later he married a woman named Pompeia, but the couple divorced after just a few years.

An Ambitious Politician

Caesar had great ambition. He became political partners with Marcus Licinius Crassus and Pompey, a leader of Rome. Crassus was a general and a politician and was called the wealthiest man in Roman history.

This partnership among the three men was called the First Triumvirate. It gave Caesar great power in Rome.

He became governor of Gaul, which is now France and Belgium. As he conquered more territory, he could be cruel to his enemies. In one case, he waited until his opponents' water supply had gone dry. Then Caesar ordered his troops to cut off the hands of everyone still alive.

Made Dictator For Life

Caesar eventually went to war against Pompey and chased him into Egypt, where he was killed. In Egypt, Caesar joined forces with Cleopatra. They had a son together named Caesarion.

After returning to Rome, Caesar was made dictator for life, which meant he ruled Rome. He was called the Father of his Country.

He served as dictator just a year before he was killed. In that short period Caesar transformed Rome. He increased the size of the Senate and opened it up so that more Romans were able to participate in government. He changed the Roman calendar and gave citizenship to many foreigners. Caesar also invited his defeated rivals to join him in the government.

Caesar worked hard to build his power. He stuffed the Senate with his friends, who would vote the way he told them to. He forced the senators to grant him honors and titles. His face was on Roman coins.

But It Only Lasted A Year Before He Was Assassinated

Caesar's reforms were popular with Rome's poorer citizens. The Senate was another matter. A number of senators thought he wanted to be king. Legend said that it had been 500 years since Romans had allowed a king to rule them.

Including former enemies in government led to his end. Gaius Cassius Longinus and Marcus Junius Brutus were both former enemies who joined the Senate. Together, they led a plot to kill Caesar on March 15, 44 B.C, which is called the Ides of March.

It is not clear whether Caesar knew about the plot, but the group, which called itself "the liberators," needed to act fast. Caesar planned to leave Rome on March 18 for a military action in what is now Iraq.

Following Caesar's death, a power struggle broke out in Rome. It caused the end of the Roman Republic.

Just two years after his death he became the first Roman to be deified, or made a god. The Senate also gave him the title "The Divine Julius."

Caesar's great-grandnephew, Gaius Octavian, put together an army to fight Cassius and Brutus. Octavian won and took power in 27 B.C. Using the name Augustus, he became the first Roman emperor.

Quiz

- 1 What are the MAIN ideas of this article?
- (A) Julius Caesar was a power-hungry dictator who scared his people for years, and he was assassinated by people who wanted to free the country.
 - (B) Julius Caesar was a poor man from a poor family who came into power, and his country hated him for it so they murdered him.
 - (C) Julius Caesar was a great military leader who won many battles, and he was a terrible politician who could never work with others.
 - (D) Julius Caesar was a skilled military leader, and he was very good at working with other people to accomplish his goals.
- 2 Which of the following details from the article BEST supports the idea that "Julius Caesar was a skillful and popular leader of the Roman Republic"?
- (A) This partnership among the three men was called the First Triumvirate. It gave Caesar great power in Rome.
 - (B) In Egypt, Caesar joined forces with Cleopatra. They had a son together named Caesarion.
 - (C) Just two years after his death he became the first Roman to be deified, or made a god.
 - (D) Caesar's great-grandnephew, Gaius Octavian, put together an army to fight Cassius and Brutus.
- 3 What is the connection between the sections "Early Years" and "But It Only Lasted A Year Before He Was Assassinated"?
- (A) "Early Years" explains Julius Caesar's birth and childhood experienced; and "But It Only Lasted A Year Before He Was Assassinated" describes his death in great detail.
 - (B) "Early Years" provides an overview of Julius Caesar's life; and "But It Only Lasted A Year Before He Was Assassinated" describes the events preceding and following his death.
 - (C) "Early Years" explains what Julius Caesar's family thought of him; and "But It Only Lasted A Year Before He Was Assassinated" describes what he thought of his family.
 - (D) "Early Years" explains why Julius Caesar was important; and "But It Only Lasted A Year Before He Was Assassinated" states why he did not make such a big impact after all.
- 4 Which of the following BEST describes how this article is organized?
- (A) This article begins with Julius Caesar's death, and then it details his life.
 - (B) The article begins with Julius Caesar's birth and ends with his last day.
 - (C) The article follows Julius Caesar's birth, rise to power, assassination, and impact on Rome.
 - (D) The article discusses Julius Caesar's impact on Rome, analyzes how he was important, and explains why.