Cleopatra Vii Essay, Research Paper

Cleopatra is a throne name to many queens from Macedonia who ruled in Egypt. The most famous of these women was Cleopatra VII. She was the daughter of Ptolemy XII Auletes, King of Egypt. Cleopatra VII lived from 69-30 B.C. and reigned as queen of Egypt from 51-30 B.C. (Encyclopedia Encarta 99). Cleopatra is said to be far from beautiful, despite her glamorous image today. Her picture on ancient coins made her look like she had a long hooked nose and masculine features. She is also said to be very seductive with her enchanting musical voice and exuded charisma. She was also very intelligent and a great ruler. She spoke nine different languages. She was the only Ptolemy pharaoh who could actually speak Egyptian (Internet site, 2). The Ptolemy family had ruled Egypt since 305 B.C. After the death of Alexander the Great, Ptolemy I declared himself King of Egypt. The Ptolemy family was of Macedonian descent, but is said to be part Greek and part Iranian as well. Cleopatra s father s, Ptolemy XII, full name was Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos Auletes which means flute-player in Greek. He began ruling in 80 B.C. and continued to rule until his death in 51 B.C. Cleopatra s mother is said to have been Cleopatra V Tryphaena, who either died or disappeared in 69 B.C. Cleopatra had two older sisters; Cleopatra VI and Berenice IV, and one younger sister, Arsinoe IV. She also had two younger brothers Ptolemy XIII and Ptolemy XIV, both of whom she had to marry. In 58 B.C. Berenice IV took over the kingdom forcing her father, Ptolemy XII, to flee to Rome. She ruled Egypt until he regained the throne and then in 55 B.C. he had her beheaded. Cleopatra s other sister disappeared sometime between 58-55 B.C. Ptolemy XII named CleopatraVII and Ptolemy XIII as heirs to the throne and when he died they took over. A rule established by Ptolemy II stated that you had to marry your sibling if ruling a country together. So Ptolemy XIII and Cleopatra VII married, but strictly as a rule. Cleopatra VII was 18 and Ptolemy was only 10 when they were named King and Queen of Egypt in 51 B.C. (From now on Cleopatra VII will be Cleopatra). For the most part Cleopatra did most of the ruling. Meanwhile, Ptolemy served as a pet for his advisors. They would tell him what to do. Finally, three years after Cleopatra had ruled they advised him to take total control of the kingdom. He went with his advisors and Cleopatra was exiled. Outside of the walls of Alexandria, the port city of the kingdom, in Syria Cleopatra began to construct an army for her revenge. Meanwhile in Rome, Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great were fighting against each other in a civil war. Pompey was allies of the Egyptians and fled to Egypt to seek out help. Pothinus, one of Ptolemy s advisors, predicted that Caesar s victory was inevitable, and he told Ptolemy XIII to have Pompey beheaded in hopes that Caesar would take their side in the civil war between Cleopatra. So Ptolemy XIII had Pompey killed in front of his wife by Lucius Septmus, his servant at one time. Pothinus had Pompey s head saved for Julius Caesar to see when he arrived. When Caesar did arrive and they showed it to him, hoping that he would be pleased. However, they discovered that he was very disgusted. Pompey was once a friend, and he thought that the way he was brutally butchered in front of his family was very disrespectful (Internet site, 1). Outside the walls Cleopatra knew she had to tell Caesar what was really happening. She disguised herself, wrapped herself in a roll of carpet, and was carried into the castle. She knew that if anyone would catch her Ptolemy XIII would have her beheaded. She made it up to the room where Caesar was staying and when she fell out of the carpet piece it is said that Caesar fell in love with her charm. They stayed the night together (Internet site, 2). The next morning Caesar decided to call an audience. Ptolemy XIII was shocked to find Cleopatra at Caesar s side. He stormed out of the palace screaming that he had been betrayed. Then, Caesar had Ptolemy arrested, but Pharaoh s army attacked the palace. Thus began what was later called the Alexandrian War. The civil war between Ptolemy XIII and Cleopatra had now turned into a war between Caesar and Ptolemy allied with Arsinoe IV. The war went on for six months. It ended when Pothinus was killed in a battle, and Ptolemy XIII drowned in the Nile River trying to escape. The city of Alexandria surrendered to Caesar. Caesar held Arisnoe captive and restored Cleopatra to the throne. Again she was forced to marry her other brother, Ptolemy XIV (Internet site, 2). After the war, Cleopatra showed Caesar every pleasure and luxury she had to offer. This two-month trip included a tour up the Nile River. Where it was said that she became pregnant. They would have sailed to Ethiopia if Caesar s troops had agreed to follow him. Roman historian, Suctonius wrote. After the cruise Caesar returned to Rome leaving behind three legions to look after Caesarian and Cleopatra. She gave birth to his son, Caesarion, or also known as Ptolemy XV. It was said that Caesar may not have been Caesarian s father, but Caesar claimed him as his. A year later Caesar invited them to Rome. The two were received with great honor in Rome and a golden statue was dedicated by Caesar to Cleopatra and placed in the temple of Venus Genetrix. Then, while Cleopatra, Ptolemy XIV, and Caesarian were in Rome, Caesar paraded through Rome s streets with his prisoners, including Arisnoe (Encyclopedia Americana #7, P. 51).

They lived in Caesar s villa for two years. The Romans were starting to get upset by this extra marital affair the two were having. Caesar was already married to a woman named Calpurnia. Romans thought that Caesar intended on passing a law, which would allow him to marry Cleopatra and make their son his heir. He also planned on becoming King of Rome. Caesar was assassinated at a Senate meeting in 44 B.C. Rome was then divided among three men. They were Octavian (who later became known as Augustus), Marcus Lepidus, and Marcus Antonius (also known as Mark Antony). Fearing for her life Cleopatra and her family returned to Alexandria. Shortly after the assassination, Ptolemy XIV died. He is said to have been poisoned by Cleopatra. She then put her son Ptolemy XV Philopator Philometor (Caesarion) on the throne with her. He was accepted as a ruler because at birth she had him recognized by priests of Hermon as the son of the god Amon. After the battle of Phillippi, in 42 B.C., Mark Antony called Cleopatra to Tarsus to arrange a meeting for helping him with his dispute financial situation. Cleopatra saw another chance to advance her power. She charmed Antony with her ways. She arrived in style on a barge with a gilded stem, purple sails, and silver oars. The boat was sailed by her maids dressed as sea nymphs, and she was dressed as the goddess Venus (goddess of love). She was under a golden canopy being fanned by boys dressed as cupid. He began to fall in love with her (Internet site, 2). He granted her every request and even had her sister, Arsinoe, killed. Antony returned to Egypt with her and for a year from 41-40 B.C. she was his mistress, confidante, and companion. However, he was compelled to return to Rome to fulfill his duties there. For four years they were separated. In 37 B.C. he sent for her to join him in Antioch where they were married. But Rome did not honor this marriage because he was already wed to Octavian s sister, Octavia. Their twins were then born Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene. Antony granted Cleopatra part of his territories in Syria. She then became pregnant again with Ptolemy Philadelphus. The gossip being spread around Caesar s kingdom in Rome led charges being pressed on him. Finally, his powers were taken away from him. Cleopatra returned to Egypt. Eventually, Antony divorced Octavia and went to be with Cleopatra. Octavian declared war on Antony and Cleopatra in 32 B.C. The two commanders of their armies met in Actium to discuss the ruling of the Roman world. Antony used Cleopatra s plan so when the ships fled his army surrendered and did not flee with him and Cleopatra to Alexandria. Back in Alexandria, Cleopatra could tell that Antony s spirit was broken. It soon became clear to her that her dreams of power could not come true with him at her side. They both tried to negotiate with Octavian again, but it proved to be unsuccessful. Antony returned to Rome. Cleopatra then locked herself in her room with two servants and word got to Antony that she was supposedly dead; he then committed suicide thinking that she was gone. Then hearing the news of his death she went to plead with Octavian once more, but it was unsuccessful. He held her captive where she too committed suicide. Some say she poisoned herself, others think that she died from snakebite. Cleopatra and Antony were buried beside each other at her last request to Octavian (Encyclopedia Americana #7, P. 51). Octavian put Caesarion to death ending the family s long rule of Egypt. Egypt then became part of the Roman Empire (Encyclopedia Encarta 99). The Ptolemy family ruled Egypt for many years and Cleopatra VII was the last ruler of the Ptolemic dynasty. This story is just one of many stories that make history from this time and area. This event is a major factor in how Rome gained the land of Egypt. There are many other movies and stories that portray this story, as well as others, which illustrates history, romance, defiance, and deceitfulness of ancient rulers.