

# Julius Caesar



**Julius Caesar is one of the most renowned figures in history and had a major impact on the shape of ancient Rome. His position as a general and as ruler helped to change the history of the ancient world significantly.**

## Early Life

Gaius Julius Caesar was born around 100 BC in Rome, Italy. His family were **patricians** and part of the Roman nobility. Despite their high rank, Caesar's family were not particularly wealthy and didn't have much influence in politics. His father, also named Gaius Julius Caesar, was a senator and his mother was called Aurelia. He was the nephew of the renowned general Gaius Marius.

At the age of 16, Caesar found himself the head of the family after the sudden death of his father. A year later, he married Cornelia, the daughter of one of his uncle's allies and they had a daughter named Julia. The ruler of the Romans, Sulla, ordered Caesar to divorce Cornelia as she was a daughter of his enemies. He refused, lost his inheritance and went into hiding.

## Political Life

After Sulla's death in 78 BC, Caesar returned to Rome and became a successful and well-known prosecutor – an expert in criminal law. Later, he rose in rank to become a **quaestor** of a Roman province in 69 BC.

In 61 BC, Caesar was elected as governor of Spain. This was a very high position and he proved his worth by winning a series of battles as well as many political victories.

In 59 BC, Caesar was elected as a senior Roman **consul**, allowing him to make powerful allies and began to have control over much of Rome as part of an alliance between himself and other politicians; Crassus and Pompey.

In 58 BC, Caesar was elected governor of Gaul, where he commanded a large army. He directed a series of large campaigns which stabilized the region and he gained a reputation as a fierce military leader.

In 48 BC, Caesar travelled to Egypt and was in the middle of a civil war between the child pharaoh Ptolemy and his regent, Cleopatra. Caesar fell in love with Cleopatra and the two had a son, Caesarion.



## Ruling Rome

After brutal campaigns waging war against his enemies in the Middle East, Africa and Spain, Caesar returned to Rome and, in 46 BC, declared himself the ruler of the Romans. During his rule, he changed many things about the Republic, such as:

- reducing government debt
- increasing the size of the **Senate**
- supporting military veterans
- granting Roman citizenship to those in Rome's far away territories

### Did You Know...?

The month of 'July' is named after Caesar. It was renamed in his honour after his death.

Many of his political opponents were outraged by Caesar's rule and, in 44 BC, after Caesar had declared himself ruler for life, he was assassinated by a group of senators who feared his ultimate control. His death led to a cycle of civil wars which ultimately brought down the Roman Republic. Caesar's successor was his grand-nephew Octavian (later known as Augustus Caesar), who became the first emperor of Rome.

## Glossary

**patricians** – a group of ruling class families in ancient Rome.

**quaestor** – an official in charge of public spending.

**consul** – the highest political office in Rome.

**Senate** – the council of the Roman Republic, similar to a government.



# Questions

1. What is Caesar's first name? Tick one.

- Julius  
 Gaius  
 Marius  
 Octavius

2. Why did Caesar go into hiding?

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3. Match the place to the event in Caesar's life.

Spain

Met and fell in love with Cleopatra.

Gaul

Elected as governor.

Rome

Declares himself leader of the Republic.

Egypt

4. What was the job of Caesar's father?

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5. What does the word **fierce** mean?

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6. Do you think the changes listed in the text that were made by Caesar as ruler were positive changes? Explain your answer.

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7. At the start of the text, it says that Caesar 'had a large impact on the shape of ancient Rome'. Do you agree? Explain your answer using evidence from the text.

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8. What do you think Caesar should be mostly remembered for? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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