Much of what we know about Cleopatra was written after her death when it was politically expedient to portray her as a threat to Rome and its stability. Thus, some of what we know about Cleopatra may have been exaggerated or misrepresented by those sources. Cassius Dio, one of the ancient sources that tell her story, summarizes her story as "She captivated the two greatest Romans of her day, and because of the third she destroyed herself."

**Early Years**

During Cleopatra's early years, her father tried to maintain his failing power in Egypt by bribing powerful Romans. Ptolemy XII was reportedly the son of a concubine instead of a royal wife.

When Ptolemy XII went to Rome in 58 BCE, his wife, Cleopatra VI Tryphaina, and his eldest daughter, Berenice IV, assumed the rulership jointly. When he returned, apparently Cleopatra VI had died, and with the help of Roman forces, Ptolemy XII regained his throne and executed Berenice. Ptolemy then married his son, about 9 years old, to his remaining daughter, Cleopatra, who was by time about eighteen.

**Early Rule**

Cleopatra apparently attempted to rule alone, or at least not equally with her much-younger brother. In 48 BCE, Cleopatra was pushed out of power by ministers. At the same time, Pompey -- with whom Ptolemy XII had allied himself -- appeared in Egypt, chased by forces of Julius Caesar. Pompey was assassinated by Ptolemy XIII's supporters. A sister of Cleopatra and Ptolemy XIII declared herself ruler as Arsinoe IV.

**Cleopatra and Julius Caesar**

Cleopatra, according to the stories, had herself delivered to Julius Caesar's presence in a rug and won his support. Ptolemy XIII died in a battle with Caesar, and Caesar restored Cleopatra to power in Egypt, along with her brother Ptolemy XIV as co-ruler.

In 46 BCE, Cleopatra named her newborn son Ptolemy Caesarion, emphasizing that this was the son of Julius Caesar. Caesar never formally accepted paternity, but he did take Cleopatra to Rome that year, also taking her sister, Arsinoe, and displaying her in Rome as a war captive. That he was already married (to Calpurnia) yet Cleopatra claimed to be his wife added to a climate in Rome that ended with Caesar's assassination in 44 BCE.

After Caesar's death, Cleopatra returned to Egypt, where her brother and co-ruler Ptolemy XIV died, probably assassinated by Cleopatra. She established her son as her co-ruler Ptolemy XV Caesarion.

**Cleopatra and Marc Antony**

When the next Roman military governor of the region, Marc Antony, demanded her presence -- along with that of other rulers who were controlled by Rome -- she arrived dramatically in 41 BCE, and managed to convince him of her innocence of charges about her support of Caesar's supporters in Rome, captivated his interest, and gained his support.

Antony spent a winter in Alexandria with Cleopatra (41-40 BCE), and then left. Cleopatra bore twins to Antony. He, meanwhile, went to Athens and, his wife Fulvia having died in 40 BCE, agreed to marry Octavia, the sister of his rival Octavius. They had a daughter in 39 BCE. In 37 BCE Antony returned to Antioch, Cleopatra joined him, and they went through a sort of marriage ceremony in 36 BCE. That same year, another son was born to them, Ptolemy Philadelphus.

Marc Antony formally restored to Egypt -- and Cleopatra -- territory which the Ptolemy's had lost control of, including Cyprus and part of what is now Lebanon. Cleopatra returned to Alexandria and Antony joined her in 34 BCE after military victory. He affirmed the joint rulership of Cleopatra and her son, Caesarion, recognizing Caesarion as the son of Julius Caesar.

Antony's relationship with Cleopatra -- his supposed marriage and their children, and his granting of territory to her -- was used by Octavian to raise Roman concerns over his loyalties. Antony was able to use Cleopatra's financial support to oppose Octavian in the Battle of Actium (31 BCE), but missteps -- probably attributable to Cleopatra -- led to defeat.

Cleopatra tried to get Octavian's support for her children's succession to power, but was unable to come to an agreement with him. In 30 BCE, Marc Antony killed himself, reportedly because he'd been told that Cleopatra had been killed, and when yet another attempt to keep power failed, Cleopatra killed herself.

CLEOPATRA’S death is one of the most famous ever. After arranging Antony’s funeral, she and her children were taken prisoners but were treated in a good way. Cleopatra afraid of being humiliated decided to take her life.

She would not live this way, so she had an asp, which was an Egyptian cobra, brought to her hidden in a basket of figs. She arranged a big delicious meal and asked for figs.

When the guards entered to see Cleopatra she was already dead. They found the 39-year old queen dead on her golden bed, with her maid Iras dying at her feet. Her other maid, Charmion, was weakly adjusting Cleopatra's crown, and she too fell over dead. Two pricks were found on Cleopatra's arm, and it was believed that she had allowed herself to be bitten by an asp (a kind of poisonous snake). As she had wished, she was buried beside Antony.

She died on August 12, 30 BC at the age of 39. The Egyptian religion declared that death by snakebite would secure immortality. With this, she achieved her dying wish, to not be forgotten. The only other ruler to cast a shadow on the fascination with Cleopatra was Alexander who was another Macedonian. After Cleopatra's death, Caesarion was strangled and the other children of Cleopatra were raised by Antony's wife, Octavia.

Her death was the mark of the end of the Egyptian Monarchs. The Roman Emperors came into to rule in Egypt. The Ptolemies were Macedonian in decent, but ruled as Egyptians, as Pharaohs. Cleopatra was the last pharaoh; after her death Egypt became a Roman province. Because Caesarion was Julius Caesar's son and might pose a threat to Octavian's power, Octavian had the boy strangled by his tutor. Cleopatra's other children were sent to Rome to be raised by Octavia. Cleopatra Selene married King Juba II of Mauretania and had two children, Ptolemy and Drusilla. No one knows what happened to Alexander Helios and Ptolemy Philadelphus.

Cleopatra was quite remarkable, she had great brilliance and her devotion to her country was utmost. She was a quick-witted woman who was fluent in nine languages, however, Latin was not one of them. She was a mathematician and a very good businesswoman she fought for her country.

She had a charismatic personality, was a born leader and an ambitious monarch who deserved better than suicide.

**Egypt and Cleopatra's Children After Cleopatra's Death**

Egypt became a province of Rome, ending the rule of the Ptolemies. Cleopatra's children were taken to Rome. Caligula later executed Ptolemy Caesarion, and Cleopatra's other sons simply disappear from history and are assumed to have died. Cleopatra's daughter, Cleopatra Selene, married Juba, king of Numidia and Mauretania.