Marcus Antonius (Mark Antony) was born in [Rome](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMrome.htm) in 83 B.C. He was related on his mother's side to [Julius Caesar](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMcaesar.htm). He was from a prominent noble family and served under Caesar in [Gaul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaul) (53-50 B.C.).

Mark Antony went to Rome to become tribune of the plebs in 49 B.C. He was expelled from the senate and fled back to the [Roman Army](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMarmy.htm). The following year he led the left-wing of Caesar's army at [Pharsalia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pharsalia). After defeating [Pompey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pompey), he was left to govern Italy during Caesar's absence in [Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa_Province).

When [Julius Caesar](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMcaesar.htm) returned to [Rome](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMrome.htm) he appointed 300 of his supporters as members of the [Senate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Senate). Although the Senate and Public Assembly still met, it was Caesar who now made all the important decisions. By 44 BC Caesar was powerful enough to declare himself dictator for life. Although in the past Roman leaders had become dictators in times of crisis, no one had taken this much power.

Caesar began wearing long red boots. As the ancient kings used to wear similar boots, rumours began to spread that Caesar planned to make himself king. Caesar denied these charges but the Roman people, who had a strong dislike of the [kingship system](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Kingdom), began to worry about the way Caesar was dominating political life.

Rumours began to spread that [Julius Caesar](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMcaesar.htm) planned to make himself king. [Plutarch](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMplutarch.htm) wrote: "What made Caesar hated was his passion to be king." Caesar denied these charges but the Roman people, who had a strong dislike of the kingship system, began to worry about the way Caesar made all the decisions. Even his friends complained that he was no longer willing to listen to advice. Finally, a group of senators decided to kill Caesar.

Even some of Caesar's closest friends were concerned about his unwillingness to listen to advice. Eventually, a group of 60 men, including [Marcus Brutus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcus_Junius_Brutus), rumoured to be one of Caesar's illegitimate sons, decided to assassinate Caesar.

Plans were made to carry out the assassination in the [Senate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Senate) just three days before he was due to leave for [Parthia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthia). When [Julius Caesar](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMcaesar.htm) arrived at the Senate a group of senators gathered round him. [Publius Servilius Casca](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Servilius_Casca) stabbed him from behind. Caesar looked round for help but now the rest of the group pulled out their daggers. One of the first men Caesar saw was Brutus and was reported to have declared, "You too, my son." Caesar knew it was useless to resist and pulled his toga over his head and waited for the final blows to arrive.

At Caesar's funeral, Mark Antony was chosen to give the eulogy. During his speech, he removed the toga from Caesar's body to show the crowd the stab wounds, pointing at each one naming with men who had struck the blows. However, [Cicero](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMcicero.htm) later commented: "Caesar subjected the Roman people to oppression... Is there anyone, except Mark Antony who did not wish for his death or who disapproved of what was done?... Some didn't know of the plot, some lacked courage, others the opportunity. None lacked the will."

Mark Antony also published Caesar's will which revealed that he had left 300 sesterces to every man in [Rome](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMrome.htm). Caesar also stated in his will that his impressive gardens were to become parks for the people who lived in the city. This action helped Mark Antony to gain political influence over the people of Rome.

At various periods between 49 and 47 Mark Antony administered Italy when [Julius Caesar](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMcaesar.htm) was absent. He was therefore well-placed to assume leadership of the Caesar faction in Rome. Mark Antony allied himself with [Marcus Aemilius Lepidus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcus_Aemilius_Lepidus_%28triumvir%29) in a joint bid for power. However, they were challenged by Caesar's great nephew and adopted son, [Octavian](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMaugustus.htm). The three men met on an island in a river near Mutina and formed the Second Triumvirate. In doing so, they brought an end to [Republican Rome](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMrepublican.htm). When the Senate attempted to regain control, Antony and Octavian had 130 of them murdered. Their property was seized and given to those willing to support the new rulers.

[Marcus Brutus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcus_Junius_Brutus) and [Gaius Cassius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaius_Cassius_Longinus) were defeated by Mark Antony and [Octavian](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMaugustus.htm) at the [Battle of Philippi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Philippi) in October 42 BC. After the battle Octavian returned to Rome and Mark Antony went on to govern the east, whereas [Marcus Aemilius Lepidus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcus_Aemilius_Lepidus_%28triumvir%29) went on to govern [Hispania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hispania) and the province of [Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa_Province).

[Fulvia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fulvia), Mark Antony's wife, was also active in Roman politics. To solidify the political alliance, Fulvia offered her daughter, [Clodia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clodia_Pulchra), to Octavian. Clodia became his wife but she was later returned when Octavian married [Scribonia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scribonia). According to [Suetonius](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMsuetonius.htm), Octavian's marriage with Clodia was never consummated and that she was returned in "mint" condition.

[Fulvia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fulvia) saw this as an insult to her family and she decided to take action. Together with Mark Antony's brother, [Lucius Antonius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucius_Antonius_%28brother_of_Mark_Antony%29), she raised eight legions in Italy to fight against [Octavian](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMaugustus.htm). The army occupied Rome for a short time, but eventually retreated to [Perusia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perusia). Octavian besieged Fulvia and Lucius Antonius in the winter of 41 - 40 B.C., starving them into surrender. Fulvia was exiled to [Sicyon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sicyon). Lucius Antonius, was sent by Octavian to [Hispania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hispania) as governor. To show his commitment to his partner, Mark Antony divorced Fulvia and married Octavian's sister [Octavia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Octavia_Minor).

It was while he was in [Egypt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt) that Mark Antony met [Cleopatra](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMcleopatra.htm). Like [Julius Caesar](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMcaesar.htm) before him, Mark Antony soon fell in love with the Queen of Egypt. They formed a close alliance as Mark Antony set about reorganizing the eastern provinces.

In 40 B.C. the [Parthians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthia) invaded Roman territory, occupying [Syria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syria), advancing into [Asia Minor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anatolia) and installing [Antigonus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antigonus_the_Hasmonean) as puppet king in [Judaea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judea). Mark Antony sent his general [Publius Ventidius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Publius_Ventidius_Bassus) to oppose this invasion.

Octavian now agreed for Mark Antony to retaliate by invading [Parthia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthia). However, the rebellion in [Sicily](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sicilian_revolt) of [Sextus Pompeius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sextus_Pompeius) kept the army promised to Mark Antony in Italy. This caused a dispute with Octavian but a new treaty was signed in [Tarentum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taranto) in 38 BC.

Mark Antony returned to Egypt and persuaded [Cleopatra](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMcleopatra.htm) to lend him the money he needed to form an alliance with [Herod the Great](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod_the_Great). In 37 BC, Herod and the [Roman Army](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMarmy.htm) took back [Judaea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judea). Herod turned [Antigonus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antigonus_the_Hasmonean) over to Mark Antony, who had him beheaded.

Mark Antony now felt strong enough to invade Parthia. However, with an army of about 100,000 Roman and allied troops but the campaign proved a disaster and after several military defeats Mark Antony was forced to carry out an humiliating retreat.

Octavian now decided to destroy the triumvirate by forming a new alliance with the traditional Republican aristocracy. [Marcus Aemilius Lepidus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcus_Aemilius_Lepidus_%28triumvir%29) was forced to resign and Octavian began attacking Mark Antony for abandoning his faithful wife, [Octavia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Octavia_Minor), to be with the promiscuous [Cleopatra](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMcleopatra.htm). Octavian claimed that Cleopatra was attempting to gain control of the [Roman Empire](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMempire.htm) by marrying Mark Antony. Cleopatra replied that her son [Caesarion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caesarion), and not Octavian, was Caesar's true heir.

[Octavian](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMaugustus.htm) responded by declaring war on [Cleopatra](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMcleopatra.htm). Although some Roman legions supported Mark Antony, the vast majority took the side of Octavian.

In 31 BC Octavian defeated Mark Antony at the [Battle of Actium](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Actium) on the west coast of [Greece](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greece). Mark Antony and Cleopatra were forced to flee to [Alexandria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandria) in [Egypt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt). When Octavian's troops surrounded Alexandria, Mark Antony committed suicide by falling on his sword.

[Cleopatra](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/ROMcleopatra.htm) was captured by Octavian who planned to take her back to Rome as his prisoner. However, she was determined not to be humiliated in this way and arranged for a poisonous snake to be smuggled into her room in a large box of figs. Cleopatra then committed suicide by allowing the snake to bite her.

Cleopatra had earlier sent her son [Caesarion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caesarion) into hiding but he was betrayed by his tutor. When Octavian found out where Caesarion was he had him murdered but spared Cleopatra's three children by Mark Antony.