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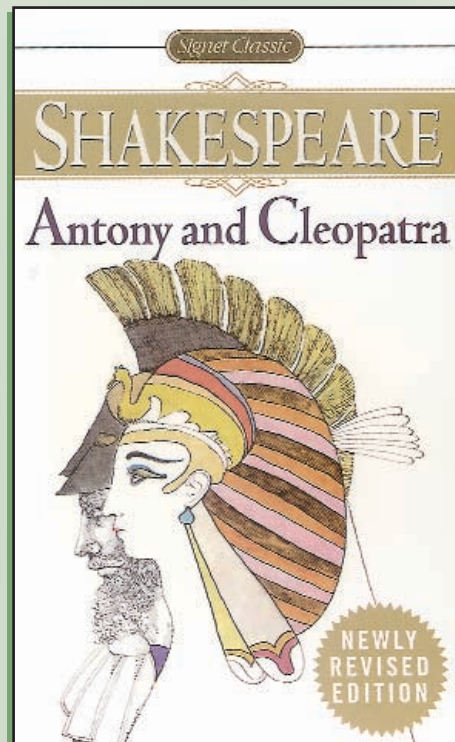
A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE SIGNET CLASSIC EDITION OF

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S

# ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

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## INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* is a play filled with political intrigue, power struggles, war and its consequences, and the plight of two desperately impassioned lovers. Although the play's action is slightly more complicated than Shakespeare's other tragedies, *Antony and Cleopatra* provides an excellent means for students to study the multiple levels of subject matter contained in historical dramas. Teachers of English, history, political science, social studies, geography, mythology, and drama may all benefit from the themes explored in this play. The play, therefore, provides many opportunities for cross-curricular study.

The very mention of the two title characters, Antony and Cleopatra, conjures images of love and the desperate measures taken in pursuit of love. Some have subtitled this play "The Greatest Love Story Ever Told." Others argue that the play does not depict love, but rather presents a desperate infatuation that destroys a great Roman leader and a noble Egyptian queen. With either interpretation, the play offers a compelling love story that will intrigue students of any age or skill level. Additional themes of divided power, battles with formidable forces, and manipulative enemies and subordinates provide suspense and action. The juxtaposition of love and war is neatly wrapped in Shakespeare's poetic language, thereby providing a literary work that is compelling and eloquent.

The play at first appears quite complex with inconsistent character behavior, such as Cleopatra's many mood swings. A sprawling location for the play's action also complicates events as they occur on three different continents and on the seas that divide these lands. Once character behavior is analyzed and questions are posed concerning motives, many of the play's hidden truths become known and reveal a familiar plot of love and war. Likewise, when the play's action is visually recreated by acting out scenes, exploring staging, or being a member of an audience enjoying the play or a film version of the play, many text references to geographical location, character motivation, and circumstance gain new meaning. After all, plays are written to be performed and observed, not just read.

The following teacher's guide provides materials to aid teachers in planning multi-layered exercises in text exploration. The guide provides historical context and a plot synopsis. Following this literary overview, teachers will find activities suggested for student investigation of the play's content before, during, and after reading. A list of discussion questions for each act is also provided to assist teachers in developing class dialogues concerning the play's action and thematic content.

## SHAKESPEARE'S ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA: AN OVERVIEW

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

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Before one delves into Shakespeare's play *Antony and Cleopatra*, it is important to look at the world of the main characters and the events that precede the play's action.

Approximately two thousand years ago, Cleopatra, "Queen of the Nile," ruled over Egypt. Her capitol city, Alexandria, was considered the greatest cultural and commercial center in the eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, Mark Antony, Octavius Caesar, and Lepidus were in joint control of the Roman Empire. This triumvirate was the result of Mark Antony's defeat of Brutus and Cassius, who had assassinated Julius Caesar in 44 b.c. After his victory over the assassins, Mark Antony joined with Octavius Caesar and Lepidus, men who had remained loyal to Julius Caesar, and formed a joint rulership of the entire Roman Empire. They divided the Empire into three provinces: Octavius Caesar controlled Rome's European provinces; Lepidus oversaw North Africa; and Mark Antony ruled Rome's Asian territories.

As the play begins, it is 41 B.C. and the Roman Empire is expanding its hold on surrounding lands and would soon dominate the whole of their known world. But the Empire is experiencing civil unrest in Italy and faces a considerable threat from Parthia in its eastern provinces, Mark Antony's territory. From the east, Parthia's Sextus Pompeius is attempting to take control of the Mediterranean Sea, and the triumvirate faces a formidable force. While Octavius Caesar and Lepidus struggle to keep control in Italy, Mark Antony readies for war with the Parthians.

Although recognized as a brave soldier and eloquent speaker, Mark Antony also has quite the reputation as a ladies man and a great appreciator of a good game and a witty joke. Knowing of Queen Cleopatra's reputation as a provocative woman who uses her feminine charms, wit, and guile to compensate for being a woman in a traditionally male role, he commences what might be considered social intrigue. While Mark Antony readies his troops for battle, he commands Queen Cleopatra to appear before him when he arrives in Cilicia, a country in Asia Minor close to the occupied areas of Parthia. He plans to provoke Cleopatra by accusing her of aiding Cassius and Brutus in their earlier war against him, but Cleopatra has other plans for Antony.

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Determined to win over Antony as she had Julius Caesar, Cleopatra sets sail on the river Cydnus to meet Antony. Her barge is decorated with gleaming gold and propelled by servants rowing silver oars to the sounds of enchanting music. She drapes herself in gold robes and is fanned by young boys dressed as cupids. Her ladies-in-waiting, dressed as beautiful mermaids, steer the helm and tend the tackle. As she arrives, large crowds flock to the dock, drawn by the music and the exotic perfumes that fill the air. The people rumor that Venus has come to play with the god Bacchus, and it is here that the tale of Antony and Cleopatra begins. Antony is dazzled by Cleopatra's beauty, wit, and mystique, and, although the Parthians are now assembled in Mesopotamia ready to invade Syria, he leaves his wife and his post to depart for Alexandria with the insistent and enchanting Queen Cleopatra.

## LIST OF THE PLAY'S CHARACTERS

### EGYPT

Cleopatra—Queen of Egypt

Charmian and Iras—her personal attendants

Alexas—her minister

Seleucus—her treasurer

Mardian—a eunuch

Diomedes—a servant

Clown—a simple country man

### ROME

Mark Antony, Octavius Caesar, Lepidus—the Triumvirate

Octavia—sister to Octavius Caesar and second wife of Antony

Sextus Pompeius (Pompey)—leader of the faction opposed to the Triumvirate

### MARK ANTONY'S FOLLOWERS AND OFFICERS

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Domitius Enobarbus

Decretas

Ventidius

A Soothsayer

Eros

Philo

Demetrius

Canidius

Silius

Scarus

### OCTAVIUS CAESAR'S FOLLOWERS AND OFFICERS

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Maecenas

Dolabella

Thidias

Taurus

Proculeius

Gallus

Agrippa

### SEXTUS POMPEIUS'S FOLLOWERS AND OFFICERS

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Menas and Menecrates—pirates

Varrus

Messengers, Servants, Officers, Soldiers, Sentries, Guards, Watchmen

**SYNOPSIS**

At the play's opening, Antony, who had abandoned his wife Fulvia and his post in time of war, is indulging in Alexandria's lavish lifestyle and is fully infatuated by Cleopatra. Then Antony learns from a messenger that his wife and his brother Lucius were the cause of the unrest in Italy and had engaged in battle with Octavius Caesar. A new messenger brings the unfortunate news that Antony's wife, Fulvia, died in Greece after having fled Italy (I,i). Antony mourns Fulvia's death and resolves to leave Cleopatra and return to Rome in order to counter Pompey's threat in Asia. Cleopatra throws a passionate tantrum when she hears of Antony's announced departure. She rants and raves to Antony about love and devotion and accuses him of not loving her fully. But as quickly as the tides turn, Cleopatra begs his forgiveness for her outbursts and wishes him victory. Antony departs for Rome, but Cleopatra knows he will return to her (I,iii).

In Rome, Octavius Caesar condemns Antony for being self-indulgent, living a debauched life in Alexandria and neglecting his duties to Rome, but Lepidus is softer in his judgement of Antony. A messenger announces that Sextus Pompeius has gained allegiance from many Romans, and that his allies, the pirates of Menecrates and Menas, threaten the borders of Italy. Octavius and Lepidus hope Antony will return to his position and unite the triumvirate in a combined war against the Parthians (I,iv).

Cleopatra daydreams of Antony and wonders how he is faring in Rome when Alexas, her minister, brings her a pearl from Antony with Antony's promise to extend her empire. She boasts of how she enchanted both Julius Caesar and Gnaeus Pompey in the past, and to seal her deal with Antony, she sets out to return her love to Antony in a letter (I,v).

In Sicily, Pompey waits for a sign from the gods that he should make his final move for power over the triumvirate. He counts on Cleopatra distracting Antony from the war and keeping him in Egypt (II,i).

Antony returns to Rome and is met by a furious Octavius Caesar who accuses Antony of inciting the war in Italy. Antony denies the accusations, blaming Fulvia's wild nature, but the men are clearly at odds and the unity of the triumvirate is threatened. Agrippa, Octavius's officer, proposes a remedy to mend the rift between Antony and Octavius. As proof of Antony's devotion to Octavius and Rome, Agrippa proposes that Antony, now a widower, marry Octavius's newly widowed sister, Octavia. To prove his devotion and seal their alliance, Antony agrees, and Octavius consents to an immediate wedding, before the attack on Pompey (II,iii).

A messenger comes to tell Cleopatra that Antony is to marry Octavia. Enraged, Cleopatra beats the messenger and sends him off to get details of Octavia's age and beauty (II, v). He later returns and, having learned from his previous encounter with Cleopatra, describes Octavia in the most unflattering way so as to please Cleopatra and escape further beatings. Satisfied, Cleopatra commends the servant on his graphic descriptions (III,iii).

Meanwhile in Italy, after some negotiations, Pompey agrees to peace and invites his past enemies on board his ship for a banquet. Many side discussions ensue concerning the battles, the questionable future of Antony and Octavia, and persistent doubts about a united triumvirate. Lepidus drinks too much and the servants mock him while Menas, a pirate unhappy with the treaty, pulls Pompey aside and offers to cut the throats of Antony, Lepidus, and Caesar. Pompey refuses to conspire with Menas, but Pompey admits that he would have commended him had Menas done the deed without his knowledge (II, vii). Disappointed in Pompey's missed opportunity for power, Menas later decides to desert Pompey (II,vii).

At the announced defeat of the Parthians, Antony, Octavia, and Caesar have a heartfelt farewell as Antony and Octavia depart for Athens (III,ii). No sooner does the couple arrive in Athens than they learn of new trouble, stirred this time by Octavius Caesar. Caesar has broken the treaty and declared war on Pompey. For Octavia's sake, Antony agrees not to act against Caesar in anger and instead offers to act as mediator. Octavia leaves for Rome to be with her brother, Caesar (III,iv). Later, Antony's personal assistant, Eros, reports to Enobarbus that Caesar has betrayed Lepidus by first using him in his attack on Pompey and then arresting him for breaking the treaty (III,v). Antony is enraged when he learns of this deceit and demands that Lepidus be deposed and his revenue divided between Caesar and Antony.

Meanwhile, Octavia returns to Rome. Offended that his sister had not been accompanied by a military escort of suitable pomp, Caesar vows revenge for the disgraceful treatment of his sister and for Antony's proclamation giving Rome's eastern provinces to Cleopatra and her children (III,vi).

Octavius Caesar and Antony engage in battle, and Cleopatra insists on being present, much to the disapproval of Antony's commanders. Antony decides to fight Caesar at sea, which Cleopatra supports, but others advise against such a strategy. But Antony insists, and all blame Cleopatra's bad influence for Antony's poor decision (III,vii). Antony and Cleopatra go to battle at sea, but the Egyptian fleet soon turns and flees, and Antony's ships follow Cleopatra's in retreat. Antony loses the battle in disgrace.

Antony delivers a passionate speech, lamenting his poor strategy and advising his followers to flee as well. He offers his treasure to them as compensation. Cleopatra begs Antony's forgiveness for her cowardliness. Softened by her heartfelt plea, Antony forgives her (III,xi).

Through the messages of his ambassador, Antony requests that Caesar allow him to live in Egypt with Cleopatra. If not, Antony asks that Caesar grant him leave to carry on a private life in Athens. Cleopatra also surrenders to Caesar and asks that the crown of the Ptolemies (Egypt) be reserved for her heirs. Caesar refuses Antony's requests but agrees to Cleopatra's, provided that she exile Antony in disgrace or kill him (III,xii).

Back at Cleopatra's palace, Antony learns of Caesar's answer and, against all odds, demands a hand-to-hand combat with Caesar. Having finally lost his faith in Antony's power of reason, Enobarbus decides to leave Antony's service. Caesar sends his officer Thidias to win Cleopatra. But when Thidias is caught kissing Cleopatra's hand, Antony has him whipped. Humiliated, Thidias scurries back to Caesar. Antony accuses Cleopatra of being a faithless strumpet, but she swears her loyalty and he, once more, forgives her. Antony declares a last night of revelry before the final battle, where he has promised to fight Caesar to the death (III,xiii).

Antony prepares for battle and bids a tearful farewell to his loyal servants (IV,ii). While in battle camp he learns that the loyal Enobarbus has deserted him at last. He forgives Enobarbus and sends his belongings after him along with a number of additional gifts (IV, v). Enobarbus, learning of Antony's forgiveness and generosity, is wracked with guilt over his desertion. He refuses to fight in Caesar's army against Antony and vows to die in a ditch, considering it an appropriately foul end to such a foul deed (IV,vi). As the watchmen carry him away, the dying Enobarbus begs for Antony's forgiveness (IV,ix).

Pursued by Antony's fierce forces, Caesar's troops retreat (IV,viii). Antony returns to Alexandria and a proud Cleopatra (IV,viii). Then Antony learns that Caesar's navy is preparing for a counterattack at sea, and he orders his fleet into battle (IV,x). Antony leaves Alexandria to observe the battle, and then returns, enraged. He has been betrayed! The Egyptian fleet has surrendered and has appeared to support Caesar's fleet. Irreconcilable, he accuses Cleopatra of betrayal and vows to kill her (IV,xii).

Fearing for her life, Cleopatra locks herself high in her monument. She sends Mardian, a eunuch, to tell Antony that she has killed herself and the last word on her lips had been "Antony" (IV,xiii). Mardian dutifully reports on Cleopatra's "suicide." Overcome by the loss, Antony pledges to join Cleopatra in death. He orders Eros to make one final act as his servant and kill him. Reluctantly, Eros draws his sword, but asks Antony to turn away as he does this hateful deed. At the last moment, Eros kills himself instead. Antony praises Eros's valiant act and takes it as a lesson for himself. Antony impales himself on his own sword but fails to strike a fatal wound. Guards swarm into the room and halt his further attempts at suicide. Diomedes, Cleopatra's servant, arrives to announce that Cleopatra is not dead after all. Mortally wounded, Antony asks to be taken to Cleopatra's side so that he may die in his lover's arms (IV,xiv).

Antony is carried to Cleopatra's monument and pleads for one last kiss. Fearing capture by Octavius, Cleopatra refuses to leave the monument. Instead, she bids her ladies to lift Antony up to her. He dies in her arms. Overcome by the loss of her lover, Cleopatra vows to take her own life (IV,xv).

At his camp, Caesar learns of Antony's suicide. He mourns Antony's death, claiming that such a death should shatter the very world. An Egyptian servant arrives asking Caesar what will become of Cleopatra. Caesar assures the servant that he will treat Cleopatra gently and with dignity. Fearing Cleopatra's irrational behavior, Caesar sends his officer Proculeius to ensure that Cleopatra is brought back to Rome alive, for her arrival there would provide evidence of Caesar's great victory (V,i).

Proculeius arrives at Cleopatra's monument and informs her that Caesar has assured both her safety and her son's continued rule of Egypt. But she fears the servant is untrustworthy and attempts to kill herself with a dagger. Proculeius commands his guards to stop her, but she vows that she will find another way to kill herself rather than become Caesar's captive. Dolabella, Caesar's officer, reveals that Caesar instead intends to take her and her children to Rome. Fearful that she would have to endure many indignities if she complied, Cleopatra resolves to commit suicide in the "high Roman fashion."

Cleopatra prepares for death. She invites into her chambers a trusted countryman who arrives with a basket of figs in which he has concealed several poisonous asps. As Cleopatra bids farewell to her ladies, Iras and Charmian, Iras suddenly falls dead at her feet. Worried that her attendant will meet Antony in death before she does, Cleopatra quickly clutches an asp to her breast. She applies another to her arm and soon dies from their bites. As one of Caesar's guards enters, Charmian announces that the escort was too slow to stop an act so fitting of a noble queen. Charmian applies the last asp to herself and dies. Caesar, upon learning of Cleopatra's valiant death, pays tribute to her courage and noble end. He orders her burial next to Antony in honorable graves accompanied with great ceremony (V,ii).



## BEFORE READING THE PLAY

Before reading the play, students should explore the time period and historical significance of the play's action. They should become familiar with the famous tales of Julius Caesar, Marcus Antony, and Queen Cleopatra, which were well known to Elizabethans. Students should become acquainted with the topographical world in 44 b.c. and the effects of divided power on war and land acquisitions. Finally, students should delve into the language of Shakespeare's play, with its implied meanings and poetic language. An understanding of the effects of iambic pentameter and purposeful switches to prose to imply character, class, subtext, and action is essential for higher levels of literary appreciation and understanding.

Following is a list of exercises and assignments that will support this manner of text and content exploration. Any of the exercises may be expanded or adapted as time and facilities allow.

### I. THE STRATEGY GAME

This map game is designed to help students explore the concepts of divided power, leadership strategies, and the stakes of war. The game is specific to the play's action by including a triumvirate, homeland protection, love and betrayal, and five possible individuals seeking control.

#### SETTING UP THE GAME

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Supplies needed:

1. One large map of the Roman Empire and its surrounding territories in approximately 41 b.c. for each group of students. (To be used as a game board. Alternately, if more familiar geography is preferred, use a map of the United States with Canada, and Mexico as the surrounding territories and the U.S. governed by a triumvirate.)
2. Five large game pieces to represent five leaders and 60 smaller game pieces to represent five armies of 12 pieces each. (Either chess or checkers pieces, coins or toy soldiers are recommended as game pieces.)
3. Strategy Cards made by writing individual strategies on index cards (suggestions for strategy statements below).
4. Small pieces of scrap paper and pens or pencils to write Declarations.
  - Divide the class into groups of five. If numbers do not work out evenly, assign a sixth person to the group to act as the mediator who requests Declarations and hands out Strategy Cards.
  - Designate each group member to one of the following (A,B,C,D or E): Triumvirate of Rome (A,B,C), Ruler of Egypt (D), Ruler of Parthia (E).
  - Give each student a large game piece to represent his ruler. Each ruler receives an army, represented by 12 game pieces.

#### PLAYING THE GAME

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A simplified list of steps:

1. Divide Power and Territories amongst five Rulers.
2. Round One: (a) Strategy Cards dealt, (b) invitation for Requests for Allies made and Requests for Allies notes exchanged, (c) Declarations made by all five Rulers, (d) game pieces moved to war or retreat locations, (e) losses and gains of armies exchanged, (f) armies stay where they are and go on to next round.
3. Round Two: same as above.
4. Round Three: same as above, but in step (e) game pieces are counted, (f) all Strategy cards and notes of Requests for Allies are exposed. Leaders with the most game pieces are announced as winners.

To start the game, the Triumvirate divides the Roman Empire into three territories of sub-rule. The Ruler of the African continent is (A), the Ruler of the Asian continent is (B), and the Ruler of the European continent is (C).

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The game consists of three rounds. To play each round:

- Deal out one Strategy Card to each ruler. (Use the Strategy Card to influence your Declaration and strategy during the round.)
- Privately read your Strategy Card and decide how this will influence your Declaration. Leaders do not conspire before they announce their Declarations, but if one ruler wishes to request the aid of another ruler in war before the Declarations are made, a "Request for Allies" is offered.
- Request Allies by passing small notes to certain rulers. The contents of the notes are not to be known until all three rounds are complete. Once declarations are made there is no turning back. The rulers must make Declarations that are based on the Strategy Cards, for the card's strategies will all be exposed after all three rounds have been played. (This assures that students, as in life and in the play's action, are not always sure whom to trust and exactly how their actions are motivated.)
- Make your declaration of war on a specific ruler or territory, or plea for peace or abstinence, by making a Declaration Statement one at a time. (Examples of Declaration Statements given below.)
- After all five Declarations are made, move the game pieces representing armies and rulers to declared locations of wars, or in retreat to your own land. (Armies placed in war will either win or lose soldiers. Those that stay at home and are not attacked, lose nothing, but gain nothing.)
- If you combine forces with another ruler and outnumber another army placed on the same territory, the outnumbered army gives up one half of his/her soldiers to the larger army and these soldiers are divided equally amongst the winning rulers. If you do not combine forces and armies are equal, the round is a draw.

The leader with the most game pieces after three rounds wins and holds whatever land his/her army has conquered over other armies.

#### **SUGGESTIONS FOR STRATEGY CARDS:**

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- "You are in love with Ruler D and will proclaim whatever Ruler D proclaims."
- "You don't trust Ruler A's ability to make rational decisions and will not side with Ruler A in war."
- "You have great loyalty towards Ruler C and will back Ruler C in any war, unless you suspect that Ruler C has betrayed you."
- "You believe that the Triumvirate is disorganized and ask Ruler D to side with you in overtaking all of the Triumvirate territory."
- "You do not want to go to war and risk losing your beautiful country, so you refrain from attacking anyone, even if it means betraying another Ruler and fleeing battle."
- "You suspect that Ruler E has broken the treaty with you, and you declare war."
- "You are angry with Ruler A and are determined to fight, no matter what the consequences."
- "You don't trust anyone, and so will side with no one."
- "You will promise anything so that no one will be angry with you, but you will turn tail and run in war, rather than face defeat or vulnerability."
- "You believe you are invincible and will fight with anyone for more control over land."

#### **SUGGESTIONS FOR DECLARATIONS:**

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Declarations are to be made as announcements of battle, retreat, wishes for peace, and for forming an ally with another Ruler. Examples:

- "I will ally with D, and go to war if he/she proclaims war on anyone."
  - "I stand my ground and go to war with anyone who attacks my borders." • "I will not partake in any of these wars and hope that all of you will refrain from battle."
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## II. THE ANCIENT WORLD

Acquaint students with the geography of Antony's and Cleopatra's world by posting a map of the world depicting the division of land and ancient names of these lands as listed in the play.

- Show students the territories governed by the five rulers in the play.
- Use the map as a visual guide to the play's action so that students can see territories lost and gained.
- Use color-coded push-pins, flags, or post-it notes to represent where rulers are during each scene. Also keep track of each ruler's armies.
- Have students point to where each scene takes place so they can follow the action.

Students can also create map images of the play's action using a computer and a simple graphics program, like Power Point. They can highlight territories gained and lost during the play's action and present these images to the class showing how the play's world changes with each battle.

## III. STORYTELLING

Shakespeare, one of the greatest storytellers of the English language, adapted most of his plays from popular, well-known tales. As any good storyteller does, he took artistic license with these tales and made his own adaptations of the original. So, too, could the students.

- Before reading the play, tell students the beginning of the story of *Antony and Cleopatra* and then have them finish the story, predicting how it will end.
- Students can write their own stories or small groups can create group stories with each member adding to it.
- Then they can simply tell their version to the class or explore an original method of presenting the story. As Shakespeare used the stage and drama, students could also use drama or comic strips, radio plays, spoof skits, readers' theater, soap opera, poetry, rap, ballad, mime, dance, video, email exchanges, news announcement, etc. This can be a lengthy and creative exercise where students invest in the possibilities and methods of storytelling.
- Once all stories are presented, students can discuss and perhaps vote on the most likely ending to match Shakespeare's version.

## IV. WHAT MAKES A TRAGEDY?

Introduce students to Aristotle's *Poetics*. Outline the contents of an effective tragedy interpreted from Aristotle's *Poetics*, including:

1. **Tragedy**—a serious play typically dealing with the problems of a central character, or protagonist, leading to an unhappy or disastrous ending brought on by fate and a tragic flaw in the main character
2. **Hubris**—wanton insolence or arrogance resulting from excessive pride or from passion
3. **Foreshadowing**—to indicate or suggest beforehand
4. **Climax**—the highest point of interest or tension in a drama, and the turning point of the play's action
5. **Catharsis**—the purifying of the emotions or relieving of emotional tensions
6. **Denouement**—the outcome, solution, unraveling or clarification of a plot in a drama

Discuss Aristotle's six constituent elements of a Tragedy, ranked in order of priority:

1. Plot—the arrangement of dramatic incidents
  2. Characters—the people represented in the play
  3. Thought or Theme—the ideas explored
  4. Language—the dialogue and poetry
  5. Music—the choral odes (*specific to Greek plays*)
  6. Spectacle—scenery and other visual elements
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Relate these elements to other contemporary real-life tragedies like politicians or leaders who are scandalized publicly for having extra-marital affairs, committing crimes or for covering a lie. Students can also read Greek and Roman myths, other tragic plays by Shakespeare, and/or watch popular tragic movies, like *Braveheart*. As students read *Antony and Cleopatra* they should identify places where these elements are exposed through the play's action and discuss the characters' flaws and the cause of each character's downfall or success.

## V. UNDERSTANDING REAL VS. DRAMATIC ACTION

Have students read books or watch documentaries that depict life in Rome, Egypt, and the ancient world. They can explore transportation, styles of dress, methods of war as well as uniforms and arms. This provides students with clear visual images of the characters and their lifestyles. Likewise, they will begin to understand how long it took to move armies from place to place. Students can then understand how, within the play's two-hour dramatic action, many years elapse. During the time of the play's five acts, Antony and Cleopatra have born a number of children together, and many battles have been won or lost.

Have students speculate how much time has passed during the play's action and look to the text to support these speculations. For example, in Act III, scene vi, Caesar complains of Antony's public display of his bastard children and his declarations to give more of the Triumvirate's land to Cleopatra:

CAESAR: I'th'marketplace, on a tribunal silvered,  
Cleopatra and himself in chairs of gold  
Were publicly enthroned; at the feet sat  
Caesarion, whom they call my father's son,  
And all the unlawful issue that their lust  
Since then hath made between them, Unto her  
He gave the stablishment of Egypt, made her  
Of lower Syria, Cyprus, Lydia  
Absolute queen

## VI. KEEPING TRACK OF THE CHARACTERS AND THEIR LOYALTIES

Have students divide a piece of paper into four columns and place the rulers, Caesar, Antony, Cleopatra, and Pompey, at the top of each column. Underneath, list his/her loyal followers. Students can place this chart next to the script as they read the play and keep track of the loyalties of the minor characters. As minor characters betray their leaders, retreat or die, students can either cross out or move them to other columns, keeping track of power shifts.

## VII. KNOWING THE STORY AS THE ELIZABETHANS DID

Most Elizabethans were familiar with the tale of Antony and Cleopatra before Shakespeare produced his drama about them. Shakespeare's source was most likely Plutarch and it is included as supplemental reading in the Signet Classic text. Students can read Plutarch's story before they read the play and later discuss how Shakespeare adapted Plutarch's famous tale to the stage. Assign portions of Plutarch's tale to small groups to read and relate to the class either by oral reading or storytelling.

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**WHILE READING THE PLAY****I. FORMING INDIVIDUAL INTERPRETATIONS OF SCENES**

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Many scenes offer an opportunity for individual interpretations. For example: where Cleopatra's integrity and honesty are questionable, where an officer's or servant's loyalty sways, or where humor and sarcasm are used to expose subtext. Can students form their own opinions of these interpretations? If so, how do they interpret them?

- Divide the characters' parts amongst the students, reading the play orally. Discuss interpretations of scenes and character motivations.
- Divide the class into small groups, assigning a scene to each group. Have them rehearse, practicing voice, inflection, and emotion. They can prepare an introduction to the scene, set the stage, and then read the scene aloud with their practiced interpretations while the rest of the class attempts to summarize the scene in writing. The class can then discuss perceived interpretations gained through these presentations.
- Staging methods can also be explored by individuals or small groups. For example, in Act IV, scene xv, Cleopatra is in her monument with her ladies. She asks them to help lift the dying Antony up to her so that she will not have to leave the safety of her monument. Assign this same scene to a few different individuals or groups and compare interpretations and solutions to its staging challenge.

**II. EXPLORING THE SOUNDS OF THE PLAY**

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Shakespeare's plays were performed outdoors with minimal props. Elizabethan theater practitioners had to be quite creative using inexpensive devices to create magic and action on stage. This activity reinforces the live action and stage sounds of drama, as well as introduces students to simplified staging devices as a means of bringing a play to life.

Assign small groups to specific scenes from the play. Provide each group with a cassette recorder. Have students practice reading the scenes aloud, playing specific characters and providing sound effects. Students enjoy bringing objects to class that make supportive sound effects, including crowd and battle noises, footsteps upon character's entrances, swords being drawn, snakes attacking, etc. Have students record the scenes as a mini radio play. Groups then play their scenes in sequence.

**III. INTERPRETING CONTENT THROUGH DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

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Pose discussion questions before reading each scene or act that require students to delve into the content as they read it.

- After reading the scene, hold class discussions concerning their varied answers to the questions.
- Assign journal entries that explore the answers to these questions.
- Split the class into small groups and have them discuss the answers to questions posed and report on their findings.
- Split the class into small groups and assign each group a different scene to explore. Give each group one or two discovery questions to guide their exploratory work on the scene. Then have each group read the scene aloud and discuss their interpretations.

**ACT I**

1. Why are Antony and Cleopatra attracted to each other? What qualities in Cleopatra influence Antony's consistent forgiveness of her suspicious actions?
  2. Many of Antony's followers express their opinions of Antony's actions and of Cleopatra's power over him. What are the perspectives of Antony's followers and how do they change as the play progresses?
  3. Why does Shakespeare include the warnings of a soothsayer? How does this add to the plot of the traditional tragedy?
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4. Discuss Antony's internal conflicts, including: love and duty, wishing freedom from Fulvia and coping with her loss, doubt and trust in Cleopatra, rational thinking and passionate reactions. Why is he so conflicted? Is this an unusual personality trait? Is it a weakness?
5. Explain the loyalties of each member of the triumvirate. Which of the three leaders appears to be the most powerful at this point in the play? How does the power shift?
6. Cleopatra and Charmian compare methods of keeping a man. What manipulative strategies are evident in Cleopatra's methods?
7. Cleopatra is "cunning past man's thought," but Antony is aware and engages in many a battle of wills with Cleopatra. In which scene does Cleopatra win such a battle? When does Antony win? How does the status of each person shift when they are together? What "weapons" do each use to gain status?
8. Relationships, such as Antony and Cleopatra's, contain many unspoken thoughts or truths. What are the unspoken thoughts of Antony and Cleopatra? How do the spoken words vary from the unspoken? What evidence points towards these subtextual truths?
9. Cleopatra is a woman of many tactics. What tactics does she use to get what she wants from Antony, her servants, and later from Caesar? Are her dramatic mood swings emotional outbursts? Or are they manipulative strategies as well?
10. What was Octavius Caesar's opinion of Antony's valor prior to the start of the play? How does it change throughout the play?
11. How does life in Egypt differ from life in Rome? How is the atmosphere of Cleopatra's palace different from that of the seat of the Roman Empire? Why do these differences attract Antony to Egypt?
12. How trustworthy is Cleopatra? Should Antony trust her as an ally? Is she truthful? To whom?
13. Antony and Cleopatra are quite public with their private affair. How do the Romans look at such public behavior? How would contemporary U.S. citizens react to the president having such a public affair with another country's leader? Would the reactions be the same in other cultures?
14. How are messengers and followers treated differently by Caesar, Antony, and Cleopatra? Who seems to be the most benevolent, hostile, or respectful in such relationships? What does this say about each character?
15. Octavius Caesar is spoken of many times before he actually makes an appearance. What impressions of Caesar are created before he arrives in the play? Does he fulfill those impressions?

## ACT II

1. Why does Pompey believe that he can win a war against the triumvirate? What part does Cleopatra play in raising his expectations for victory?
  2. In Act II, scene ii, Antony and Caesar have an argument filled with accusations and statements of self-defense. Who is to blame for the unrest in Italy and the war against Caesar? Who wins the argument?
  3. Caesar and Antony reconcile their differences. How sincere is this reconciliation? Who plans the marriage between Octavia and Antony? Caesar or Agrippa?
  4. What is Enobarbus's opinion of Cleopatra? How does he regard her beauty and charms? Is he fearful of her power over Antony?
  5. A soothsayer appears for a second time in the play. What are his warnings and what references are made to the supernatural as proof of his predictions?
  6. Cleopatra's moods change wildly and unpredictably. Which mood most accurately portrays her true personality?
  7. Pompey and the triumvirate finally meet face to face. What are each party's intentions as they come into this meeting? What changes each leader's belief as the meeting progresses? How does each leader feel about the outcome of the meeting?
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8. The Soothsayer warned Antony that his angel would be overpowered if he stays in Rome. Who seems to overshadow Antony? How?
9. During the banquet scene, Lepidus gets drunk and has to be carried out. What is Shakespeare's purpose? Is it purely for comic relief or to show a weakness in Lepidus? What role does Enobarbus play in these festivities? Why?
10. In the midst of the banquet and drunken revelry, at least one person is conspiring to overthrow the others. Who is this person and does he have the power to carry out these ambitions?
11. By the end of Act II, there appears to be a united front among all parties. Are they actually united? Does the calm, united surface hide turbulence beneath? If so, who causes this turbulence? Why?
12. Many servants and subordinates express their opinions about the treaty. What are their thoughts and predictions for the future? How accurate are their perceptions? How accurate are the leader's beliefs? Why does Shakespeare create this dichotomy?

### ACT III

1. What opinions do fellow soldiers have of Lepidus? How are they altered after his drunken behavior at the banquet?
  2. What predictions do you have for the longevity of Antony and Octavia's marriage? How does Octavia feel about it? Will Antony be any more loyal to Octavia than he was to Fulvia?
  3. How sincere is the farewell of Caesar, Antony, and Octavia? Who appears to be the most sincere? Who might be disguising ulterior motives?
  4. Is Cleopatra truly jealous of Octavia and her marriage to Antony, or is she simply concerned that Octavia will win his full attention?
  5. How much truth is in the messenger's description of Octavia to Cleopatra? Does he take cues from Cleopatra on appropriate answers to her questions? If so, what signs does she give him?
  6. What kind of relationship do Antony and Octavia have? Is Antony sincerely trying to make the marriage work?
  7. What is Lepidus's fate after Caesar sets him up as a traitor to Pompey?
  8. How truthful is Caesar's outrage when Octavia returns to Rome without proper ostentation or ceremony? To what extent is he honestly upset at the treatment of his sister? What other motive might he have for appearing upset?
  9. What are Cleopatra's motives in joining Antony in the battle at sea? Is it her passion for Antony that takes her to his side? Her need to show her superiority over Octavia? Or does she have other motives?
  10. What are Antony's qualities as a general? How sound are his strategies?
  11. How would the Elizabethans have staged the battle scenes in Actium? What staging devices might have been used to dramatize the actions of scenes viii, vix, and x?
  12. How is Antony noble in defeat? Does he deserve the praise he receives from his peers and followers?
  13. Why does Cleopatra flee the battle at Actium? Why does Antony forgive her?
  14. Why does Antony send his schoolmaster as his ambassador? How does Caesar receive this humble messenger?
  15. How do each of the major characters respond to the demand for Antony's death or exile? Does anyone really consider this a workable proposal?
  16. What are Cleopatra's motives in accepting Thidias's personal advances?
  17. Yet another scene presents Antony accusing Cleopatra of being faithless and betraying him, and yet again, he forgives her. How does Cleopatra convince him of her loyalty and love?
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**ACT IV**

1. In the beginning of the act, Shakespeare gives us a glimpse of each camp before the final battle. What is the emotional atmosphere in each camp? How do the generals of each camp differ in leadership style? What are the perspectives of the subordinates as they prepare for battle?
2. Antony has a feast with his men before the day of battle. What is the Biblical reference? What is the significance?
3. Antony's soldiers hear music and identify it as an omen. Is the omen positive or negative for their side? Do they agree? How does this omen foreshadow upcoming events?
4. Antony makes many generous gestures to his soldiers. How do these acts of generosity reflect on his character as a general? Part of his generosity is his willingness to forgive. One such act of forgiveness and generosity has a profound effect on one of his men. Who? How? Is Antony's forgiveness a positive or a negative trait?
5. Why does Antony win the battle? What are the circumstances surrounding this battle? How do they differ from those previously fought?
6. Shakespeare places Antony's victorious scene between Enobarbus's despairing death scenes. Why?
7. In the final sea battle, the Egyptian fleet surrenders and appears to be welcomed by Caesar's men. Did the Egyptians conspire with Caesar and throw the battle or did the Egyptian fleet surrender in defeat? How do the actions of the Egyptians and the expectations of Antony reflect differences in Antony's and Cleopatra's cultural backgrounds?
8. Cleopatra sends a false message to Antony of her suicide, using manipulation to get what she wants. How does this reflect on her as a leader?
9. Eros takes his own life, rather than kill Antony. Does Shakespeare expose Eros's devotion to Antony any earlier in the play? Is Eros's act selfless and brave? What would have happened to him had he killed Antony?
10. What effects do the multiple suicides have on other characters in the play? Were these suicides the only answers in desperate times or did the characters have other options? What would have happened to each of the characters had they not taken their own lives?
11. Even on his deathbed Antony forgives Cleopatra's many deceptions and makes a heartfelt farewell. With so many noble qualities, what is Antony's weakness or tragic flaw, according to Aristotelian theory, that causes his downfall?
12. Cleopatra is overcome by Antony's death and faints over his body. How does this reaction reveal the true feelings of Cleopatra? What does she discover about herself after Antony's death?

**ACT V**

1. How genuine is Caesar in his tribute to Antony's life? Is Caesar sincere in his assurance to Cleopatra that she will be treated with respect and dignity? Why does Caesar send so many men to watch over Cleopatra?
  2. Many men confide in Cleopatra, telling her to trust them. Who sounds trustworthy?
  3. Caesar and Cleopatra finally meet face to face. What do you think is Caesar's reaction to this long-awaited meeting? How does he approach Cleopatra and what tone does he use with her? What are Cleopatra's impressions of Caesar?
  4. Does Cleopatra honestly attempt suicide with the dagger or is this another one of her manipulations?
  5. What picture does Cleopatra paint of her captor and her likely treatment should she go to Rome? How does this influence her final decision?
  6. How does Shakespeare show the class differences between Cleopatra and the countryman or Clown who brings the basket of figs?
  7. What killed Iras?
  8. How does Cleopatra die? How significant is the means of her suicide?
  9. Charmian lives long enough to praise Cleopatra's noble end. What might have happened to her had she not died along with Cleopatra?
  10. The play ends with many deaths and Caesar's promised tribute to Antony and Cleopatra. Who is the greatest victor here? Is there a victor?
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#### IV. UNDERSTANDING THE LANGUAGE OF THE PLAY

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Shakespeare introduces themes through the language of the play. Using the quotations provided, or others you select, ask students to identify important themes, truths, secrets, subtext or qualities admired in Roman times as revealed through Shakespeare's language. How does Shakespeare show class differences in characters through their speech patterns, wording, and switches from poetry to prose?

- Split the class into small groups and give each group a quotation to examine for subtext, word imagery, and rhythm patterns. Have students read the passages aloud and discuss their choices oral interpretation.
- Assign students individual passages and have them rewrite the passages in their own words, making sense of the content and substituting modern expressions. Have the students read the rewritten passages aloud and discuss their findings.
- Assign students a few quotations from the play that express similar themes. Have them write an exploratory essay comparing the quotations and revealing the syntax that supports this similar theme.
- Assign each student one quotation from the list below and have them find another passage in the text that expresses a similar theme. Have them also find contrasting themes. Assign journal entries that compare and/or contrast quotations and have students discuss how the quotations support a common theme in the play.

#### QUOTATIONS FOR DISCUSSION OF THEMES IN ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

##### POWER

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(II, ii, 94–98)

ANTONY

And then when poisonèd hours had bound me up  
From mine own knowledge. As nearly as I may,  
I'll play the penitent to you: but mine honesty  
Shall not make poor my greatness, nor my power  
Work without it.

(II, ii, 234–238)

ENOBARBUS

I saw her once

Hop forty paces through the public street;  
And having lost her breath, she spoke, and panted,  
That she did make defect perfection,  
And, breathless, pow'r breathe forth.

(II, ii, 147-151)

ANTONY

What power is in Agrippa,

If I would say, "Agrippa, be it so,"

To make this good?

CAESAR

The power of Caesar, and

His power unto Octavia.

(I, iii, 20–23)

CLEOPATRA

What, says the married woman you may go?

Would she had never given you leave to come!

Let her not say 'tis I that keep you here.

I have no power upon you; hers you are.

(III, xii, 34–36)

CAESAR

Observe how Antony becomes his flaw,

And what thou think'st his very action speaks

In every power that moves.



(IV, xv, 38–39)

CLEOPATRA

And welcome, welcome! Die where thou hast lived,  
 Quicken with kissing. Had my lips that power,  
 Thus would I wear them out.

### **FORGIVENESS AND SHAME**

---

(III, xi, 50–61)

ANTONY O, whither hast thou led me, Egypt? See,  
 How I convey my shame out of thine eyes  
 By looking back what I have left behind  
 'Stroyed in dishonor.

CLEOPATRA O my lord, my lord,  
 Forgive my fearful sails! I little thought  
 You would have followed.

ANTONY Egypt, thou knew'st too well  
 My heart was to thy rudder tied by th' strings,  
 And thou shouldst tow me after. O'er my spirit  
 Thy full supremacy thou knew'st, and that  
 Thy beck might from the bidding of the gods  
 Command me.

CLEOPATRA O, my pardon!

(IV, ix, 12–23)

ENOBARBUS O sovereign mistress of true melancholy,  
 The poisonous damp of night disponge upon me,  
 That life, a very rebel to my will,  
 May hang no longer on me. Throw my heart  
 Against the flint and hardness of my fault,  
 Which, being dried with grief, will break to powder,  
 And finish all foul thoughts. O, Antony,  
 Nobler than my revolt is infamous,  
 Forgive me in thine own particular;  
 But let the world rank me in register  
 A master-leaver and a fugitive.

O Antony! O Antony!

[Dies]

### **HONOR**

---

(II, vii, 75–82)

POMPEY Ah, this thou shouldst have done,  
 And not have spoke on't. In me 'tis villainy,  
 In thee't had been good service. Thou must know,  
 'Tis not my profit that does lead mine honour;  
 Mine honour, it. Repent that e'er thy tongue  
 Hath so betray'd thine act: being done unknown,  
 I should have found it afterwards well done,  
 But must condemn it now. Desist and drink.

(III, iv, 20–24)

ANTONY Gentle Octavia,  
 Let your best love draw to that point, which seeks  
 Best to preserve it. If I lose mine honor,  
 I lose myself: better I were not yours  
 Than yours so branchless.

---

(III, x, 17–23)

SCARUS                                      She once being loofed,  
The noble ruin of her magic, Antony,  
Claps on his seawing, and, (like a doting mallard)  
Leaving the fight in height, flies after her.  
I never saw an action of such shame;  
Experience, manhood, honor, ne'er before  
Did violate so itself.

(III, xiii, 56–61)

THIDEUS He knows that you embrace not Antony  
As you did love, but as you feared him.

CLEOPATRA O!

THIDEUS The scars upon your honor therefore he  
Does pity, as constrainèd blemishes,  
Not as deserved.

CLEOPATRA He is a god, and knows  
What is most right. Mine honor was not yielded,  
But conquered merely.

(IV, ii, 5–7)

ANTONY                      Tomorrow, soldier,  
By sea and land I'll fight: or I will live,  
Or bathe my dying honor in the blood  
Shall make it live again. Woo't thou fight well?

(V, i, 19–26)

DECRETAS                  He is dead, Caesar,  
Not by a public minister of justice  
Nor by a hirèd knife; but that self hand,  
Which writ his honor in the acts it did,  
Hath, with the courage which the heart did lend it,  
Splitted the heart. This is his sword;  
I robbed his wound of it: behold it stained  
With his most noble blood.

## **TRUST AND HONESTY**

---

(V, ii, 13–15)

CLEOPATRA Antony  
Did tell me of you, bade me trust you, but  
I do not greatly care to be deceived,  
That have no use for trusting.

(III, xiii, 41–46)

ENOBARBUS [Aside] Mine honesty and I begin to  
square.  
The loyalty well held to fools does make  
Our faith mere folly: yet he that can endure  
To follow with allegiance a fall'n lord  
Does conquer him that did his master conquer  
And earns a place i' th' story.

(V, ii, 249–260, prose)

CLEOPATRA Remember'st thou any that have died on't?  
CLOWN Very many, men and women too. I heard of  
one of them no longer than yesterday; a very honest  
woman, but something given to lie, as a woman

should not do but in the way of honesty; how she died of the biting of it, what pain she felt; truly, she makes a very good report o' th' worm; but he that will believe all that they say shall never be saved by half that they do; but this is most fallible, the worm's an odd worm.

CLEOPATRA Get thee hence, farewell.

CLOWN I wish you all joy of the worm.

(II, ii, 111–114)

ANTONY Thou art a soldier only; speak no more.

ENOBARBUS That truth should be silent I had almost forgot.

ANTONY You wrong this presence; therefore speak no more.

(IV, xiv, 119–127)

DIOMEDES Locked in her monument. She had a prophesying fear

Of what hath come to pass; for when she saw  
(Which never shall be found) you did suspect  
She had disposed with Caesar, and that your rage  
Would not be purged, she sent you word she was  
dead;

But, fearing since how it might work, hath sent  
Me to proclaim the truth, and I am come,  
I dread, too late.

## LOVE

---

(I, i, 1–17)

PHILO Nay, but this dotage of our general's  
O'erflows the measure. Those his goodly eyes  
That o'er the files and musters of the war  
Have glowed like plated Mars, now bend, now  
turn

The office and devotion of their view  
Upon a tawny front. His captain's heart,  
Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst  
The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper  
And is become the bellows and the fan  
To cool a gipsy's lust.

*[Flourish. Enter ANTONY, CLEOPATRA, her Ladies,  
the Train, with Eunuchs fanning her.]*

Look, where they come:

Take but good note, and you shall see in him  
The triple pillar of the world transformed  
Into a strumpet's fool. Behold and see.

CLEOPATRA If it be love indeed, tell me how much.

ANTONY There's beggary in the love that can be  
reckoned.

CLEOPATRA I'll set a bourn how far to be beloved.

MARK ANTONY Then must thou needs find out new heaven,  
new earth.

---

(I, ii, 147–157)

ANTONY She is cunning past man's thought.

ENOBARBUS Alack, sir, no; her passions are made of nothing but the finest part of pure love. We cannot call her winds and waters sighs and tears; they are greater storms and tempests than almanacs can report. This cannot be cunning in her; if it be, she makes a show'r of rain as well as Jove.

ANTONY Would I had never seen her!

ENOBARBUS O, sir, you had then left unseen a wonderful piece of work, which not to have been blest withal would have discredited your travel.

(II, i, 19–27)

POMPEY He dreams: I know they are in Rome together,

Looking for Antony. But all the charms of love,  
Salt Cleopatra, soften thy waned lip!

Let witchcraft join with beauty, lust with both!

Tie up the libertine in a field of feasts,

Keep his brain fuming. Epicurean cooks

Sharpen with cloyless sauce his appetite,

That sleep and feeding may prorogue his honor

Even till a Lethè'd dullness—

(II, ii, 136–142)

AGRIPPA By this marriage

All little jealousies, which now seem great,

And all great fears, which now import their dangers,

Would then be nothing; truths would be tales,

Where now half-tales be truths: her love to both

Would each to other, and all loves to both,

Draw after her.

## THE AGONIES OF WAR

---

(V, i, 35–48)

CAESAR O Antony!

I have followed thee to this. But we do launch

Diseases in our bodies. I must perforce

Have shown to thee such a declining day,

Or look on thine: we could not stall together

In the whole world. But yet let me lament

With tears as sovereign as the blood of hearts

That thou, my brother, my competitor

In top of all design, my mate in empire,

Friend and companion in the front of war,

The arm of mine own body, and the heart

Where mine his thoughts did kindle—that our stars,

Unreconcilable, should divide

Our equalness to this.

(IV, xiv, 12–20)

ANTONY My good knave Eros, now thy captain is  
Even such a body: here I am Antony,  
Yet cannot hold this visible shape, my knave.  
I made these wars for Egypt; and the Queen—  
Whose heart I thought I had, for she had mine;  
Which whilst it was mine had annex'd unto't  
A million moe, now lost—she, Eros, has  
Packed cards with Caesar, and false-played my glory  
Unto an enemy's triumph.

### **COURAGE AND AN HONORABLE DEATH**

---

(IV, xv, 83–90)

CLEOPATRA  
My noble girls! Ah, women, women, look,  
Our lamp is spent, it's out. Good sirs, take heart:  
We'll bury him; and then, what's brave, what's noble,  
Let's do't after the high Roman fashion,  
And make death proud to take us. Come, away.  
This case of that huge spirit now is cold.  
Ah, women, women! Come; we have no friend  
But resolution, and the briefest end.

(IV, xiv, 55–69)

ANTONY Since Cleopatra died,  
I have lived in such dishonor, that the gods  
Detest my baseness. I, that with my sword  
Quartered the world, and o'er green Neptune's back  
With ships made cities, condemn myself to lack  
The courage of a woman; less noble mind  
Than she which by her death our Caesar tells  
"I am conqueror of myself." Thou art sworn, Eros,  
That, when the exigent should come, which now  
Is come indeed, when I should see behind me  
Th' inevitable prosecution of  
Disgrace and horror, that on my command,  
Thou then wouldst kill me. Do't, the time is come.  
Thou strik'st not me, 'tis Caesar thou defeat'st.  
Put color in thy cheek.

EROS           The gods withhold me!

(V, ii, 280–298)

CLEOPATRA   Give me my robe, put on my crown, I have  
Immortal longings in me. Now no more  
The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip.  
Yare, yare, good Iras; quick: methinks I hear  
Antony call: I see him rouse himself  
To praise my noble act. I hear him mock  
The luck of Caesar, which the gods give men  
To excuse their after wrath. Husband, I come:  
Now to that name my courage prove my title!  
I am fire, and air; my other elements  
I give to baser life. So, have you done?  
Come then, and take the last warmth of my lips.  
Farewell, kind Charmian, Iras, long farewell.  
[Kisses them. IRAS falls and dies]

---

Have I the aspic in my lips? Dost fall?  
If thou and nature can so gently part,  
The stroke of death is a lover's pinch,  
Which hurts, and is desired. Dost thou lie still?  
If thus thou vanishest, thou tell'st the world  
It is not worth leave-taking.

## AFTER READING THE PLAY

### 1. INTERNET SEARCHES FOR FURTHER STUDY

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Have students in small groups research the historical context of *Antony and Cleopatra* by searching the Internet for websites dedicated to such topics as: the Egyptian Royalty, the Roman Empire, Cleopatra, Marcus Antony, etc. Assign such topics as: life in ancient Egypt, famous paintings depicting Roman rulers, Roman architecture, dress for Egyptian women, maps of the Roman Empire, etc. Have them present their findings to the class.

### 2. DOCUMENTING THE RISE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

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Using such programs as Power Point or simply using hand drawings, students can create maps of the Roman Empire's territories during the time of the play and diagram battles, movements, acquisitions, and the effects of treaties. Then have students research the territories of the Roman Empire before the play's action until the fall of the Empire. Discuss whether the period of play's action marks a turning point in the Empire's fortunes.

### 3. VIEWING FILM VERSIONS OF HISTORICAL PLAYS

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Watch films of plays based on historic figures—for example, Shakespeare's *Henry V*, *Richard III*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*, or non-Shakespearean sources like James Goldman's *A Lion in Winter*, and Allen Bennett's *The Madness of King George*. Discuss where and how the author uses artistic license. Where is the play or film historically accurate? Where does Shakespeare stray from history in *Antony and Cleopatra*? Where does Shakespeare embellish the plot? Why?

### 4. COMPARISONS OF POLITICAL LEADERS

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Study current and past rulers and political leaders. What were their strategies, loyalties, and relationships to other political leaders of their time? Investigate famous female rulers and political leaders like Golda Meier, Margaret Thatcher, Elizabeth I, and Indira Gandhi. What differences are apparent, if any, in their leadership styles? Why?

### 5. WRITING THE THOUGHTS OF ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

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Have students write journal entries or letters that could have been written by Antony or Cleopatra. What letters might they have exchanged while away from each other during each act of the play? What might their individual thoughts have been before battle or treaty? Write these as letters or journal entries.

### 6. ACTING OUT CROWD SCENES

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To better understand individual motivations and loyalties and how they could be staged, have students act out crowd scenes, such as Act II, scene ii. Many individuals have different opinions of what is going on and some have disgruntled reactions to the treaty, harboring secrets and angling for private advantage. Assign parts to each student and have them ad lib in a crowd scene. Then freeze into a tableau. Have the rest of the class try to figure out who is portraying which role and the motivation of each character.



## 7. STAGING THE PLAY AT THE GLOBE THEATER

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- Explore how this play might have been staged during Shakespeare's time.
- Use a model of the Globe Theatre or have students create one, and stage scenes using stand up cutouts of each character.
- Explore scene designs, props, and uses of trap doors, balcony, and doorways. What opportunities are there for house entrances through the standing patrons in the yard of the theater (often called *groundlings*)?
- How might the performers of the day have satisfied the rowdy groundlings while still entertaining the lords and ladies sitting above in the gallery?
- During Shakespeare's time all parts would have been played by men or boys. A boy would have played the part of Cleopatra. How would this affect the staging of the play?
- Watch the movie, *Shakespeare in Love*, as an example of staging practices and the use of boy players on the Elizabethan stage.

## 8. ROMAN SPECTACLE OF ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

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Research Roman theater staging and practices. How might the Romans have dramatized the story of Antony and Cleopatra in the Roman Coliseum? How would their dramatization differ from the Elizabethan tale written and produced by Shakespeare? The Romans were known to flood the Coliseum and stage dramatic battle scenes. How might they have staged Antony and Caesar's battle at sea? Have students identify scenes that occur outside the play's action, such as Cleopatra's barge arriving to meet Antony for the first time. Alternately, have them suggest scenes that could have happened, but did not. For example, Cleopatra does not commit suicide but Caesar does indeed parade her down the streets of Rome as his trophy.

## 9. INVESTIGATING MYTHOLOGICAL REFERENCES

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- Have students research the myths and mythological figures of Venus, Bacchus, Mars, Janus, and Atlas all mentioned in the play.
- Have students research the symbols associated with each of these mythological figures mentioned in the play. Search through art books or on the internet to find reproductions. Have students study the reproductions for symbols, motifs, and style of portraiture.
- Many artists include mythological references as motifs on clothing or in the foreground and background of portrait paintings of famous people. Have students create portraits of Antony, Cleopatra, and Octavius Caesar and include mythological symbolism in the foreground, background, and in the motifs on the clothing of these famous individuals. Students could explore various symbols that represent the qualities of each character and tie them to their mythological character by placing these symbols in the portrait.
- Have students discuss the purpose of the mythological references presented in their paintings.
- Students could cut out images from magazines, old greeting cards, and catalogues and create a collage that depicts the mythological imagery of their famous figure.

## 10. SUMMARY QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

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- The title of the play often draws the audience into the playwright's theme of the play. If you were to retitling Antony and Cleopatra to reflect your impressions of the play's prominent theme, what would it be?
  - Aristotle states that the most effective tragedy will have a central character of high status who will, due to his tragic flaw, bring about his own downfall. What is Antony's tragic flaw and how does he bring about his own downfall?
  - Cleopatra keeps the audience and everyone in the play wondering, "Are her actions real, or a façade?" She presents a constant conflict of truth vs. reality. What does Cleopatra really want? If you were to write her epitaph, what would it be?
  - Antony projects a character that is readily granting forgiveness and honoring loyalty. To whom is he most loyal? Why?
  - Is this a play about love, infatuation, power or manipulation? If you had to choose one overriding motivation for Antony and then Cleopatra, which word would be most fitting, and why?
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**WEBSITES**

## The Folger Shakespeare Library

<http://www.folger.edu/welcome.htm>

A major center for scholarly research, the Folger houses the world's largest collection of Shakespeare's printed works, in addition to a large collection of other rare Renaissance books and manuscripts. The website provides excellent sources and links to The Shakespeare Quarterly, the Folger Museum Store, the Folger Library Catalog, and many more academic sources.

## The Concordances of Shakespeare

<http://www.concordance.com/shakespe.htm>

A complete on-line service providing the concordances of Shakespeare's plays, plus other helpful sources and links including; word and phrase searches, an unabridged dictionary, and even a crossword helper.

## Bardware.com

<http://www.bardware.com/bardware/>

An easy to use site that provides maps of most of the locations in Shakespeare's plays, fast facts on Shakespeare's life, trivia, and links to other helpful sites.

## Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet

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Explores nineteenth-century paintings, criticism, and productions of Shakespeare's plays and their influences on one another.

## Bardcentral.com

<http://www.bardcentral.com/home.html>

A Canadian site selling a dazzling array of popular, obscure, and foreign-language productions of Shakespeare's plays on video and audio.

## Shakespeare's Globe Research Database

<http://www.rdg.ac.uk/globe/>

This site, sponsored by the University of Reading (UK), is dedicated to providing background information on Shakespearean performance in original conditions. It includes pages devoted to the original Globe and other playhouses in Early Modern London, reports and photographic documentaries on reconstruction and performances at the New Globe, and also some practical information.

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## ABOUT THE EDITORS OF THIS GUIDE

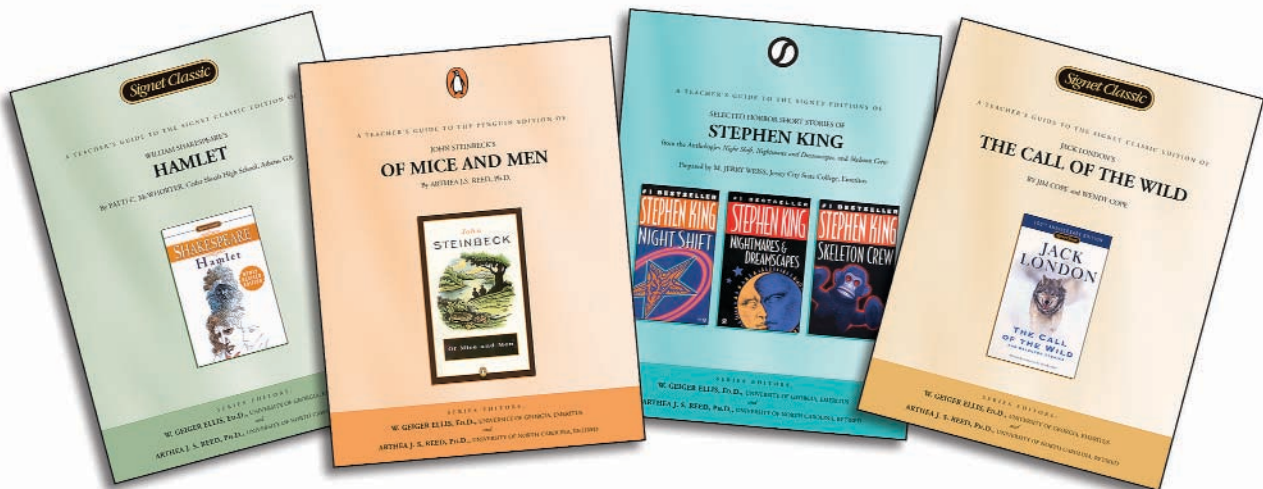
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