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Literature
Teaching Unit
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



Antony and Cleopatra

by William Shakespeare

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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Antony and Cleopatra

Objectives

Note: All references come from the Dover Thrift Edition of *Antony and Cleopatra*, Copyright 1998.

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. define the term “foreshadowing” and show how the following lines foreshadow the deaths of the two main characters:

Cleopatra: Act I, Scene II: “Oh, excellent! I love long life better than figs,” (spoken by Charmian) and “...hath yet but life/And not a serpent’s poison,” (spoken by Enobarbus).

Antony: Act I, Scene III: “Upon your sword/Sit laurel victory!” (spoken by Cleopatra).

2. discuss how Enobarbus functions as a commentator and how his role allows the audience to gain a greater understanding of Roman opinions and of Antony’s character.
3. trace the chronology of the play’s main action through the five acts.
4. discuss the characteristics of iambic pentameter and blank verse and their importance in the work.
5. recognize and explain the use of prose in a drama written predominantly in poetry.
6. analyze the stratifications of Roman society, including comments on the social distinctions that differentiated rulers, generals/trusted advisors, relatives, common soldiers, and slaves.
7. discuss conventions of death, including death in battle, suicide, and burial.
8. explain how Antony and Cleopatra could be seen as a cautionary tale to English citizens and to their leaders, citing examples.
9. compare and contrast Cæsar and Antony as generals and as men.
10. discuss the importance of the soliloquy in the pacing, character development, and tone of the play.
11. trace the rise, fall, and ultimate status of Antony’s character and as an example of the tragic hero.
12. analyze Cleopatra as a woman and as a queen.
13. cite and explain various examples of literary terms.

Antony and Cleopatra

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Discuss the balance of power and the obligations among the Triumvirs (Lepidus, Cæsar, and Antony).
2. Discuss the technique of using messengers as a tool of commentary and give several examples.
3. Use inference and observation to contrast the characters and importance of Antony's two wives, Fulvia and Octavia.
4. Comment on the relationship of Cæsar and Octavia and the role of duty for the high-born Roman woman.
5. Although the play is a tragedy, it has some moments of comic relief. Cite two examples of this and discuss the importance of inserting comic relief in the play.
6. Discuss the differences between an elegy and a eulogy and cite an example of each in this play.
7. Lepidus, although a member of the Triumvirate, is certainly never equal to Cæsar in power or to Antony in personal magnetism. Show how these impressions are conveyed in the play, and give an analysis of the character of Lepidus.
8. Jealousy is an important element in Cleopatra's personality. Discuss this trait in her make-up, and cite examples of behavior that showed her jealousy.
9. In Act II, Scene II, Enobarbus gives a breathtaking description of Cleopatra's beauty and wealth. Rephrase this description either in poetry or as a rap presentation of your own devising.
10. Several battles occur in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Discuss two battles and compare the military skills of Cæsar, Pompey, and/or Antony as demonstrated in those battles. (Note: Choice of battles will determine which generals are analyzed.)
11. Advisors are an important to kings, queens, and generals. Discuss two of the following advisors, determining whether their advice was wise or foolish and whether they were loyal advisors or not.
 - Enobarbus
 - Agrippa
 - Charmian
 - Mardian
 - Proculeius
 - Menas
12. Would you want Cleopatra as an ally? Why or why not?

Antony and Cleopatra

Note

1. When was *Antony and Cleopatra* written, and why should this matter to today's reader?

2. Why did Shakespeare choose to write about Mark Antony?

3. Where did Shakespeare get his information about Mark Antony?

4. While Shakespeare used several incidents and even some passages from the North text, how does his work differ from the earlier text?

Act I, Scene IV: Rome. Cæsar's House.

1. Cæsar and Lepidus are the other two rulers besides Antony. As the scene opens, they are discussing Antony. How do they rate him?

2. Who is the Queen of Ptolemy?

3. What news does the messenger bring to Cæsar and Lepidus?

4. How does Cæsar describe the Antony of earlier days, and what is the purpose of this description?

8. Mæcenas says Cæsar and Antony should stop bickering because of their need to join together against Pompey. What does Enobarbus reply, and what note should be taken about his comments?

9. What method does Agrippa propose to ensure Antony's loyalty to the Triumvirate and to Cæsar? How is this suggestion received?

10. Mæcenas, Agrippa, and Enobarbus begin discussing life at Cleopatra's court. What does Enobarbus report, and why is this important to the play?

11. Enobarbus' description of Cleopatra's first meeting with Antony is famous for its sensuality. Why does Shakespeare have Enobarbus give this description, when Antony or another courtier could have done it? Why does the playwright have Enobarbus speaking in blank verse, when he has previously spoken in prose?

12. Why does Shakespeare insert the lengthy description of Cleopatra (almost a soliloquy by Enobarbus) at this point in the play, when Antony has already returned to Rome and is reverting to his role as ruler?

13. Locate as many literary terms, figures of speech, or poetic devices as you can in the first long speech of Enobarbus, beginning with, "I will tell you."
