

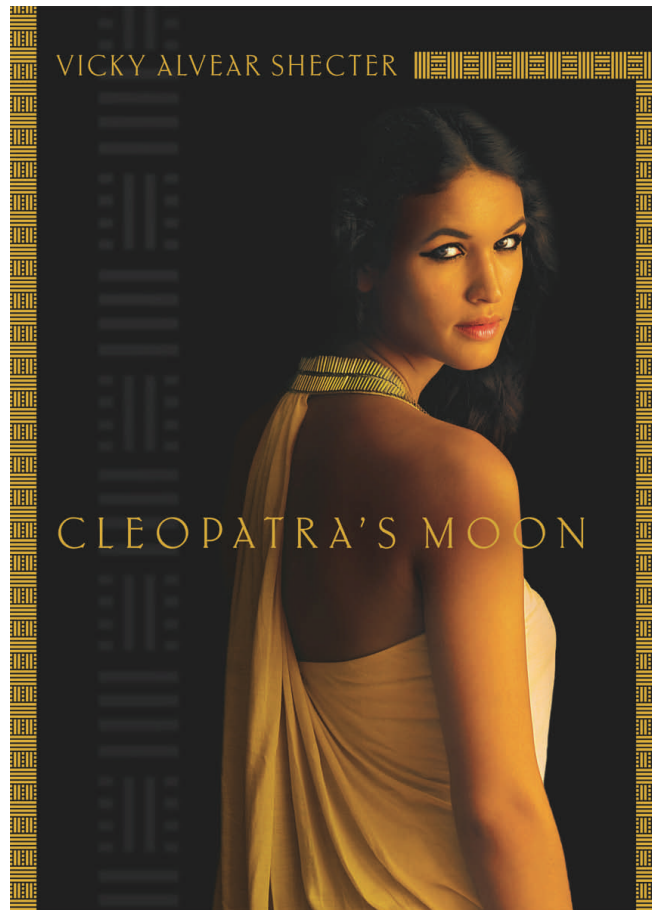
Connections and Discussion Guide

Cleopatra's Moon by Vicky Alvear Shecter

Published by Arthur A. Levine Books,
an Imprint of Scholastic
384 pages 978-0-545-22130-6 \$18.99

“Fascinating....
highly memorable.”
– *Publishers Weekly*

“A tale of a determined
young woman who must
adapt to the loss of
everything she’s known.”
– *Booklist*



“Romance, drama,
heartbreak, and
adventure....Shecter
writes about the world
of ancient Egypt and
Rome with
wonderful detail...
a fantastic read.”
– *School Library
Journal*

About the Book

A child of privilege and power, Cleopatra Selene watches her world crumble when her parents, Marcus Antonius of Rome and Cleopatra VII of Egypt, are defeated by Antonius's rival, Octavianus. Unable to face the humiliation of capture, both parents take their own lives. Cleopatra Selene, along with her two brothers, is taken to Rome where she spends her early teen years in the compound of Octavianus, where family life reflects the political intrigue and shifting alliances of the larger world around her. Desperate to reclaim her beloved kingdom, she tries to make contact with those loyal to Egypt and schemes to find a way back to power, but the power of Rome seems invincible. Perhaps she should take the way her mother chose to keep Octavianus from ruling her life, but Cleopatra Selene chooses another route that has far-reaching consequences.

Pre-Reading Activities

Research the importance of Alexander the Great, his tutor Aristotle, and the establishment of Greek influence in Egypt. Research the life and times of Cleopatra VII and her alliances with the Roman rulers, Julius Caesar and Marcus Antonius.

Look up the Egyptian concept of *ma'at* and what it meant to Egypt's rulers and their society as a whole.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Cleopatra Selene suspect that her family's misfortunes began on the day of her parents' greatest triumph? (p. 5)
2. What does the tutor Euphronius mean when he tells Selene and Alexandros that their mother is a true "philosopher-king" in the spirit of their ancestor, Alexander the Great? Discuss the ways in which Cleopatra uses her wisdom.
3. Why does the tutor Euphronius take the children to the Jewish quarter of Alexandria? What is the importance of their discussion with the rabbi?
4. Compare the religions of the Egyptians, the Jews, the Greeks, and the Romans. Are there similarities? What are the major differences? How do the religious beliefs affect the treatment of women in Egypt and in Rome?
5. Why does the priestess of Isis teach Cleopatra Selene how to summon the god Anubis? How does she use this ritual later? What does Octavianus mean when he denounces the Egyptian "beastly" gods?
6. Why do Antonius and Cleopatra take their own lives? Why does Octavianus spare the lives of their children and take them to Rome? Why is Caesarion such a threat to him? What does he mean when he says, "Two Caesars are simply one too many?" (p. 93)
7. Compare the personalities of Marcus Antonius and Octavianus. How are they similar and how are they different? Why do you think so many armies and rulers sided with Octavianus rather than Antonius?
8. Why does Octavianus allow the children to complete the burial rites for their parents? Does he fear the Egyptian gods, or does he wish to appease the people?
9. Why does Ptolmy adapt to life in Rome more easily than his older brother and sister? Discuss Octavia's reaction to their arrival in Rome. How does she feel about each of them? At what point do you realize her true feelings?
10. Compare the living quarters of the royal family in Egypt and the ruling family in Rome. What are the most important differences and how do they affect the children who are used to Alexandria?

11. Discuss Cleopatra Selene's relationship to Julia. Why does Julia treat her the way she does? What is Julia's relationship to Livia and why do you think they despise each other?

12. Compare Octavia and Livia and the power that each of them has in the compound of Octavianus. Compare their personalities and use of power to Cleopatra Selene's memory of her mother.

13. How is Juba different from the other members of the household? Why does he ask Cleopatra Selene about her mother the first time they talk? What attracts her to him? Why does Juba offer to teach Alexandros to fight?

14. Discuss Juba's statement: "The important question is not 'Why was I saved?' but 'What will I do with the life that the gods decided to spare?'" (p. 157) How does this comment relate to the situation of Cleopatra Selene, Alexandros, and Ptolmy?

15. What effect does Octavianus's "Triumph" have on the children? Why does Cleopatra Selene feel that Octavia is "stealing" Ptolmy from her? (p. 183) Why does Octavia call him her "Little Marcus"? Why are the Egyptian children a political asset for Octavianus?

16. Why does Marcellus pursue Cleopatra Selene? Is he truly interested in helping her? Why does she consider responding to his advances? How does she truly feel about him?

17. Discuss the different approaches that Juba and Cleopatra Selene take to their situations. Discuss the question in her mind: "Was it better to stoically accept what the Fates handed you? Or to push back, to use the emotional energy that the Stoics strived so hard to control, to *shape* your own fate, like Alexander?" (p. 250) Apply this question to real-life situations in the present day.

18. What is the importance of the ritual in which Cleopatra Selene is inducted into the Mysteries of Isis? Is there more than one way to interpret the visions she has during this ceremony?

19. Why does Juba consider asking Octavianus to reinstate him in his homeland? Why would it be more difficult for Cleopatra Selene to return to Egypt? Why does she cling to the idea that she must try to reclaim her heritage?

20. In the midst of her despair over losing her last family member, why does Cleopatra Selene choose life for herself, over death? How is she rewarded for her decision?

Post-Reading Activity

Research what is known about the reign of Juba and Cleopatra Selene in North Africa. From your reading of this novel, what kind of rulers would you expect them to be?

Research what happened in the Roman Empire after the death of Octavianus.

Related Reading

Dyan Blacklock. *The Roman Army: The Legendary Soldiers who Created an Empire*. Illus. by David Kennett. Walker, 2004.

Learn about the characteristics of the Roman military that made it possible for them to conquer much of the known world.

Suzanne Collins. *The Hunger Games*. Scholastic, 2008

Catching Fire. Scholastic, 2009

Mockingjay. Scholastic, 2010

This trilogy, set in a future time, is reminiscent of the repressive rule of the Roman Empire and makes an interesting comparison to the actual Roman times.

Joann Fletcher. *Cleopatra the Great: The Woman Behind the Legend*. HarperCollins, 2011.

A wealth of detail about Cleopatra Selene's legendary mother and her lifestyle in Egypt.

Joann Fletcher. *Exploring the Life, Myth, and Art of Ancient Egypt*. (Civilizations of the World). Rosen, 2010.

Provides a full background of the history and customs of this fascinating culture.

Geras, Adele. *Cleopatra: Discover the World of Cleopatra Through the Diary of her Handmaid Nefret*. Illus. by M. P. Robertson. Kingfisher, 2007.

This volume presents both fictional and factual treatments of the life and court of Cleopatra Selene's mother, with a detailed map of the Alexandria where Selene spent her childhood.

Vicky Alvear Shecter. *Cleopatra Rules! The Amazing Life of the Original Teen Queen*. Boyds Mills, 2010.

A chatty and informative life of the famous queen.

Gregory, Kristiana. *Cleopatra VII: Daughter of the Nile, Egypt, 57 B.C.* (The Royal Diaries). Scholastic, 1999.

A fictionalized diary of Cleopatra Selene's mother from the ages of 12 to 14, and the fears and intrigues of her life as a teenager.

Web Sites

Search Egyptian artifacts in the museum where the author serves as a docent:

<http://carlos.emory.edu/egyptian-nubian>

The Temple of Dendur at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

http://www.metmuseum.org/explore/newegypt/html/wk_dend.htm

Information about the Roman emperors:

<http://www.roman-emperors.org/impindex.htm>

Images from the rule of Cleopatra Selene and Juba II:

<http://images.mitrasites.com/cleopatra-selene.html>

***Cleopatra's Moon* is available from your local bookstore or usual supplier, or from:
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Call toll-free 1-(800)-724-6527**

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