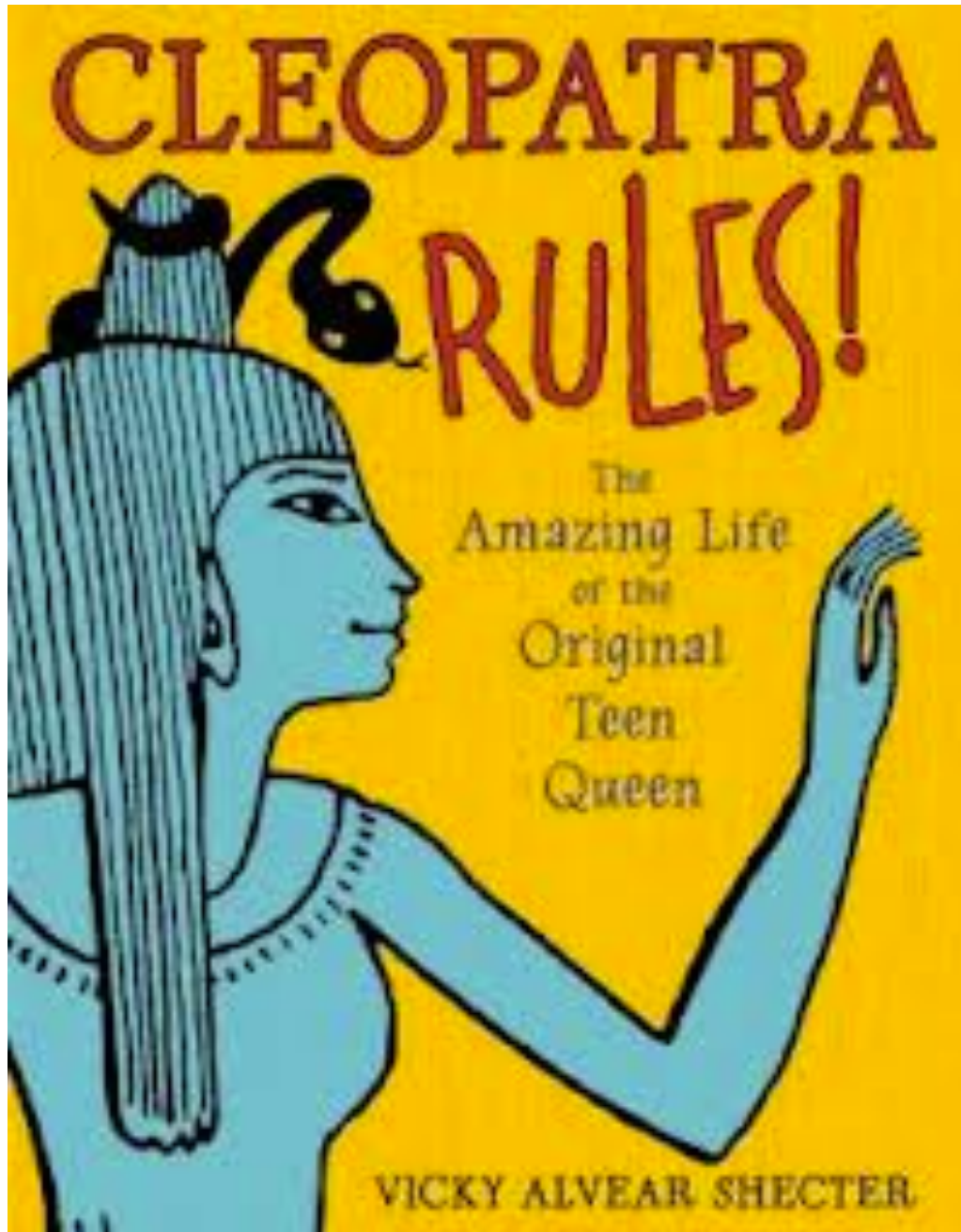


Teacher's Guide for:



***2011 VOYA Honor List for Nonfiction***

## INTERVIEWING CLEOPATRA

STANDARDS: History/Language Arts/Social Studies

GRADE LEVEL: Appropriate for Grades 4-8

OVERVIEW: Students will question Cleopatra on the events that lead up to the fall of Ptolemaic Egypt to the Romans. They will be exposed to the importance of an alternate perspective (all we have is the perspective of the victors)—how do “her” answers compare to Rome’s message about the queen, particularly in light of Rome’s need for a scapegoat as a cover for yet another civil war (a war between two Romans—Octavius and Antony). They will explore the manipulation of her image—and the beauty myth—and how the queen might feel about that (based on archaeological evidence of what she really looked like).

PURPOSE: Develop research/interview techniques, writing, listening and speaking skills; explore the role of the propaganda, and discuss ways of how focusing on the queen’s looks minimizes her accomplishments.

OBJECTIVES: The student will:

1. Research and take notes on Ptolemaic Egypt, Cleopatra VII, and Roman leaders.
2. Formulate appropriate questions to gain knowledge of the background and wider political picture behind the conflict with Rome.
3. Work cooperatively in small groups.
4. Perform interview with partner (whole class as audience).
5. Demonstrate good listening and speaking/presentation skills.
6. Discuss how an everpresent/streamlining media may or may not have affected how Cleopatra was remembered.

RESOURCES: *Cleopatra Rules! The Amazing Life of the Original Teen Queen* text; additional resource books or online sources, pictures of Cleopatra VII, student props (student created microphone, costumes, etc.).

ACTIVITIES:

1. Assign research of Cleopatra (additional option: assign research of Rome during the fall of the republic and the role that the capture of Egypt played in funding Octavius’s consolidation of power)
2. Take notes
3. Formulate and record the questions and suggested answers within the group.

4. Practice the interview.
5. Perform the interview with the whole class as an audience.
6. Complete an evaluation form—self/peer
7. Accelerated Group—Develop a time-line of Cleopatra’s life and the transformation of Rome from a republic to an empire ruled by a single man.
8. Class discussion (see Tying it All Together).

#### TYING IT ALL TOGETHER:

After presentations, discuss what you learned about Cleopatra and ancient Rome. What surprised you? Discuss how and why it was important for Rome to control how her image was recorded and remembered. Explore how a preoccupation with how the queen looked diminished the focus on her talents as a brilliant politician, excellent negotiator, and a speaker of at least seven languages.



## A MIRROR TO OURSELVES

STANDARDS: Social Studies/Ancient History/Language Arts

GRADE LEVEL: Grades 7-9

OVERVIEW: Cleopatra VII, the last queen of Egypt, has been immortalized as a type of “siren” figure—dangerously gorgeous. Yet depictions on coins and busts created during her life show her as ranging from unattractive to moderately attractive. The focus on her looks began with the stories Rome told about her. Discuss the reasoning behind blaming her—and absolving Mark Antony of his “reason”—for political gain. Discuss the way the tone was set on how to not just talk about the queen, but other female leaders that came after.

PURPOSE: Understand the relevance of ancient history to today’s world and the connections/patterns that may still be at play, particularly as it relates to sexual discrimination or women leaders. Understand patterns in history and what we can learn from them to make informed decisions. Develop research, communication, and presentation skills.

OBJECTIVES: Students will

1. Research how Rome formulated a message about Cleopatra in order to convince the people they “needed” a war against her (when it was really a war against Mark Antony).
2. [For older students] Discuss the ways in which using sexualized insults against powerful women disempowers them; is that still happening today?
3. Draw parallels between the preoccupation of Cleopatra’s so-called “allure” versus her political acumen and how or whether our culture continues to focus on how women look versus their intelligence or contributions.

RESOURCES/MATERIALS: *Cleopatra Rules! The Amazing Life of the Original Teen Queen*; Online resources: [http://www.softschools.com/timelines/cleopatra\\_timeline/62/](http://www.softschools.com/timelines/cleopatra_timeline/62/) (timeline); Cleopatra: Short, Fat and Ugly: <http://dsc.discovery.com/news/briefs/20010326/cleo.html>; [Pictures of Egypt <www.touregypt.net>](http://www.touregypt.net)

ACTIVITIES:

1. Class discussion on the parallels of how we perceive/treat women in power today with how Rome manipulated Cleopatra's image and story.
2. Either in small groups or individually, students research different aspects of Egyptian and Greco-Roman culture: language, clothing, music, architecture, food, etc..
3. Have students create posters describing image/perception of the queen versus reality.
4. [older students] Discuss how propaganda shapes perceptions and how it has been used historically in war efforts.

### TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

After posters are presented, have a class discussion on the personal ways we see this manipulation of imagery regarding powerful women in the media today (think TMZ and the glee with which women are taken down). Do teens/people today still use sexually demeaning insults to ostracize/disempower women who may or may not be intimidating in some way? How does learning about the image manipulation of Cleopatra over the years change your perception about both the queen and the Romans in power during her rule?



## About the Author



**Vicky Alvear Shecter** lives in Atlanta, Georgia. She is a docent at the Michael C. Carlos Museum of Antiquities at Emory University where she regularly gives tours to schoolchildren and visiting groups.

She specializes in writing midgrade mythology/NF books and YA historical fiction set in the ancient world. Her novels, published by Arthur A. Levine Books/Scholastic, include the award winning, *Cleopatra's Moon* and *Curses and Smoke: A Novel of Pompeii*.

She is also the author of the popular mythology series, “Secrets of the Ancient Gods,” including *Anubis Speaks!*, *Hades Speaks!*, and *Thor Speaks!* (2015).

Look for her columns about the modern echoes of the ancient world in the Huffington Post at: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/vicky-alvear-shecter/>

Prior to writing for children, Vicky was an award-winning marketing and public relations writer.

### **“I Love Making School Visits!”**

Vicky loves to make history come alive for kids in lively presentations at schools and home school groups. Email now to set up a presentation or SKYPE visit!

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### **Additional Resources**

The Michael C. Carlos Museum of Emory University in Atlanta has an excellent museum exploring ancient and Hellenistic art. A field trip is highly recommended. Vicky is a docent at the museum and would be happy to give you and your students an individual tour.

The Carlos Museum also features an educational website teachers can use to supplement their lessons. Go to the website:

<http://www.carlos.emory.edu/ODYSSEY/Teachers/ll/lessons.htm> for more information.