



# Cleopatra: Last Queen of Egypt

*Joyce Tyldesley*

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## **Cleopatra: Last Queen of Egypt** Joyce Tyldesley

The Romans regarded her as “fatale monstrum”—a fatal omen. Pascal said the shape of her nose changed the history of the world. Shakespeare portrayed her as an icon of tragic love. But who was Cleopatra, really?

Cleopatra was the last ruler of the Macedonian dynasty of Ptolemies. Highly intelligent, she spoke many languages and was rumored to be the only Ptolemy to read and speak Egyptian. Her famous liaisons with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony had as much to do with politics as the heart. Ruthless in dealing with her enemies, many within her own family, Cleopatra steered her kingdom through difficult times, and very nearly succeeded in creating an eastern empire to rival the growing might of Rome.

Her story was well documented by her near contemporaries, and the tragic tale of contrasts and oppositions—the seductive but failing power of ancient Egypt versus the virile strength of modern Rome—is so familiar we almost feel that we know Cleopatra. But our picture is highly distorted. Cleopatra is often portrayed as a woman ruled by emotion rather than reason; a queen hurtling towards inevitable self-destruction. But these tales of seduction, intrigue, and suicide by asp have obfuscated Cleopatra’s true political genius.

Stripping away our preconceptions, many of them as old as Egypt’s Roman conquerors, Egyptologist Joyce Tyldesley offers a magnificent biography of a most extraordinary queen.

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