

CA Ancient History A Level Prescribed Source Translations

Roman Period Study: Timespan 3



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This resource was created in collaboration with James Renshaw, Team Leader for the Classical Association's Subject Advisory Team for Ancient History. We would also like to thank the following contributors for their work in developing and advising on this resource:

John Hazel

Dr John Holton

Dr Stephanie Holton

Simon MacPherson

About this resource

This resource is designed to support teachers and students of the OCR A Level Ancient History. Initially, we have focused on the period studies, but we hope to cover the whole specification in time. The aims of the project are:

- To provide schools with good quality, free online sourcebooks for this qualification.
- To provide translations which are accurate, accessible and easy to read.
- Where appropriate, to give some context to a prescribed source.
- To invite teachers and students to give feedback so that we can improve and amend the resource as appropriate.

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Timespan 3: Gaius

1. CA Translations

Dio Cassius	Josephus	Pliny the Elder	Seneca
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2. Linked Sources

The following sources can be found by using the listed external links:

Coins

See the companion British Museum document for the period study prescribed coins.

Inscriptions

See the companion Classical Association document for the period study prescribed inscriptions.

Suetonius

[Gaius](#), 13–14, 18–20, 22, 27–33, 37, 56–59

Dio Cassius

Sections: *The Roman History* [59:3.1–5.5](#); [59.9.4–7](#); [59.16.1–11](#); [59.26.5–27.1](#); [59.28.1–11](#); [59.29.1–30.3](#)

59.3.1–5.5

Gaius' behaviour as emperor

59.3 1 He went through this same process of deterioration, too, in almost all other respects. Therefore, he had at first seemed most democratic, to such a degree, in fact, that he would send no letters either to the people or to the Senate nor assume any of the imperial titles; yet he became most autocratic,

2 so that in one day he took all the honours that Augustus had only just received over the course of such a long reign and that were voted to him one at a time – some of which Tiberius had refused to accept at all. Indeed, he postponed none of them except the title of Father [of the Fatherland], and even that he acquired very soon.

3 Though he had proved himself the most adulterous of men, seizing one woman at the very moment of her marriage, and dragging others from their husbands to have sex with them, he afterwards came to hate them all save one; and he would certainly have detested her, had he lived longer. Towards his mother, his sisters, and his grandmother Antonia he conducted himself at first in the most dutiful manner possible.

4 He immediately saluted his grandmother as Augusta, and appointed her to be priestess of Augustus, granting to her at once all the privileges of the Vestal Virgins. To his sisters he also assigned these privileges of the Vestal Virgins, also that of watching the games in the Circus with him from the imperial seats, and the right also to have spoken on their behalf, not only the prayers annually offered by the magistrates and priests for his welfare and that of the State, but also the oaths of allegiance that were sworn to his rule.

5 He himself sailed across the sea, and with his own hands collected and brought back the bones of his mother and of his brothers who had died; and wearing the purple-bordered toga and attended by lictors, as at a triumph, he deposited their remains in the tomb of Augustus.

6 He cancelled all the measures that had been voted against them, and recalled all those who were in exile. Yet, after doing all this, he showed himself the most wicked of men toward both his grandmother and his sisters. For he forced the former to kill herself because she had criticised him for something; and as for his sisters, after raping them all he confined two of them on an island, the third having already died.

7 He even demanded that Tiberius, whom he called grandfather, should receive from the Senate the same honours as Augustus; but when these were not immediately voted (for the senators could not, on the one hand, bring themselves to honour him, nor on the other hand, dare to dishonour him, because they were not yet clearly aware of the character of their young master, and were therefore postponing all action until he was present), he gave no mark of distinction other than a public funeral, after causing the body to be brought into the city by night and laid out at daybreak.

8 And though he made a speech over it, he did not say as much in praise of Tiberius as he did to remind the people of Augustus and Germanicus and incidentally to speak in his own favour.

59.4

1 For Gaius always went by opposites in everything so that he not only matched but even surpassed his predecessor's debauchery and bloodthirstiness for which he used to censure him; whereas he imitated none of the qualities he praised in the other.

2 Though he had been the first to insult him and the first to abuse him, so that others, wishing to please him in this way, indulged in a rather reckless freedom of speech, he later praised and extolled Tiberius, even going so far as to punish some for what they had said. These, as enemies of the former emperor, he hated for their abusive remarks; and he hated equally those who in any way praised Tiberius, as being his predecessor's friends.

3 Though he put an end to the charges of **maiestas** [treason], he nevertheless made these the cause of a great many persons' downfall. Again, though, according to his own account, he had given up his anger against those who had formed a conspiracy against his father and mother and brothers, and even burned their letters, he yet put great numbers of them to death on the strength of those letters. It is true that he actually destroyed some letters, but they were not the originals containing the absolute proof, but rather copies that he had made.

4 Moreover, though he at first forbade any one to set up images of him, he even went on to manufacture statues himself; and though he once requested the cancellation of a decree ordering sacrifices to be offered to his Fortune, and even caused this action of his to be inscribed on a tablet, he afterwards ordered temples to be built and sacrifices to be offered to himself as to a god.

5 He delighted alternately in vast crowds of men and in solitude; he grew angry if requests were made, and also if they were not made. He would display the keenest enthusiasm about various projects, and then carry out some of them in the most idle fashion. He would spend money most generously, and at the same time show a

most sordid spirit in exacting it. He was both irritated and pleased both with those who flattered him and with those who freely spoke their minds.

6 Many who were guilty of serious crimes he failed to punish, and he killed many who were not even under any suspicion of wrong-doing. He either flattered his associates excessively or abused them excessively. As a result, no one knew either what to say or how to act toward him, but all who met with any success in this respect gained it as the result of chance rather than of judgement.

59.5

1 This was the kind of emperor into whose hands the Romans then had fallen. So the actions of Tiberius, though they were felt to have been very harsh, were nevertheless as far superior to those of Gaius as were the actions of Augustus to those of his successor.

2 For Tiberius always kept the power in his own hands and used others as agents for carrying out his wishes; whereas Gaius was ruled by the charioteers and gladiators, and was the slave of actors and others connected with the stage. Indeed, he always kept Apelles, the most famous of the tragic actors of the day, with him even in public.

3 Thus he by himself and they by themselves did without let or hindrance everything that such people would naturally dare to do when given power. Everything that pertained to their art he arranged and settled on the slightest pretext in the most lavish manner, and he compelled the praetors and the consuls to do the same, so that almost every day some performance of the kind was sure to be given.

4 At first he was just a spectator and listener at these and would take sides for or against various performers like one of the crowd; and one time, when he was annoyed with men of opposing tastes, he did not go to the show. But as time went on, he came to imitate, and to take part in many events,

5 driving chariots, fighting as a gladiator, giving exhibitions of pantomime dancing, and acting in tragedy. So much for his regular behaviour. And once he sent an urgent summons at night to the leading men of the Senate, as if for some important discussion, and then he danced in front of them.

59.9.4–7

Gaius' policies as emperor

59.9

4 The following good and praiseworthy acts were performed by Gaius. He published, as Augustus had done, all the accounts of the public funds, which had not been made public while Tiberius was away from the city. He helped the soldiers to extinguish a fire and gave assistance to those who suffered loss by it.

5 As the equestrian order was becoming low in numbers, he sent for men of high birth and wealth from the whole empire, even from outside Italy, and enrolled them in the order. He even permitted some of them to wear the senatorial dress before they had held any office through which we gain admission to the Senate, on the strength of their prospects of becoming members later, whereas previously only those who had been born into the senatorial order were apparently allowed to do this.

6 These measures gave satisfaction to everybody; when he put the elections once more in the hands of the people and the plebs, overturning what Tiberius had put in place concerning these things,, and abolished the tax of 1%, and even, furthermore, scattered tickets at a gymnastic contest that he had arranged and distributed a great number of gifts to those who had secured them; these actions,

7 though delighting the masses, upset sensible people who stopped to reflect that if the offices should fall once more into the hands of the many, and the funds on hand should be exhausted and private sources of income fail, many disasters would result.

59.16.1–11

Gaius' attitude to the memory of Tiberius; the reintroduction of treason trials; honours to Gaius

59.16

1 Up to this time Gaius had not always spoken ill of Tiberius before everybody, but also, far from punishing others when they denounced him either privately or publicly, he had actually enjoyed their remarks. But now he entered the Senate-chamber and praised his predecessor at length, and then strongly accused the Senate and the people of wrongly finding fault with him. .

2 "I myself have the right to do this," he said, "in my capacity as emperor; but you not only do wrong but are guilty of *maiestas* [treason] as well, to take such a tone towards one who was once your ruler." He then took up separately the case of each man who had lost his life, and tried to show, as people at least thought, that the senators had been responsible for the death of most of them, and all by their votes of condemnation.

3 The evidence of this, allegedly derived from the very documents which he previously declared he had burned, was read aloud to them by the imperial freedmen. And he added: "If Tiberius really did do wrong, you ought not, by Jupiter, to have honoured him while he lived, and then, after repeatedly saying and voting as you did, turn round now.

4 But it was not Tiberius alone that you treated in an unpredictable manner; you also inflated Sejanus' ego and corrupted him, then put him to death. Therefore I too ought

not to expect any decent treatment from you." After some such remarks as these he represented in his speech Tiberius himself as saying to him:

5 "In all this you have spoken well and truly. Therefore show no affection for any of them and spare none of them. For they all hate you and they all pray for your death; and they will murder you if they can. Do not stop to consider, then, what acts of yours will please them and do not mind it if they talk,

6 but look solely to your own pleasure and safety, since that has the most just claim. In this way you will suffer no harm and will at the same time enjoy all the greatest pleasures; you will also be honoured by them, whether they wish it or not. If, however, you pursue the opposite course, it will not really bring you any advantage;

7 for, although in name you may win an empty reputation, you will gain no advantage, but will become the victim of plots and will die without glory. For no man living is ruled by his own free will; on the contrary, only while a person is afraid he pays court to someone who is stronger, but when he gains courage, he takes vengeance on the man who is weaker."

8 At the close of this address Gaius restored the charge of *maiestas* [treason], ordered his commands to be inscribed at once upon a bronze tablet, and then, rushing quickly out of the Senate-house, made his way the same day to the suburbs. The Senate and the people were very frightened as they recalled the denunciations that they had spoken against Tiberius and at the same time thought over the contrast between the words they had just heard from Gaius and his previous speeches.

9 For the moment, their alarm and dejection prevented them from saying a word or transacting any business; but on the next day they met again and presented lavish praise on Gaius as a most sincere and pious ruler, for they felt very grateful to him that they had not been killed like the others.

10 Consequently they voted to offer annual sacrifices to his Mercy, both on the anniversary of the day on which he had read his address and on the days belonging to the palace; on these occasions a gold statue of the emperor was to be carried up to the Capitol and hymns sung in its honour by the boys of the noblest birth.

11 They also granted him the right to celebrate an ovation, as if he had defeated an enemy. These were the honours they decreed on that occasion; and later, on almost any pretext, they were sure to add others.

59.26.5–27.1

Gaius behaves as if he is a god.

59.26

5 Gaius was praised for this, partly out of fear and partly with sincerity, and when some called him a demigod and others a god, he lost his head. Indeed, even before this he had demanded that he should be regarded as more than a human being, and was accustomed to claim that he had intercourse with the Moon, that Victory had crowned him, and to pretend that he was Jupiter, and he made this a pretext for seducing numerous women, particularly his sisters; again, he would pose as Neptune,

6 because he had bridged so large an expanse of sea; he also impersonated Hercules, Bacchus, Apollo, and all the other divinities, not merely males but also females, often taking the role of Juno, Diana, or Venus. Indeed, to match the change of name he would assume all the rest of the features that belonged to the various gods, so that he might really seem to look like them.

7 At one moment he would be seen as a woman, holding a wine-bowl and thyrsus, and at another he would appear as a man equipped with a club and lion's skin or perhaps a helmet and shield. He would be seen at one time with a smooth chin and later with a full beard. Sometimes he wielded a trident and at times he brandished a thunderbolt. At one point he would impersonate a girl equipped for hunting or for war, and a little later would play a married woman.

8 Therefore by varying the style of his dress, and by the use of accessories and wigs, he achieved accuracy however diverse the roles; and he was eager to appear to be anything rather than a human being and an emperor. Once a Gaul, seeing him telling oracles from a lofty platform in the guise of Jupiter, was moved to laughter,

9 whereupon Gaius summoned him and asked, "What do you think I am?" And the other answered (I give his exact answer) he was only a shoemaker. Thus it is, apparently, that persons of such rank as Gaius can bear the frankness of the common herd more easily than that of those who hold high position.

10 The clothes, now, that I have described were what he would wear whenever he pretended to be a god; and suitable supplications, prayers, and sacrifices would then be offered to him. At other times he usually appeared in public in silk or in triumphal dress.

59.27

1 He used to kiss very few people; for to most of the senators, even, he merely stretched out his hand or foot for homage. Consequently the men who were kissed

by him thanked him for it even in the Senate, and this in spite of the fact that he kissed actors every day in plain sight of everybody.

59.28.1–11

Gaius' extreme behaviour

1 Gaius ordered that a sacred precinct should be set apart for his worship at Miletus in the province of Asia. The reason he gave for choosing this city was that Diana had already taken over Ephesus, Augustus had taken over Pergamum, and Tiberius had taken over Smyrna; but the truth of the matter was that he had set his heart on having for himself the large and exceptionally beautiful temple which the Milesians were building to Apollo.

2 Then he went to still greater lengths, and actually built two temples of his own in Rome itself, one that had been granted him by vote of the senate and another at his own expense on the Palatine. It seems that he had constructed a sort of lodging on the Capitoline, in order, as he said, that he might dwell alongside Jupiter;

3 but claiming that he did not deserve to take second place in this union of households, and blaming the god for occupying the Capitoline before him, he hastily built another temple on the Palatine, and wished to transfer to it the statue of the Olympian Zeus after remodelling it to resemble himself.

4 But he found this to be impossible, for the ship built to bring it was shattered by thunderbolts, and much laughter was heard every time that anybody approached the statue as if to take hold of its base; after uttering threats against the statue, he set up a new one of himself.

5 He cut in two the temple of Castor and Pollux in the Roman Forum and made through it an approach to the palace running directly between the two statues, in order, as he liked to say, to have the Dioscuri for gate-keepers. Styling himself Jupiter Latiaris,¹ he established as his priests his wife Caesonia, Claudius, and others who were very wealthy, receiving ten million sesterces from each of them in return for this honour.

6 He also made himself a priest in his own service and appointed his horse a fellow-priest; and tender and expensive birds were sacrificed to him daily. He had a machine by which he gave claps of thunder in response to thunder, and sent return flashes of lightning when there was lightning. Likewise, whenever a thunderbolt fell, he would hurl a javelin at a rock in response, repeating each time the words of Homer: "Either lift me up or I will lift you up".²

¹ Jupiter Latiaris means Jupiter the protector of Latium (the region around Rome).

² This quotation is from Homer, *Iliad* 23.724.

7 When Caesonia bore a daughter only a month after her marriage, he pretended that this had come about through supernatural means, and was enormously proud of the fact that within so few days of becoming a husband he was now a father. He named the girl Drusilla, and taking her up to the Capitol placed her on the knees of Jupiter, suggesting that she was his child, and handed her over to Minerva to be nursed.

8 Now this god, this Jupiter (for he was called by these names so much in the end that they even found their way into documents), at the same time that he was doing all this, was also collecting money in absolutely shameful and dreadful ways. For even if one were to overlook the goods and the taverns, the prostitutes and the courts, the craftsmen and the wage-earning slaves, and other such sources from which he extracted all the money he could;

9 how could one keep silent about the rooms assigned in the palace itself, and the wives of the leading men as well as the children of the most revered families that he put in those rooms and forced into prostitution, reaping revenue through them from everybody alike? Some of these people did this willingly, others very much against their will, but they did so still so that they would not be thought disagreeable.

10 However, the ordinary people were not really much displeased by these events, but in fact enjoyed with him his sexual exploits and the fact that he used to throw himself each time on the gold and silver collected from these sources and roll in it.

11 But then he legislated harshly regarding taxes, and inscribed them in extremely small letters on a tablet which he hung up in a high place, so that it would be read by as few people as possible, and so that many, being unaware of what had been ordered or forbidden, would end up having to pay the penalties outlined. Then the people immediately all ran at speed into the Circus and raised a terrible outcry.

59.29.1–30.3

The assassination of Gaius

59.29

1 As he continued to play the madman in every way, a plot was formed against him by Cassius Chaerea and Cornelius Sabinus, though they were tribunes in the Praetorian Guard. There were a good many, of course, in the conspiracy and aware of what was being done, among them Callistus and the prefect.

1a Practically all his courtiers were won over, both on their own account and for the common good. And those who did not take part in the conspiracy did not reveal it when they knew of it, and were glad to see a plot formed against him.

2 But the men who actually killed Gaius were those I have named. Chaerea was an old-fashioned sort of man to begin with, and he had his own special cause for resentment. For Gaius was in the habit of calling him 'girly', though he was the hardiest of men, and whenever it was Chaerea's turn to command the guard, would give him some such password as 'Love' or 'Venus'.

3 Now an oracle had come to Gaius a short time before warning him to beware of Cassius, and, supposing that it was referring to Gaius Cassius, governor of Asia at the time, because he was a descendant of the Gaius Cassius who had slain Caesar, he caused him to be brought back as a prisoner; but the man whom Heaven was really indicating to Gaius was this Cassius Chaerea.

4 Likewise, an Egyptian, Apollonius, foretold in his native land the actual fate of Gaius; for this he was sent to Rome and was brought before the emperor the very day on which he was destined to die, but his punishment was postponed until a little later, and in this way his life was saved. The deed was done in this way: Gaius was celebrating a festival in the palace and was producing a show.

5 During this he was both eating and drinking while entertaining the rest of the company. Even Pomponius Secundus, consul at the time, was taking his fill of food as he sat by the emperor's feet, and at the same time kept bending over continually to shower kisses upon them. Chaerea and Sabinus, pained as they were by the disgraceful proceedings, nevertheless restrained themselves for five days.

6 But when Gaius himself wished to dance and act a tragedy and for this purpose announced three more days of the entertainment, the followers of Chaerea could stand it no longer, but waiting merely till he went out of the theatre to see the boys of high birth whom he had summoned from Greece and Ionia apparently to sing the hymn composed in his honour, they intercepted him in a narrow passage and killed him.

7 When he had fallen, none of the men present kept their hands off him, but all kept stabbing him savagely, even though he was dead; and some even tasted his flesh. His wife and daughter were also promptly killed.

59.30

1 Thus Gaius, after doing in three years, nine months, and twenty-eight days everything that has been told, learned by actual experience that he was not a god.

1a Now he was spat upon by those who had been accustomed to bow down to him even when he was absent; and he became a sacrificial victim at the hands of those who were used to speak and write of him as "Jupiter" and "god." His statues and his

images were dragged from their pedestals, for the people in particular remembered the distress they had suffered.

1b All the soldiers of the Germanic corps fell to rioting and quarrelling, with the result that there was some bloodshed.

1c The bystanders recalled the words that he had once addressed to the people, "If only you had just one neck!", and they showed him that it was he who had just one neck, whereas they had many hands.

2 And when the Praetorian Guard became excited and began running about and inquiring who had killed Gaius, Valerius Asiaticus, an ex-consul, silenced them in a remarkable manner; he climbed up to a visible place and shouted: "I wish I had killed him!" This alarmed them so much that they stopped their uproar.

3 All those who in any way accepted the authority of the Senate were true to their oaths and became quiet. While the scenes just described were taking place around Gaius, the consuls, Sentius and Secundus, immediately transferred the funds from the treasuries to the Capitol. They stationed most of the senators and plenty of soldiers as guards over it to prevent the people from doing any plundering. So these men together with the prefects and the followers of Sabinus and Chaerea were discussing what should be done.

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Josephus

Sections: *Jewish Antiquities* [19.1–3](#); [19.4–11](#); [19.17–27](#); [19.100–114](#); [19.201–211](#)

19.1-3

Gaius' madness

1 Now this Gaius not only showed he was mad in injuring the Jews at Jerusalem or those that lived nearby, but allowed it to extend throughout the earth and the sea, wherever was subject to the Romans, and filled it with thousands of crimes. They were certainly more than any previous history relates.

2 But Rome itself suffered the most appalling effects of his actions since he considered it not to be any way more honourable than other cities; but he plundered the rest of its citizens, especially the Senate and the nobility, and those who were dignified by famous ancestors.

3 He also had a large number of devices to use against those of the equestrian order, as it was styled, who were considered by the citizens equal in dignity and wealth to the senators, because out of them the senators themselves were selected. He treated these people quite disgracefully, and removed them out of his way; they were at once put to death and their wealth plundered, as generally he killed men to seize their riches.

19.4–11

Gaius claims to be a god

4 He also claimed to be a god and insisted that greater honours should be paid to him by his subjects than those that are owed to human beings. He also frequented the temple of Jupiter on what is called the Capitol which they consider the holiest of all their temples, and he was bold enough to call himself the brother of Jupiter.

5 And his other activities did not fall short of madness, as when he built a bridge from the city of Dicearchia in Campania to Misenum, another city by the sea, from one promontory to another, thirty furlongs long as measured over the sea.

6 And this was done because he judged it to be a most tedious thing to row over it in a small ship, and he also thought that it was fitting for him to build that bridge since he was lord of the sea, and that he might force it to show obedience as well as the earth. So he enclosed the whole bay within this bridge; and drove his chariot over it, and thought that, as he was a god, it was suitable for him to travel over roads like this.

7 And he didn't hold back from plundering Greek temples, and ordered that all the engravings, sculptures, and the rest of the ornaments of the statues and donations dedicated there should be brought to him, saying that the best things ought to be put nowhere but in the best place - and that the city of Rome was the best place.

8 He decorated his palace and gardens, as well as the houses he stayed in when he travelled all over Italy with the plunder brought from those temples. He even dared to order that the statue of 'Olympian' Zeus (so-called because he was honoured by the Greeks at Olympia) created by Phidias³ the Athenian, should be brought to Rome.

9 But he did not achieve his purpose because the architects told Memmius Regulus, who had been commanded to remove that statue of Zeus, that the workmanship was such that it would be spoiled and would not survive the removal. It is said that Memmius postponed taking it down because of these reports as well as great omens of an incredible nature⁴.

10 He wrote a letter to Gaius reporting these things in defence of his failure to carry out the task. As a result of this he was in danger of being executed, but he was saved when Gaius died first.

11 In fact Gaius's madness advanced so far that when a daughter was born to him, he carried her into the temple of Jupiter on the Capitol, put her on the knees of the god's statue, and said that the child was common to him and to Jupiter, and determined that she had two fathers: but which of those fathers was greater, he left undetermined. And people had to endure him acting like this.

19:17-27

Conspiracies against Gaius

17 Three different conspiracies had been made to take out Gaius, and each of them was led by excellent men. Emilius Regulus, born at Corduba in Spain, got some men together and was keen to get Gaius taken out either by them or by himself.

18 There was also another conspiracy under the leadership of Cassius Chaerea, tribune [of the Praetorian Guard]. Annius Minucianus was also a man of great importance among those who were prepared to oppose his tyranny.

³ Phidias (or Pheidias) was a famous Athenian sculptor, painter and architect who was active in the 5th century BC. He was responsible for the design of much of the Athenian acropolis, including the huge Athena Parthenos statue. Here, the statue referred to is his seated Zeus at Olympia, one of the ancient seven wonders of the world, which stood over 12 metres tall.

⁴ Dio LIX 28.3 reports that these omens included the ship built to transport the statue being destroyed by thunderbolts and loud laughter which erupted whenever anyone approached to take hold of the pedestal.

19 Now the different causes of these men's hatred and of the conspiracy against Gaius were the following. Regulus was indignant and hated all injustice. For he had a mind naturally angry and bold and free, which caused him not to hide his plans. So he communicated them to many of his friends, and to others, who he considered strong and active men.

20 Minucianus joined this conspiracy, because of the injustice done to Lepidus, his particular friend, a man of the best character, whom Gaius had killed; and also because he was afraid for himself since Gaius's anger tended to bring death to everyone.

21 As for Chaerea, he joined because he was ashamed of the insults he received from Gaius about his manliness, and also because he himself was in danger every day from his friendship with and attendance upon him. He thought it a deed worthy of a free-born man to kill Gaius.

22 These men set the matter out for consideration before all those who had been spectators to his outrageous behaviour and who desired to escape the sharp sword that had been lifted to others, by removing Gaius. Perhaps it would be successful, and achieving success would gain the approval of so many excellent people that seriously wished to share in their plan for the liberation of the city, and of the government, even at the risk of their lives.

23 Out of them all, Chaerea urged it on the most, both through his desire to acquire a better name and also because, as a tribune, he had secure access to Gaius and would be able to kill him more easily.

24 At this time the chariot races took place. This is a spectacle that the Romans are absolutely obsessed with: they gather eagerly at the race-course and the crowds there beg the emperors for whatever they need. The emperors who grant these requests without question are especially well-respected.

25 And so on this occasion they enthusiastically urged Gaius to reduce taxes and lighten some of the heavy tributes imposed upon them. But he would not grant their requests: and when their shouts increased, he sent soldiers, some one way, and some another, and gave orders that they should seize those that were shouting, immediately bring them out and put them to death.

26 These were Gaius' commands: and those who were commanded carried them out. And the number of those who were killed on this occasion was very large. When the people saw this they stopped shouting; because they saw with their own eyes that this petition to be relieved of the payment of their money brought them immediate death.

27 This made Chaerea more determined to go on with his plot; in order to put an end to this barbarity of Gaius' against humanity. He then, several times, thought of attacking Gaius, even while he was feasting. Yet he restrained himself for some reason. Not that he had any doubt about killing him, but he was watching for an appropriate time, so that his attempt might not be futile, but that he might strike the blow in a way that would certainly succeed.

19.100-114

The assassination of Gaius after he left the theatre during the Palatine Games

100 And when Gaius took so long, Chaerea had a good mind to go in and attack him in his seat, although he foresaw that this could not be done without much bloodshed, both of the senators, and of those of the equestrian order that were present. And although he knew this must happen, yet he had a good mind to do so thinking it right to gain security and freedom for all, at the expense of any that might be killed at the same time.

101 They had just turned to the theatre's entrance when it was signalled that Gaius had risen from his seat and there was uproar. The conspirators turned back around and pushed against the crowd, with the excuse that Gaius would be angry at them, but in reality they wanted to have a quiet place that would have nobody in it to defend him, while they set about killing Gaius.

102 His uncle Claudius had gone on ahead with Marcus Vinicius, his sister's husband, and Valerius the governor of Asia. Nobody could have blocked their exit, even if they wanted, out of respect for their character. Gaius then followed with Paulus Arruntius.

103 And when Gaius was inside the palace, he left the direct path which had his slaves standing on both sides and which Claudius' group had previously used.

104 Gaius turned aside into a private narrow passage to go to the baths and also to look at the boys that had come from Asia. A group of them had come from there to sing hymns in the mysteries which he was celebrating, and some had come to perform the Pyrrhic dance in the theatre.

105 So Chaerea met him, and asked him for the password. When Gaius gave him one of his ridiculous words, he shouted abuse back at him without hesitation, then drew his sword, and struck him violently - but not fatally.

106 There are certainly some who say Chaerea deliberately planned it so Gaius would not be killed by a single blow, but instead wanted to get a greater revenge by causing many injuries.

107 This story appears unbelievable to me because the fear men are under in such actions does not allow them to use their reason. And if Chaerea thought that, I consider him the greatest of all fools for taking pleasure in his anger at Gaius, rather than immediately ensuring safety for himself and for his partners from the dangers they were in. Because there were still many ways Gaius could have been helped, if he had not already died. For certainly Chaerea must not have thought so much about the punishment of Gaius as the danger that he himself and his friends were in,

108 while it was in his power, after such success, to keep silent and escape the anger of Gaius's defenders, and not leave it uncertain whether he would gain the end he aimed at or not, and by acting unreasonably as if he intended to ruin himself, lose the opportunity that lay before him. But everybody may guess as he likes about this.

109 However, Gaius was staggered by the pain that the blow gave him, for the stroke of the sword, falling in the middle between the shoulder and the neck, was prevented by the collar-bone from going any deeper. But he neither cried out, being so astonished, nor called out for any of his friends, whether because he had no confidence in them, or that his mind was otherwise disordered; but he groaned under the pain he endured, and immediately went forward and fled.

110 Then Cornelius Sabinus, who was already prepared in his mind to do so, pushed him and he fell down on one knee. Many of the conspirators stood round about him and struck him with their swords, and they cried out, and encouraged one another all at once to strike him again. However, all agree that Aquila gave him the finishing stroke which directly killed him.

111 But credit for the deed must be given to Chaerea. For although many agreed to the deed itself, he was the first to act on it, and began to prepare for it long before all the others,

112 and was the first man to have the courage to speak about it to them. And when they agreed with what he said about it, he got the dispersed conspirators together, he prepared everything prudently and by offering good advice, he showed himself far superior to the rest, and made obliging speeches to them with the effect that he actually compelled them all to proceed, though otherwise they would not have had enough courage for that purpose,

113 and when the opportunity arose to use the sword, he appeared first of them all ready to do so, and gave the first blow in this brave assassination; he also brought Gaius easily under the power of the rest, and almost killed him himself. Consequently it is only just to attribute all that the rest did to the advice, bravery and labours of the hands of Chaerea.

114 Therefore Gaius came to his end and lay dead from the many wounds which he had sustained.

19.201-211

An obituary for Gaius

This was the end of Gaius after he had reigned four years minus four months. Even before he became emperor he was ill-natured, a man who had reached the highest level of wickedness; he was a slave to his pleasures and a lover of slander, panic-stricken by every fearful event, and as a result thoroughly murderous towards those he was not afraid of. He enjoyed his exorbitant power only for one purpose, to injure those who least deserved it with unreasonable abuse, and got his wealth by murder and injustice.

202 He tried to appear above regarding either what was divine or agreeable to the laws, but was a slave to the praise of the people; and whatever the laws declared to be shameful and punished, that he considered more honourable than what was virtuous.

203 He gave no thought to his friends, however intimate, even though they were persons of the highest character; and if he was once angry at any of them, he would inflict punishment on them on the smallest pretexts and considered any man who tried to lead a virtuous life to be his enemy. And whatever he ordered, he would not allow any opposition to his desire; a consequence of this was that he committed incest with his sister;

204 from which event especially a bitter hatred first sprang up against him among the citizens; incest like that had not been recorded for a long time, and so this caused people to distrust him, and to hate the man who was guilty of it.

205 And as for any great or royal work that he ever did, which might be for the present and last for future ages, nobody can name any, but only the ports that he made at Rhegium and in Sicily, for the reception of the ships that brought corn from Egypt;

206 this was indeed a work unquestionably very great in itself, and of very great advantage to sailing. However he did not complete it, but left half of it incomplete, because of his lack of application to it.

207 The reason for this was his great interest in useless things, and by spending his money on the sort of pleasures that benefited no one but himself, he could not extend his generosity to things that were undeniably of great importance.

208 Apart from that he was an excellent orator, and an expert in the Greek language, as well as with the Latin language of his own country. He was also able to respond on the spot to compositions made by others, of considerable length and accuracy. He was also more skilful in persuading others to do great things than anyone else was, and this from his natural good character, which had been further improved by much exercise and effort.

209 For as he was the grandson of the brother of Tiberius, whose successor he was, he was under great pressure to care for his education, because Tiberius himself had been so prominent and successful on his own. Gaius joined this pursuit of the beautiful, giving in to the commands of a man who was both his family and his emperor. And so, he stood out as the best among his fellow citizens.

210 But the advantages he received from his learning did not match the trouble he brought upon himself in exercising his authority; it is so hard for those who have the absolute power to do without control whatever they please to obtain the virtue that a wise man needs.

211 At first he tried very hard to surround himself with friends who were worthy in every way, through education and an enthusiasm for the higher pursuits; but then, because of his increasing cruelty, they gave up the kind feelings they had for him, and began to hate him, and from this hatred came the plot which they raised against him, and from which he died.

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Pliny the Elder

Section: *Natural History* 36.122–3

Aqueducts of Gaius and Claudius

122 But all previous aqueducts have been surpassed by the most recent and very costly work begun by the emperor Gaius and completed by Claudius, since the Curtian and Caerulean Springs, as well as the Anio Novus, were made to flow into Rome from the 40th milestone at a level high enough to supply water to all the seven hills of the city, the sum spent on the work amounting to 350 million sesterces.

123 If we take into careful consideration the abundant supplies of water in public buildings, baths, pools, open channels, private houses, gardens and country estates near the city; if we consider the distances covered by the water before it arrives, the raising of arches, the tunnelling of mountains and the building of level routes across deep valleys, we shall readily admit that there has never been anything more remarkable in the whole world.

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Seneca

Sections: [On Anger 3.19.1–5](#); [On Consolation to Polybius 17.3–5](#); [On Firmness of Purpose 18.3](#)

On Anger 3.19.1–5

The cruelty of Gaius

1 I am far from being side-tracked or making a digression. The extent of his arrogance and cruelty are indeed relevant to my argument. My point is that this cruelty was the product of anger. It knew no bounds and was abnormally intense. He actually had senators beaten using whips. His own presence allowed this to become 'standard procedure'. The tortures he inflicted used the most horrific possible methods: not merely rack, ankle chains, flogging horse, and fire, but also the sight of his own face.

2 One response could be this: "Is it really so important that those three senators were destroyed by beating and burning like worthless slaves? Was he not contemplating the slaughter of the whole senate? And did he not wish that the Roman people had only one neck? His idea here was that crimes taking place in so many places and on so many occasions might be reduced to a single blow and a single day." Is there anything more unheard of than execution by night? Normally robbery and violence are concealed from attention by darkness. Punishments usually get greater publicity. The more well-known they are the more effective the example they set and the greater the change of behaviour which results.

3 Another response could be this: "What causes us shock and surprise is a daily experience for that monster. He lives for it, he is alert for it, he loses sleep to achieve it." No-one else, certainly, has ordered those being interrogated to have a sponge inserted in their mouths. The idea was to deprive them of the power of speech. When has anyone on the point of death been denied the chance to groan? He was, presumably, afraid that extreme pain might lead to excessive freedom of speech. He might hear what he did not wish to hear! He must have been aware that only a man about to die might dare to utter countless forms of abuse.

4 Indeed, when sponges could not be found he ordered that the wretches' clothing should be ripped up and bundles of these rags be stuffed into their mouths. What appalling savagery this is! At least the drawing of a final breath should be permitted. It gives space for the soul when it is ready to depart. Surely the soul should not have to rely on a wound to escape?

5 It would, no doubt, be tedious to say more on this topic. Though he did, on that very night, kill the fathers of those who had died. Centurions were sent to their various houses. This was clearly a humane act, done from a sense of pity! My wish

is to emphasise not the savagery of Gaius but his anger. Its intensity was directed not so much at individual human beings but it tore apart whole peoples. And indeed it struck at the same time cities, rivers and things that were spared any perception of pain.

On Consolation to Polybius 17.3–5

Gaius' behaviour after Drusilla's death

3 As I consider the list of Caesars and those who had to endure the deaths of brothers or sisters, how could I fail to include Gaius? He ought to have been eliminated from the list of Caesars. Nature produced him but only to inflict countless casualties on the human race and to earn its disgust. Because of him the whole empire was engulfed by flames and thrown into chaos. Its current restoration is owed to the generosity of a most kind-hearted emperor.

4 When Gaius Caesar suffered the loss of his sister Drusilla, he proved incapable of showing the grief or joy appropriate to an emperor. He fled from the gaze of his fellow citizens. He avoided any direct interaction with them. But he still did not attend the funeral rites of his sister or make to her the tributes that were her due. He tried, instead, to relieve the pain of her most distressing death by playing dice on his Alban estate. His other activities in the forum were also well publicised. But how disgraceful for a Roman emperor to console himself on the death of his sister by playing dice!

5 Gaius also showed a fervent lack of commitment by letting his beard and hair grow one moment and having it shaved the next. He wandered the coastline of Italy and Sicily in a state of nervous tension. He could never make up his mind if he wanted his sister to be mourned or worshipped. While he was setting up temples and places of worship he still subjected those who failed to show sufficient grief to the cruellest treatment. The same lack of moderation that he showed in the face of misfortune was revealed in any successful outcome: he swelled with pride to a quite extraordinary degree.

On Firmness of Purpose 18.3

The motive for Chaerea to assassinate Gaius

3 But in Chaerea's case, there was a mismatch between this officer's style of speaking and his readiness for effective action. His voice was, shall we say, unemphatic. For those unfamiliar with his practical abilities, this made him the subject of some speculation. When his duties required him to ask Gaius for the password, one time he was given "Priapus" another time "Venus". Either way, Gaius was clearly taunting an armed soldier with gross effeminacy. And he himself was kitted out in see-through clothes, fashionable sandals and gold coloured jewellery.

The fact is that he forced Chaerea to use his sword so that the man would not have to ask for the password one more time! He was the first among the conspirators to raise his hand and strike a blow. He severed the neck right in the middle with a single blow. Later that weapon inflicted a huge number of blows. Others used it to avenge public and private wrongs. But Chaerea was the first to prove himself a man, though he gave the impression of being quite the opposite.

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