

CA Ancient History A Level Prescribed Source Translations

Roman Period Study: Timespan 4



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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 4: Claudius

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

[Claudius](#) 10–14; 17–18; 20–22; 25; 29; 36; 44–45

Tacitus

[Annals](#) 3.65; 11.24; 12.25–12.26; 12.41; 12.65–12.69

Dio Cassius

Sections: *The Roman History* [60.3.1-7](#); [60.6.1-7.4](#); [60.14.1-16.4](#); [60.17.8-18.4](#)

60.3.1-7

Claudius' reaction to becoming emperor

1 Though generally speaking, he was the kind of man I have described, he still did many things in a proper manner whenever he was free from the previously mentioned weaknesses and was in control of himself. I shall now describe his acts in detail.

2 He promptly accepted all the honours that were voted to him, except the title of Father, and this he took afterwards; however, he did not enter the Senate at once, but waited until the thirtieth day. For, seeing how Gaius had died and learning that some other men had been put forward by the Senate as better suited than him to the throne, he was not overly confident, but instead exercised great caution in everything.

3 He made sure that every man or woman who came near him was searched, in case they were hiding a dagger, and at banquets he always had some soldiers present. This practice which he established continues to the present; but the indiscriminate searching of everybody came to an end under Vespasian.

4 He put Chaerea and some others to death, in spite of his pleasure at the death of Gaius. For he was looking far ahead to ensure his own safety, and so, instead of feeling grateful toward the man through whose deed he had gained the throne, he was displeased with him for having dared to kill an emperor. He acted in this matter, not as the avenger of Gaius, but as though he had caught Chaerea plotting against himself.

5 And soon after Chaerea's death Sabinus took his own life, not desiring to live after his comrade had been executed. As for the others, however, who had openly shown their eagerness for a democracy or had been regarded as eligible for the throne, Claudius, far from bearing malice toward them, actually gave them honours and offices. In plainer terms than any ruler that ever lived he promised them immunity, in which he imitated the example of the Athenians, as he said, and it was no mere promise, but he allowed it in actual fact.

6 He abolished the charge of *maiestas* [treason] not only in the case of writings but in the case of overt acts as well, and punished no one for this reason for offences committed either before this time or later.

7 As for those who had wronged or insulted him when he was a private citizen, - and there were many who had treated him like this, both because he had been considered insignificant, and also, more especially, in order to please either Tiberius or Gaius, - he did not prosecute them on any false charge, but if he found them guilty of some other crime, he would take vengeance on them at the same time for their former abuse.

60.6.1-7.4

Claudius enacts measures for the city of Rome

60.6

1 In all this, then, his course was satisfactory. Furthermore, when in the Senate the consuls once came down from their seats to talk with him, he rose in his turn and went to meet them. And, for that matter, he lived in Neapolis altogether like an ordinary citizen;

2 for both he and his associates adopted the Greek manner of life in all respects, wearing a cloak and high boots, for example, at the musical exhibitions, and a purple mantle and golden crown at the gymnastic contests.

3 Moreover, his attitude toward money was remarkable. For he ordered that no one should bring him contributions, as had been the practice under Augustus and Gaius, and ordered that no one who had any relatives at all should name him as his heir; he furthermore gave back the sums that had previously been confiscated under Tiberius and Gaius, either to the victims themselves, if they still survived, or otherwise to their children.

4 It had been the custom that if any detail whatsoever in connection with the festivals was carried out in any way that broke with precedent, it should be repeated, as I have stated. But since such repetitions were frequent, occurring three, four or five times and sometimes even ten, partly, of course, as the result of accident, but generally on purpose by those who benefited from these repetitions,

5 Claudius passed a law that the chariot races in case of a second exhibition should take only one day; and in actual practice he usually prevented any repetition at all. For the schemers were not as ready to make errors now that they gained very little by doing so.

6 As for the Jews, who had again increased so greatly that because of their numbers it would have been hard to bar them from the city without causing a riot, he did not drive them out, but ordered them, while continuing their traditional mode of life, not to hold meetings. He also disbanded the clubs, which had been reintroduced by Gaius.

7 Moreover, seeing that it was no use to forbid the people to do certain things unless their daily life were reformed, he abolished the taverns where they were accustomed to gather and drink, and commanded that no boiled food or hot water should be sold; and he punished some who disobeyed him in this matter.

8 He restored to the various cities the statues which Gaius had ordered them to send to Rome, and he also restored their temple to Castor and Pollux and placed Pompey's name once more upon his theatre. On its stage he also inscribed the name of Tiberius, because that emperor had rebuilt the structure after it had been burned.

9 He also carved his name on the stage (not because he had built it, but because he had dedicated it), but on no other building. Furthermore, he did not wear the triumphal dress throughout the festival, though permission to do so had been voted, but appeared in it merely when offering the sacrifice; the rest of the festival he controlled while dressed in the purple-bordered toga.

60.7

1 He forced to appear on the stage any knights and others, together with women of similar rank, who had been accustomed to do so in the reign of Gaius, but he did this not because he took any pleasure in their performance, but to expose and criticise their conduct in the past; and it is certain at least that none of them reappeared on the stage during the reign of Claudius.

2 The Pyrrhic dance, which the boys sent for by Gaius were practising, was performed by them once, after which they were rewarded with citizenship for it and then sent back home; but others, chosen from among his retinue, later gave exhibitions.

3 So much for what took place in the theatre. In the Circus there was one contest with camels and twelve with horses, and three hundred bears and the same number of African animals were killed. Before this each of the three classes, senatorial, equestrian, and the common people, had sat apart by themselves while watching the games; this had long been the practice, and yet no definite places had been assigned to them.

4 But Claudius now set apart for the senators the section which still belongs to them, and he also gave permission for any members who wished to sit somewhere else and even appear in citizen's dress. After this he banqueted the senators and their wives, the knights, and also the tribes.

60.14.1–16.4

The murder of Silanus and revolt of Scribonianus

60.14

1 And so, once he had become used to overindulging on blood and carnage, he turned more readily to other kinds of murder. The imperial freedmen and Messalina were responsible for this; for whenever they desired to bring about anyone's death, they would terrify Claudius and as a result would be allowed to do anything they chose.

2 Often, when in a moment of sudden alarm his immediate terror had led him to order someone's death, afterwards, when he recovered and came to his senses, he would search for the man and on learning what had happened would be grieved and repentant. He began this series of murders with Gaius Appius Silanus.

3 He had sent for this man, who was of very noble family, and governor of Spain at the time, pretending that he required a service of him, had married him to Messalina's mother, and had for some time held him in honour among those nearest and dearest to him. Then he suddenly killed him. The reason was that Silanus had offended Messalina, the most abandoned and sensuous of women, in refusing to sleep with her, and by this insult shown to her had alienated the emperor's freedman Narcissus.

4 As they had no real or even plausible charge to bring against him, Narcissus invented a dream in which he declared he had seen Claudius murdered by Silanus; then at early dawn, while the emperor was still in bed, trembling all over, he related to him the dream, and Messalina, taking up the matter, exaggerated its meaning.

60.15

1 Thus Silanus was killed because of a mere dream. After his death the Romans no longer had high hopes of Claudius, and Annius Vinicianus with some others straightaway formed a plot against him. Annius was one of those who had been proposed as emperor after the death of Gaius, and it was partly fear inspired by this that caused him to rebel.

2 As he had no military force, however, he sent to Furius Camillus Scribonianus, the governor of Dalmatia, who had a large body of citizen and foreign troops, and enlisted his support; for Camillus was already making his own plans for an uprising, more especially because he had been talked of as emperor.

3 When Annius had got so far, many senators and knights flocked to him; but they were of no use; for the soldiers, when Camillus held out to them the hope of seeing the republic restored and promised to give back to them their ancient freedom, suspected that they would again have trouble and division, and so were no longer

prepared listen to him. At this he became frightened and fled from them, and coming to the island of Issa he killed himself.

4 Claudius for a time had been very frightened, and had been ready to abdicate voluntarily in favour of Camillus; but now he recovered his courage. He first rewarded the soldiers in various ways, especially by causing the legions composed of citizens (the 7th and the 11th) to be named 'Claudian' and 'Loyal and Patriotic' by the Senate. Then he sought out those who had plotted against him, and on this charge put many to death, among others a praetor, who was first made to resign his office.

5 Several, indeed, including Vinicianus, committed suicide. For Messalina and Narcissus and all the latter's fellow-freedmen seized this opportunity to inflict their cruellest vengeance. They employed slaves and freedmen, for instance, as informers against their own masters.

6 These masters and others of the highest birth, foreigners and citizens alike, and not only plebeians, but some of the knights and senators as well, were put to torture, despite the fact that Claudius at the very beginning of his reign had sworn not to torture any free man.

60.16

1 Many men, therefore, and women, too, were executed at this time, some of the latter even meeting their fate in the very prison itself. And when they were due to die, the women too, were led in chains onto a scaffold, like captives, and their bodies, also, were thrown out onto the Stairway¹; for in the case of those who were executed anywhere outside the city, only their heads were exhibited there.

2 Some of the most guilty, nevertheless, by means of favours or bribes saved their lives with the help of Messalina and the imperial freedmen in the service of Narcissus. All the sons of those who were put to death were granted immunity and some also received money.

3 The accused were tried in the Senate in the presence of Claudius, the prefects and the freedmen. He would read the charge seated between the consuls on a chair of state or on a bench; then he would go to his accustomed seat and chairs would be placed for the consuls.

4 This same procedure was followed on other occasions of great importance.

¹ The Stairway, or *Scalae Gemoniae*, was a flight of steps leading up past the prison to the Capitoline Hill, onto which the bodies of certain executed criminals were thrown and left exposed for a time.

60.17.8–18.4

The behaviour of Messalina and the imperial freedmen

60.17

8 Messalina and Claudius' freedmen kept offering for sale and wheeler-dealing not merely the citizenship and military commands, procuratorships, and governorships, but also everything in general, so lavishly that there was a scarcity of all goods; and as a result Claudius was forced to gather the people in the Campus Martius, and there from a raised platform to fix the prices of the various articles.

9 Claudius also gave a gladiatorial contest at the camp, on which occasion he wore a military cloak. His son's birthday was observed by the praetors on their own initiative with a show and dinners. This was also done on later occasions, at least for those who chose to do so.

60.18

1 In the meantime Messalina was not only behaving promiscuously herself but was also forcing the other women to behave just as promiscuously. She made many of them commit adultery in the palace itself while their husbands were present and looked on.

2 Such men she loved and cherished, and she rewarded them with honours and offices; but others, who would not offer their wives for such business, she hated and brought to destruction in every possible way. These actions, however, though of such a nature and carried on so openly, for a long time escaped the notice of Claudius;

3 for Messalina took care of him by giving him various female slaves to sleep with, and took care of those who could give him any information by either showing them favours or inflicting punishment upon them. For example, she put out of the way at this time Catonius Justus, commander of the praetorian guard, before he could carry out his intention of telling the emperor something about these events.

4 And becoming jealous of Julia, the daughter of Drusus, Tiberius' son, and later the wife of Nero Germanicus, just as she had been jealous of the other Julia, she had her throat cut. Also at this time one of the knights, who was charged with having conspired against Claudius, was hurled down from the Capitoline Hill by the tribunes and the consuls.

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Josephus

Sections: *Jewish Antiquities* [19.158–164](#); [19.227–236](#); [19.254–262](#); [20.148, 151–2](#)

19.158-64

The soldiers choose Claudius as the successor to Gaius

158 During this interval the Senate had met, and the people had also assembled in the usual forum, and both were employed in searching for the murderers of Gaius. The people were very keen, but the Senate in appearance only.

159 For Valerius, governor of Asia, was present, who had been a consul. He went to the people, in disorder as they were, and very uneasy that they could not yet discover who had murdered the Emperor. When they all eagerly asked him who had done the deed, he replied "I wish it had been me."

160 The consuls also published an edict in which they brought charges against Gaius, and ordered the people then assembled and the soldiers to go home, promising likely (tax) relief to the people and rewards to the soldiers, if they kept quiet, as they usually did, and did not go out to do harm unjustly. For there was reason to fear that the City might suffer harm from their wild and undisciplined behaviour if they should once set out to rob the citizens and plunder the temples.

161 And now the whole number of the senators was assembled and especially those that had conspired to take away the life of Gaius; they now put on an air of great assurance, and appeared with great magnanimity as if the administration of the public affairs were already handed to them.

162 When the public affairs were in this situation, Claudius was suddenly hurried away out of his house; for the soldiers had a meeting together; and when they debated about what was to be done, they saw that a democracy was incapable of managing such a vast weight of public affairs; and that if it should be set up, it would not be for their advantage,

163 and in case if any one of those already in the government should obtain the supreme power, it would be in every way harmful to them if they had not helped in getting him there;

164 so that it would therefore be right for them, while the public affairs were unsettled, to choose Claudius as emperor, the uncle of the dead Gaius, a man of a greater importance and value to every one of those that were assembled in the Senate, both because of the virtues of his ancestors, and of the learning he had acquired in his education; and he, if once settled as emperor, would reward them just

as they deserved, and grant gifts to them. These were their decisions, and they carried them out immediately. Claudius was therefore suddenly seized by the army.

19.227-236

The reaction of the senate and people to the death of Gaius

227 But the people and senators disagreed in their opinions. The latter strongly wished to recover their former dignity, and were keen to get clear of the slavery that had been inflicted on them by the cruel treatment of the tyrant, which they now had the opportunity to achieve;

228 but the people, who were envious of them, and knew that the emperors were able to curb their greed and were a refuge from them, were very glad that Claudius had been seized and brought to them, and thought that if Claudius were made emperor, he would prevent a civil war of the kind that there had been in the days of Pompey.

229 But when the Senate realised that Claudius had been taken into their camp by the soldiers, they sent to him those of their members who had the best reputation for virtue, to tell him that he should do nothing by violence to gain power;

230 and that he, being a single individual, either already a senator or in future likely to be one, ought to give in to the Senate, which consisted of so large a number; and that he ought to let the law run its course in the arrangement of all that related to the public order, and to remember how greatly former tyrants had afflicted their city, and what dangers both he and they had escaped under Gaius; and that he ought not to hate the heavy burden of tyranny, when the injury is done by others, while he himself willfully treated his country in a mad and insolent manner;

231 that if he would comply with them, and demonstrate that his firm resolution was to live quietly and virtuously, he would have the greatest honours decreed to him that a free people could bestow; and by subjecting himself to the law, would obtain this branch of commendation, that he acted like a man of virtue, both as a ruler and a subject;

232 but that if he would act foolishly, and learn no wisdom from Gaius's death, they would not permit him to go on; that a great part of the army was got together for them, with plenty of weapons, and a great number of slaves, which they could make use of;

233 that good hope was important in such cases, as was also good fortune; and that the gods would never assist any others but those that undertook to act with virtue

and goodness, who can be no other than those who fight for the liberty of their country.

234 Now these ambassadors, Veranius and Brocchus, who were both of them tribunes of the people, made this speech to Claudius; and falling down on their knees, they begged him that he would not throw the City into wars and misfortunes; but when they saw what a large number of soldiers surrounded and guarded Claudius, and that the forces that were with the consuls were quite small in comparison to them,

235 they added that if he did desire the government, he should accept it as given by the senate; that he would prosper better, and be happier, if he came to it not by injustice, but by the good-will of those who would grant it to him.

236 Now Claudius, although he understood that the senate had sent the delegation to him out of their own self-interest, for the moment followed their advice and behaved himself with moderation. Yet in fact he was able to set aside his fear of them, partly because of the confidence of the soldiers, and partly by the persuasion of King Agrippa, who urged him not to let such a position of power slip through his hands, when it had come to him of its own accord.

19.254-262

The soldiers ensure that Claudius becomes emperor

254 But as soon as it was day, Chaerea and his companions came into the Senate, and attempted to make speeches to the soldiers. However, the mass of those soldiers, when they saw that they were making signals for silence with their hands, and were ready to begin to speak to them, grew rowdy and would not let them speak at all, because they were all keen to be under a monarchy. They demanded that the Senate choose a man as their ruler, as they did not want to put up with any more delays.

255 But the Senate hesitated about either their own governing, or how they should themselves be governed, while the soldiers would not allow them to govern, and the murderers of Gaius would not permit the soldiers to dictate to them.

256 When they were in these circumstances, Chaerea was not able to contain his anger and promised that if they wanted an emperor, he would give them one, if anyone would bring him the password from Eutyclus.

257 This Eutyclus was a charioteer for the so-called 'green' faction, and a great friend of Gaius, who used to wear out the soldiers by making them build stables for the horses,

258 and spent his time on shameful tasks. Chaerea heavily criticised them, and along with many insults, told them he would bring them the head of Claudius; for it was terrible that having rid themselves of a madman, they were about to hand over the reign to a fool.

259 However, they were not moved by his words, but drew their swords, and took up their standards, and went to Claudius to join in taking the oath of loyalty to him. So the Senate was left without anybody to defend it, and the consuls were no different from private individuals.

260 They were afraid and miserable, not knowing what would become of them, because Claudius was very angry at them; so they fell to blaming one another, and regretted what they had done.

261 At this point Sabinus, one of Gaius's murderers, threatened that he would rather kill himself than agree to make Claudius emperor and be ruled by a slave government; he also abused Chaerea for loving his life too well, while he who was the first in his contempt of Gaius, could think it a good thing to live, when, even after all that they had done for the recovery of their liberty, they found it impossible to do it.

262 But Chaerea said he would not hesitate to kill himself, but that he would first sound out the intentions of Claudius before he did it.

20.148, 151–2

The death of Claudius in AD 54

148 Claudius Caesar died when he had reigned thirteen years, eight months, and twenty days, and a report circulated that he was poisoned by his wife Agrippina. Her father was Germanicus, the brother of Claudius. Her husband was Domitius Ahenobarbus, one of the most illustrious men in the city of Rome ...

151 But now Agrippina was afraid that, when Britannicus came of age, he would succeed his father in the principate, and wanted to seize power beforehand for her own son²; regarding which the report went that she had brought about the death of Claudius.

152 Accordingly, she immediately sent Burrus, the general of the army, and with him the tribunes, and also the freedmen that had the greatest authority, to take Nero away to the camp, and salute him as emperor.

² Agrippina's son was Nero

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Pliny the Elder

Sections: *Natural History* [36.122–3](#); [36.124](#); [36.134](#)

36.122-23

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 such a high level as 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.

36.124

Claudius drains the Fucine Lake

124 One of the most remarkable achievements of the same emperor, Claudius, neglected though it was by the hatred of his successor, is, in my opinion at least, the channel that he dug through a mountain to drain the Fucine Lake. This, I need hardly say, required the expenditure of an indescribably large sum of money and the employment for many years of a horde of workers because, where earth formed the interior of the mountain, the water channel had to be cleared by lifting the spoil to the top of the shafts on hoists and everywhere else solid rock had to be cut away.

33.134

The wealth of Claudius' freedmen

We have known subsequently of many liberated slaves who have been wealthier, and three at the same time not long before our own days in the period of the emperor Claudius, namely Callistus, Pallas and Narcissus.

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Seneca

Section: *On the Shortness of Life* 18.5-6

When Claudius became emperor in AD 54, only 8 days' grain supply was left

5 Bear in mind too that trying to bargain with the human stomach is to take on a troublesome and weighty opponent. A starving population does not listen to reason, make any concessions to justice or respond to appeals for mercy. It was only very recently in those few days after Gaius Caesar died that the worst of all possible misfortunes, even for those under siege, arrived. I am talking of a shortage of rations. And if the dead below retain any capacity for feeling, he will have been dreadfully upset. For he knew that the population of Rome, or at least the survivors, had seven, maybe eight days' worth of food.

6 Can you imagine the state of mind of those in charge of the public grain supply when they had to face rocks, weapons, flames or Gaius himself? It was by a magnificent deception that they concealed the extent of the danger hidden deep in the belly of the state. They were clearly right to do so. The treatment of certain illnesses requires the ignorance of those who suffer from them. All too many patients die from an understanding of their own disease.

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