

CA Ancient History A Level Prescribed Source Translations

Roman Period Study: Timespan 5



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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:

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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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- Teaching Resources: <https://classicalassociation.org/resources/>

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Guidance for users

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Timespan 5: Nero

1. CA Translations

Dio Cassius	Pliny the Elder
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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

[Nero](#) 10–11; 20–23; 26–27; 31–32; 34; 38; 40–49; 53

Tacitus

[Annals](#) 12.41; 12.65–69; 14.1–16; 15.37–44; 15.48–74

Dio Cassius

Sections: *The Roman History* [63:22.1–26.1](#); [26.3–27.1](#), [27.2–29.3](#)

63:22.1–26.1

The revolt of Vindex in Gaul

63.22

1 Such was the life led by Nero and such was the way he ruled. I shall now tell the story of how he was deposed and his downfall from power.

1a While Nero was still in Greece, the Jews revolted openly, and he sent Vespasian against them. The inhabitants of Britain and of Gaul as well, oppressed by taxes, were becoming more angry and inflamed than ever.

1b There was a Gaul named Gaius Julius Vindex, an Aquitanian, descended from the royal family and, by virtue of his father's status, a Roman senator. He was powerful in body and very intelligent, was skilled in warfare and full of daring for any important enterprise; and he had a passionate love of freedom and a vast ambition. This was the man who stood at the head of the Gauls.

2 This Vindex called together the Gauls, who had suffered much from the numerous forced demands for money and were still suffering at Nero's hands. And mounting a platform he made a long and detailed speech against Nero, saying that they ought to revolt from the emperor and join the speaker in an attack on him.

3 "Because," as he said, "he has devastated the whole Roman world, because he has destroyed all the best men of the Senate, because he defiled and then killed his mother, and does not keep up even the appearance of sovereignty.

4 Many murders, robberies and outrages, it is true, have often been committed by others; but as for Nero's other crimes, how could anyone find words to describe them suitably? I have seen him, my friends and allies, - believe me - I have seen that man (if man he is who has married Sporus and been given in marriage to Pythagoras), in the circle of the theatre, that is, in the orchestra, sometimes holding the lyre and dressed in a loose tunic and actor's boots, and again usually wearing soled shoes and a mask.

5 I have often heard him sing, play the herald, and act in tragedies. I have seen him in chains, dragged by force, pregnant, even in the labour of childbirth - in short, imitating all the situations of mythology according to what he said and what was said to him, according to what he submitted to and what he did. Will anyone, then, call

such a person Caesar and emperor and Augustus? Never! Let no one abuse those sacred titles.

6 They were held by Augustus and by Claudius, whereas this fellow might most properly be termed Thyestes, Oedipus, Alcmeon, or Orestes; for these are the characters that he represents on the stage and it is these titles that he has taken in place of the others. Therefore rise up at last against him; help yourselves and help the Romans; set free the whole world!"

63.23

1 Such words falling from the lips of Vindex found everybody's approval. Now Vindex was not working to get the imperial office for himself but selected Servius Sulpicius Galba for that position; this man was distinguished for his upright behaviour and skill in warfare, was governor of Spain, and had a military force of no small size. And he was proclaimed emperor by the soldiers.

63.24

1 Rufus, the governor of Germany, set out to make war on Vindex; but when he reached Vesontio, he proceeded to besiege the city, for the alleged reason that it had not admitted him.

2 But Vindex came to the aid of the city against him and encamped not far off, and then they sent messages back and forth to each other and finally held a conference by themselves at which no one else was present and came to a mutual agreement against Nero, as people supposed.

3 After this Vindex set out with his army ostensibly to occupy the town; and the soldiers of Rufus, becoming aware of their approach and thinking the force was marching straight against them, marched out in their turn, on their own initiative, and falling upon them while they were off their guard and in disarray, cut down great numbers of them.

4 Vindex on seeing this was so overcome by grief that he killed himself. This is the truth of the matter; but many afterwards inflicted wounds on his body, and so gave rise to the false impression that they themselves had killed him.

63.25

1 Rufus mourned his death greatly, but refused to accept the office of emperor, although his soldiers frequently urged it upon him and he might easily have obtained it. For he was an energetic man and had a large and eager military force, and his soldiers threw down and shattered the images of Nero and called Rufus by the titles of Caesar and Augustus.

2 When he would not go along with them, one of the soldiers at that point quickly inscribed these words on one of his standards. He erased the words, however, and after a deal of trouble brought the men to order and persuaded them to submit the question of who should rule to the Senate and the people.

3 It is hard to say whether this was merely because he did not think it right for the soldiers to give the supreme power to anyone (for he declared this to be the right of the Senate and the people), or because he was entirely high-minded and felt no wish himself to be emperor, a power which others were willing to do anything and everything to secure.

63.26

1 Nero was informed of the uprising of Vindex as he was watching a gymnastic contest in Neapolis just after lunch; but, far from showing any grief, he leaped down from his seat and competed in strength with an athlete. And he did not hurry back to Rome, but merely sent a letter to the Senate, in which he asked them to excuse him for not coming, pleading a sore throat, implying that he would like, even in this crisis, to sing to them.

63.26.3–27.1

Nero reacts to the revolt of Vindex and Galba

63.26

3 In general, Nero still behaved just as he usually did and he was pleased with the news brought to him, because in any case he was expecting to overcome Vindex, and thought he had now an excuse for getting money and for murders. He continued to live luxuriously; and once the shrine of Sabina was completed and decorated, he gave it a brilliant dedication, having first inscribed on it the statement that the women had built it to the deified Sabina, Aphrodite.

4 Now in this matter he told the truth, since much of the money with which the building had been constructed had been stolen from the women. He also had his numerous little jokes, of which I will mention only one, omitting the rest. One night he suddenly summoned in haste the leading senators and equestrians, as if to communicate something to them regarding the political situation, and then said to them (I quote his exact words): "I have discovered a way in which the water-organ will produce louder and more musical tones."

5 He joked around in ways like this even at that point, and he didn't care that two sets of doors, those of the mausoleum of Augustus and of his own bedroom, opened of their own accord on the same night, or that in the Alban territory it rained so much blood that it flowed through the land like rivers, or that the sea retreated a long distance from Egypt and covered a great portion of Lycia.

63.27

1 But when he heard that Galba had been proclaimed emperor by the soldiers and that Rufus had deserted, he became extremely afraid, and not only made preparations himself at Rome, but also sent Rubrius Gallus and some others against the rebels.

1a On learning that Petronius, who he had sent ahead against the rebels with the larger part of the army, had also defected to Galba's side, Nero no longer placed any hope in armed conflict.

63.27.2–29.3

The end of Nero

63.27

2 Now that he had been abandoned by everybody alike, he began forming plans to kill the senators, burn down the city, and sail to Alexandria. He dropped this hint in regard to his intentions: "Even if we are driven from our empire, this little talent will still support us there." He had come to such a level of stupidity that he believed that he could live anyhow as a private citizen, and as a lyre-player at that.

2b He was on the point of doing these things when the senate withdrew the guard that surrounded him and then, entering the camp, declared him an enemy and chose Galba as emperor.

3 But when he realised that he had been deserted by his body-guards as well (he happened to be sleeping in a certain garden), he attempted to flee. Therefore he put on shabby clothing, mounted a horse which was no better, and with his head covered he rode while it was still/ night towards an estate of Phaon, an imperial freedman, in company with Phaon himself, Epaphroditus and Sporus.

63.28

1 While he was on the way a violent earthquake occurred, so that one might have thought the whole world was bursting apart and all the spirits of those murdered by him were leaping up to attack him. Being recognised, they say, in spite of his disguise, and saluted as emperor by someone who met him, he turned aside from the road and hid himself in a place full of reeds.

2 There he waited till daylight, lying flat on the ground so as to run the least risk of being seen. Everyone who passed he suspected had come for him; he shuddered at every voice, thinking it to be that of someone searching for him; if a dog barked anywhere or a bird chirped, or a bush or branch was shaken by the breeze, he was terribly troubled.

3 These sounds permitted him no rest, and he did not dare say a word to any one of those that were with him for fear someone else might hear; but to himself he lamented and moaned about his fate, considering above all how he had once prided himself on having a numerous body of attendants, but he was now skulking out of sight with three freedmen.

4 Such was the drama that divine power now prepared for him, so that he should no longer play the roles of other matricides and beggars, but only his own at last, and he now repented of his past outrageous acts, as if he could undo any of them.

5 Such was the tragic part that Nero now played, and this verse constantly ran through his mind:

"Both wife and father bid me die miserably."

After a long time, as no one was seen to be searching for him, he went over into a cave, where in his hunger he ate the sort of bread he had never eaten before and in his thirst drank the sort of water he had never drunk before. Very upset by this, he said: "So this is my famous cold drink!"

63.29

1 While he was in this situation, the Roman people were offering sacrifices and going wild with delight. Some even wore liberty caps, signifying that they had now become free. And they voted to give Galba the rights of imperial power. As for Nero himself, they instituted a search in all directions and for some time they had no idea where he could have gone off to. When they finally learned, they sent horsemen against him.

2 He, then, understanding that they were drawing near, commanded his companions to kill him. And when they refused, he groaned and said: "I alone have neither friend nor enemy." By this time the horsemen were close by, and so he killed himself, after uttering that often quoted remark: "Jupiter, what an artist perishes in me!" And as he lingered in his death throes, Epaphroditus finished him off.

3 He had lived thirty years and nine months, out of which he had ruled thirteen years and eight months. He was the last of the descendants of Aeneas and of Augustus, as was clearly indicated by the fact that the laurels planted by Livia and the breed of white chickens perished shortly before his death.

[Top of document](#)

Pliny the Elder

Sections: *Natural History* [34.45-46](#); [36.111](#)

34.45-46

The colossal statue of Nero

45 But all the gigantic statues of this type have been beaten in our era by Zenodorus with the Mercury which he made in the community of the Arverni in Gaul; it took him ten years and he was paid 40 million sesterces for making it. Having given enough proof of his artistic skill in Gaul, he was summoned to Rome by Nero, where he made the Colossal Statue, over 100 feet high, intended to represent that emperor but now dedicated to the Sun after the condemnation of that emperor's crimes.

46 In his studio we used not only to admire the remarkable likeness of the clay model but also to marvel at the frame of quite small timbers which constituted the first stage of the work undertaken. This statue has shown that skill in casting bronze has died, since Nero was quite ready to provide gold and silver, and also Zenodorus was not regarded as inferior to any of the artists of old in his knowledge of modelling and chasing.

36.111

Royal palaces of Gaius and Nero in Rome

However, all these houses were surpassed by two. Twice we have seen the whole city surrounded by imperial palaces, those of Gaius and Nero; indeed the latter's palace, so as to lack nothing, was made of gold.

[Top of document](#)