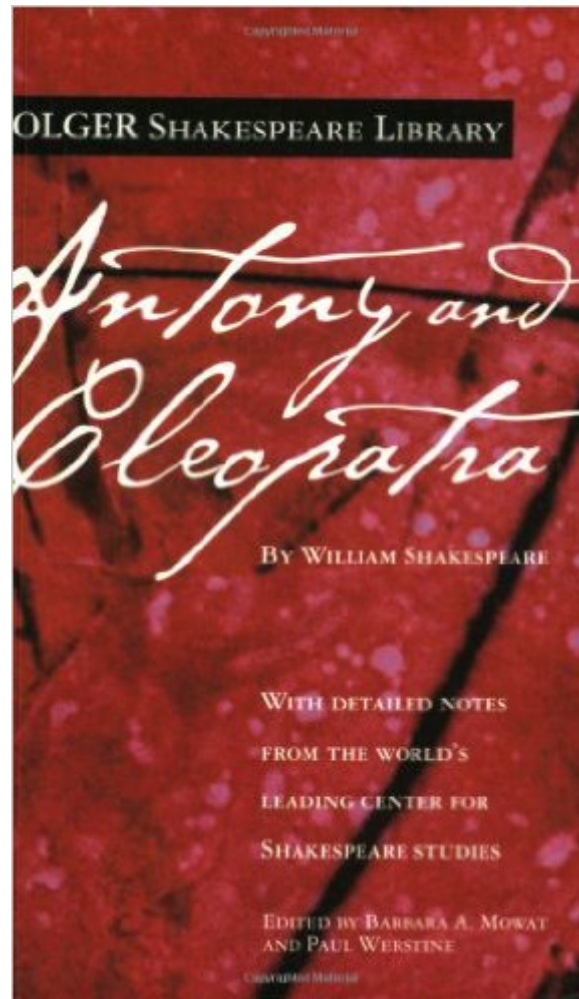


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Antony And Cleopatra (Folger Shakespeare Library)



Synopsis

Antony and Cleopatra dramatizes a major event in world history: the founding of the Roman Empire. The future first emperor, Octavius Caesar (later called Augustus Caesar), cold-bloodedly manipulates other characters and exercises iron control over himself. At first, he shares power with Mark Antony, Rome's preeminent military leader, and the weaker Lepidus. Caesar needs Antony to fend off other Roman strongmen like Pompey; he even offers his sister Octavia to him as a bride, despite Antony's reputation as a libertine and his past rivalry with Caesar. Once Caesar defeats Pompey, however, he needs no allies. He brings charges against Lepidus, denies Antony his spoils from Pompey's defeat, and seizes cities in the eastern Roman colonies that Antony rules. The play's emphasis, however, is on those whom Caesar defeats: Antony and his wealthy Egyptian ally, Queen Cleopatra. The play does not sugarcoat Antony and Cleopatra's famous love affair, including her calculated attempts to seduce Antony from his duties and his rage when he thinks she has betrayed him to Caesar. Nonetheless, the lovers find such sensual and emotional satisfaction that Caesar's world conquest seems smaller than what they find in each other. The authoritative edition of Antony and Cleopatra from The Folger Shakespeare Library, the trusted and widely used Shakespeare series for students and general readers, includes:

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Essay by Cynthia Marshall

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Customer Reviews

In the history of femme fatales, Cleopatra is still the queen -- she wasn't pretty, but she had charm, wit and power. And she's the center of Shakespeare's "Antony and Cleopatra," a play that follows the tragic affair between Cleopatra and her second high-profile Roman lover. The tragedy is undermined by the fact that Cleopatra and Antony aren't very likable people, but the story does have an empire-ending grandeur. Mark Antony has been neglecting his duties as a Roman soldier ever since he fell in love with the Egyptian queen Cleopatra. But eventually Octavian calls him back to Rome, and Antony is even pressured into marrying Octavia's sister -- which unsurprisingly throws a wrench into his relationship with Cleopatra. She's only soothed by the assurances that Octavia is ugly. In the meantime, tensions between the Romans and the increasingly Egyptophilic Antony are getting worse, until finally they break into full-out war -- despite the prophecy that Antony will lose if he fights Octavian. And the tempestuous love between Cleopatra and Antony takes a terrible turn as Egypt is about to fall... "Antony and Cleopatra" is sort of a sequel to "Julius Caesar," and it's also half epic romance and half tragedy. On one hand, it's all about the passionate, stormy love affair between Antony and Cleopatra; on the other, it's also about the final crash of an empire that had endured for thousands of years, and its last monarch. Shakespeare manages to fill the story with a sense of epic grandeur, and his writing really gets across that these conflicts and people are deeply important.

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