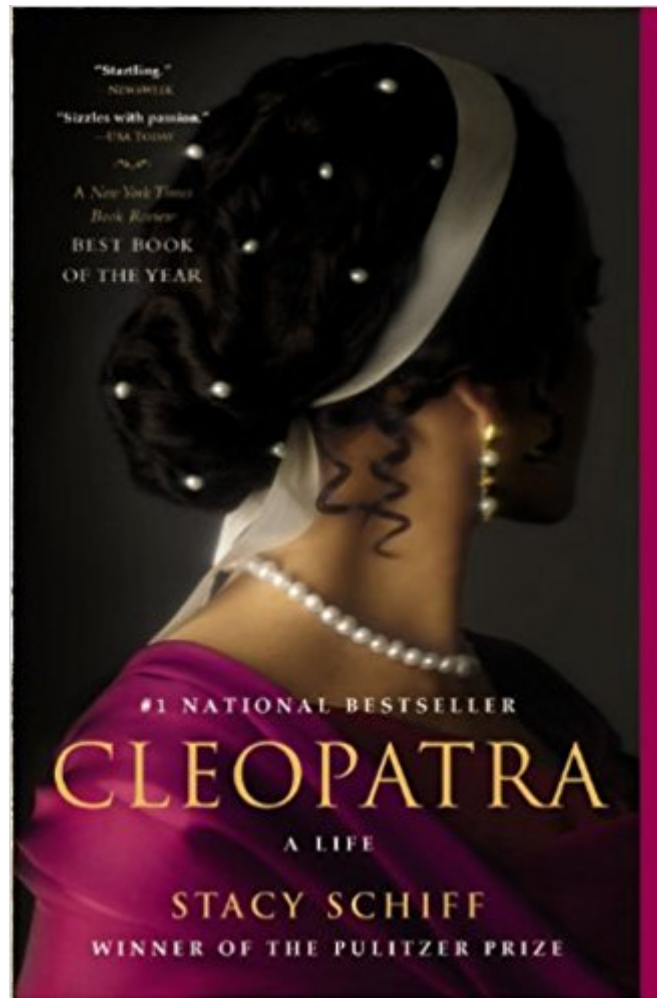




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# Cleopatra: A Life



## Synopsis

Her palace shimmered with onyx and gold but was richer still in political and sexual intrigue. Above all else, Cleopatra was a shrewd strategist and an ingenious negotiator. She was married twice, each time to a brother. She waged a brutal civil war against the first and poisoned the second; incest and assassination were family specialties. She had children by Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, two of the most prominent Romans of the day. With Antony she would attempt to forge a new empire, in an alliance that spelled both their ends. Famous long before she was notorious, Cleopatra has gone down in history for all the wrong reasons. Her supple personality and the drama of her circumstances have been lost. In a masterly return to the classical sources, Stacy Schiff boldly separates fact from fiction to rescue the magnetic queen whose death ushered in a new world order.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. From its opening strains of music, this audiobook of Schiff's stellar biography of the Egyptian queen rewards the intellect and the senses. As Schiff dusts away history's spider webs, romance's distortions, and sexism's corruptions to reveal the true (or at least the truest possible) portrait of Cleopatra, Robin Miles's voice is deep, confiding, the perfect instrument to introduce a history that has been variously forgotten, misunderstood, or suppressed. Her enunciation is crisp, her pacing pure charm: she wrings every sentence for meaning, irony, and wit, taking us through pages of description or analysis with a stately pace. A Little, Brown hardcover. (Nov.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

For those who think they know enough about Cleopatra or have the enigmatic Egyptian queen all figured out, think again. Schiff, demonstrating the same narrative flair that captivated readers of her Pulitzer Prize-winning *Vladimir (Mrs. Vladimir Nabokov)* (1999), provides a new interpretation of the life of one of history's most enduringly intriguing women. Rather than a devastatingly beautiful femme fatale, Cleopatra, according to Schiff, was a shrewd power broker who knew how to use her manifold gifts—wealth, power, and intelligence—to negotiate advantageous political deals and military alliances. Though long on facts and short on myth, this stellar biography is still a page-turner; in fact, because this portrait is grounded so thoroughly in historical context, it is even more extraordinary than the more fanciful legend. Cleopatra emerges as a groundbreaking female leader, relying on her wits, determination, and political acumen rather than sex appeal to astutely wield her power in order to get the job done. Ancient Egypt never goes out of style, and Cleopatra continues to captivate successive generations. --Margaret Flanagan --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Stacy Schiff has provided us with a fascinating biography of Cleopatra. I put that word in quotes on purpose, as, of course, it is impossible to write a true biography of someone we know only from the writings of her more-or-less contemporary enemies and from the writings of those who came later and defined her by their own prejudices. We know next to nothing about Cleopatra's early years. She is a young woman when we first encounter her. Much of the first part of the book is more about Julius Caesar; to history, she is important only through him. It is only after his death that Cleopatra, to history, becomes a major player in her own story. I thought I knew everything there was to know about Cleopatra, but there were some surprises in this book. That said, this is not an introductory work on Cleopatra or her times. Instead, it is a complement to other works. It is very interesting, very insightful, and very worth reading.

I bought this for my mother and she said that the book changed the way that she thought things happened at that time. It was very eye opening and in some places hard to get through. She was glad to read it.

Our book club is reading this based on all the hype (and the cover which is wonderful). After almost forcing myself through the first half of the book, I was rewarded during the second half. Truly this was an amazing woman who was living in amazing times. And, this just proves that people don't

really change. The politics, greed, power, lust, love, and jealousy of the powerful affected the masses and forged history. Have times really changed? The book reads at times like a college textbook, but at other times more like an interesting news article. Thankfully, the references are at the end and the footnotes are appropriate, only providing a bit of background information. However, the book could certainly have been enhanced by a few maps, a biographical listing of the many historical figures and a more thorough index. For example, Cleopatra's father is Ptolemy VII, but after first introducing him (confusing again because lots of Ptolemy's), he is referred to as Auletes. But later he might again be referred to as Ptolemy. If you have many breaks in the reading, total confusion. And, "Auletes" is not listed in the index as such but under Ptolemy. This could be chalked up as sloppy reading on my part, but remember it is hyped to "read as a novel." Places and names simply need more information. In short, this is definitely an act of scholarship that is presented in an interesting manner. Cleopatra was a complicated woman so the book is complicated as well.

Great biography of a woman in Roman times trying to keep Egypt out of the grasp of the Roman Empire. Unfortunately, there is a lot of speculation, innuendo and rumor about Cleopatra's time leading Egypt as the historical records were destroyed, abandoned or just don't exist.

Stacy Schiff tells a great true story. I honestly thought I knew everything I needed to know about Cleopatra and her life. But I was wrong. Filled with intrigue and facts of her most wonderful, exciting, and cut short to soon life. Great read great listen. I have both!

Writing about the historical Cleopatra is a daunting task but Stacy Schiff managed to create an extremely readable and authoritative biography. Records concerning the period are sketchy and more legend than history exists about this fascinating queen. Sifting through the many historians' versions of her life and those of the Romans with which she lived and worked is difficult enough but when one tries to verify the disparaging and untrue accounts of her as a woman as well as a monarch, ferreting out the "truth" is monumentally difficult. Nevertheless, Schiff has created an authoritative and very readable account of one of history's most beguiling and powerful individuals, through painstaking research and excellent judgment.

Stacy Schiff reveals as much truth as she can about Cleopatra's life and ruling. I am enthralled and amazed with all that the city of Alexandria offered. Not only did this city have wealth beyond imagination, but it was a cultural hub of the world. Cleopatra ruled this amazing city with cunning

intelligence. Historians and literary writers have villanized and sexualized her. It is believed they did so because Cleopatra threatened male rulers with her intelligence--something male rulers did not want to accept--a woman out thinking them. Good history analysis.

"Cleopatra: A Life" was an interesting read but I would not call it a great biography. I realize there is little that was written while Cleopatra was alive that survives. I really was not sure how much the author used literary license to describe events. I learned a number of "facts" about Cleopatra, Antony and others that I had not known. If you believe the book, you would have to ask how a woman of superior intelligence such as Cleopatra could make so many strategic errors and not preserve her own life. How could a brilliant general such as Antony fail in his tactics. I guess you can blame it on love and then we are back to Liz Taylor and Richard Burton.

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