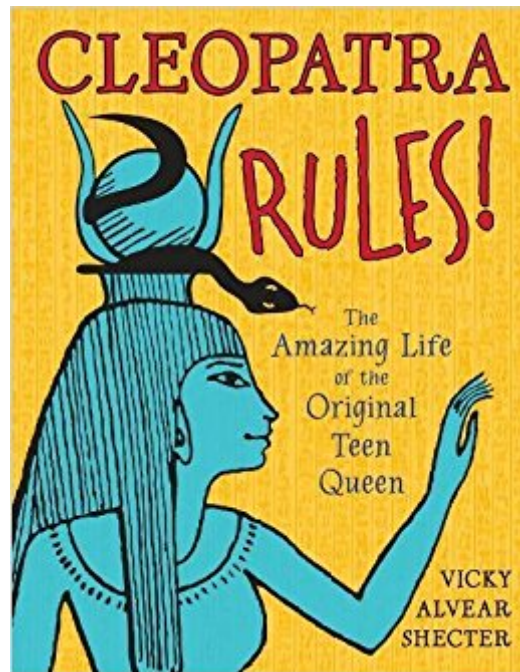




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Cleopatra Rules!: The Amazing Life Of The Original Teen Queen



Synopsis

In this lively, informal biography, Vicky Alvear Shecter shows that Cleopatra was a far more capable and powerful ruler than people have thought. Most of what we’ve known about Cleopatra—and what crept into art, film, and literature—came from her enemies, the Romans. But, ascending to the throne at 17, Cleopatra proved herself a brilliant negotiator who forged alliances that kept her in power and in control of her kingdom. This book about Egypt’s last and most famous pharaoh features an inviting text, many sidebars, and excellent color illustrations: maps, photos of ancient artifacts, and artworks from many historical periods.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 6 Up Julius Caesar was “a player,” Marc Antony a “good ol’ boy.” Caesar Augustus, once a “snot-nosed, knobby-kneed, pimply-faced peon,” presents himself as a “stud” after defeating Antony at Actium. Cleopatra started life as a “bookish nerd.” Readers are either going to love or hate the popped-up tone of this well-documented history of “the original teen queen.” Shecter packs it full of irreverent metaphors (“Egyptians believed that a soul without a body was like a hotdog without a bun”) and up-to-date recontextualizations (referring to the Donations of Alexandria: “Imagine the outrage if the vice president of the United States suddenly gave away parts of Alaska”). Short chapters with banner headlines every few paragraphs organize Cleopatra’s action-packed life into easily processed pieces, and the slangy style may mitigate the effect of the unfamiliar proper nouns. Medium-size photographs of objects

and images such as movie posters, book illustrations, and paintings proliferate, one per page. A modicum of pronunciation assistance is offered, but there is an unfortunate shortage of maps. However, sidebars with sometimes-silly factoids (games, cosmetics) help round out this view of Cleopatra's life. Respectably lengthy endnotes refer to an even-more-respectable biography. Readers are pointed to Suetonius, Tacitus, and Herodotus as well as excellent modern works on the subject. Most importantly, Shecter addresses and questions preconceptions about Cleopatra that have proliferated throughout Western culture since Plutarch. Whatever one thinks of the style, the scholarship is sound: in this case, a spoonful of Pop-Rocks may help the Ptolemies go down. Paula Willey, Baltimore County Public Library, Towson, MD

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This attractive book presents Cleopatra's story through an unusual text, many informative sidebars, and excellent color illustrations: maps, photos of ancient artifacts, and artworks from many historical periods. Calling attention to the writing as much as its story, the text includes puns, informal language, and contemporary metaphors: Cleopatra's younger sister and brother "trash-talked her worse than feuding starlets at a Hollywood club." Even young readers initially drawn to this approach may tire of the chatty tone or puzzle over more dated figures of speech, such as "Cleopatra's cleverness had even Antony's own soldiers laughing into their helmets." Still, Shecter's solid research is evident in her account of events as well as the back matter, which includes informative notes, a time line, a glossary, bibliographies of primary and secondary sources, and source notes for the illustrations. The dramatic book jacket will draw many readers. Grades 4-7. --Carolyn Phelan --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

My son was required to read this book as part of his Summer homework. I cannot understand why. It is described as an "informal" biography. A better way to describe it would be a dumbed down biography. The book is peppered with allusions to pop culture and sports, placed in the most obvious way. Instead of respecting kids - the prospective readers - it conveys a deep distrust of their abilities. Kids can love history if it is conveyed with purpose and intelligence. To take a compelling life such as that of Cleopatra and convert it into a barely tolerable hodgepodge is simply unacceptable.

A gift to my twelve-year old granddaughter. She read it immediately and enjoyed it very much. Maybe it was the graphics, maybe it was an easy read, but I think it was the topic: the amazing life of the original teen queen. What twelve year old wouldn't be intrigued by that story line.

This book was both entertaining and full of interesting information. It addressed many of the myths surrounding Cleopatra and was presented in a fun "kid-friendly" manner. The book is full of beautiful pictures, fun facts, and introduces children to the real Cleopatra in a way that they'll both understand and enjoy. I loved this book and would recommend it to anyone who has children.

Loved this book! Kids will really relate to the language. So much to learn.

I won't deny that this book is both informational and a good quick read for pre-teens and beyond. Nevertheless, one of the first things that struck me upon opening its pages were the obvious historical errors which are contained throughout. Some of them are so glaring, that I am convinced that they had to be typos rather than actual mistakes on the author's part. Anyone with even a rudimentary grasp of Egyptian history and mythology would have been able to catch the mistakes (The picture caption on page 20 is a perfect example). The more subtle historical mistakes are the ones which concerned me the most. Many of the "facts" stated by the author are nothing more than guesses. Vicky Shecter presents the vast majority of the book as accepted history, and only corrects this mistake at the very end with her "Chapter Endnotes." (The reading of Endnotes is not even common practice for the vast majority of kids in the age-group for which this book is written and it is utterly annoying for most adults. I believe footnotes would have been much more ideal). Some actions, such as Cleopatra accompanying her father to Rome, have absolutely no concrete support when analyzed with primary sources. It is through these mistakes that it becomes obvious that Ms. Shecter was reading the works of other historians in order to create her own compilation of facts for a younger audience. Unfortunately, those works contain the biases and guesses of their respective authors as well. Ironical... In a book whose stated mission it is to put aside the myths about Cleopatra, so many modern-day myths still exist. I would have given the book 4 stars had Ms. Schechter stated in the beginning that the story presented is just one proposed life of the Queen. So little is known about Cleopatra that historians cannot even decide on what she looked like or how many siblings she had. I am never a fan of guesswork being presented as fact to only be corrected at the very end of the book. Such is acceptable for a fictional narrative, not a historical biography.

Most of what we have learned throughout history regarding this Egyptian princess has been flawed and skewed at best. For example, she was not even Egyptian, she was Greek! But Cleopatra was the original Queen Bee, and this book helps dispel some of the erroneous information, support some of the correct information, and allow us to see Cleo in a whole new light. If more people wrote historical books for kids this well, more kids might be interested in history. Written in biographical style for middle grade and young adult readers, this book does an excellent job of reaching its intended audience. There is just the right amount of historical information mixed in with the perfect amount of "teen speak" to connect home with kids. I found it to be incredibly informative, and I actually learned a ton from this book! I loved the format of the book, in that it was broken down into traditional, chronological chapters following Cleo's life; however, within each chapter, there were little "break out" sections with additional tid bits of information in them, much like the structure of textbooks. It helps break up the text on the page, which is important for young readers and highly visual learners. The accompanying photographs were high quality, and gorgeous. The book is complete with a glossary and index. All in all, I found this book not only highly informative, but entertaining as well. I think this is a great book for educators and parents to share with their children, and I for one would love to see more young adult biographies written in this style!

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