



Octavian/  
Augustus  
(seated) at a  
Roman  
banquet.



# The FIRST EMPEROR

## CHARACTERS

NARRATORS A-E

OCTAVIAN/AUGUSTUS, LEADER  
OF ROME

MARK ANTONY, LIEUTENANT OF  
JULIUS CAESAR

FULVIA, ANTONY'S WIFE

CICERO, ROMAN SENATOR

MARCUS AGRIPPA, OCTAVIAN'S  
CHIEF AIDE

LIVIA, OCTAVIAN'S WIFE

TIBERIUS, LIVIA'S SON

\*SENATORS 1 AND 2

\*ROMANS: BUSINESSMAN,  
LANDLORD, SOLDIER,  
ARCHITECT, AND  
SHOPKEEPER

\*CITIZENS 1-3

\*Starred characters are fictitious.



Caesar Augustus  
(63 B.C.—14 A.D.)

HE MADE ROME INTO A POWER THAT LASTED FOR CENTURIES.

By Bryan Brown

## SCENE ONE

**Narrator A:** The man who will become known as Augustus begins life as a sickly, fatherless boy named Octavian. He is devoted to his great-uncle, Julius Caesar, who rules Rome with an iron hand. In 44 B.C., 18-year-old Octavian is studying in Macedonia. A group led by Brutus and Cassius assassinates Caesar in fear that he will never restore the Roman Republic. Mark Antony, Caesar's lieutenant, now expects to be named heir to the power in Caesar's will.

**Mark Antony:** Greetings, citizens. Today, we carry forward the glory of Rome.

**Fulvia:** Read Caesar's will to us.

**Narrator A:** Antony reads the will and becomes angry.

**Antony:** What is this! He has

adopted that *boy* Octavian and made him his heir. That pip-squeak can barely raise a sword!

**Fulvia:** Fear not, husband. The Senate has summoned Octavian, but he won't dare return to Rome.

**Narrator A:** Cicero, a powerful Roman senator and an enemy of Mark Antony, must also decide what to do about Octavian. He speaks with his fellow senators.

**Cicero:** We will use Octavian to win support from the people. We will praise the boy, decorate him—and send him swiftly to the gods.

**Narrator A:** Despite the danger, Octavian returns to Rome to **avenge** [get revenge for] Caesar's murder. Marcus Agrippa, his friend and aide, accompanies him.

**Octavian:** Mark Antony makes my blood boil! He lets Caesar's enemies live and **plunders** [takes

by force] his fortune.

**Marcus Agrippa:** You must move carefully. The Senate supports you, but beware: Cicero is a snake in the grass.

**Narrator A:** Octavian forms a **triumvirate** with Antony and Marcus Lepidus. Their combined armies easily seize power in Rome. At age 19, Octavian has already proved to be a skilled politician.

## Words to Know

- **Empire:** A group of territories or nations headed by a single supreme leader.
- **Republic:** A nation ruled by officers and representatives elected by the people.
- **Triumvirate** (try-UM-vuh-rut) An alliance of three ruling people or groups.



## SCENE TWO

**Narrator B:** The triumvirate takes swift and bloody revenge on their enemies, killing Cicero and defeating the armies of Brutus and Cassius at Philippi. But the alliance between Antony and Octavian fails. Antony falls in love with Queen Cleopatra of Egypt; together they make war against Octavian.

**Octavian:** Oh, how I am sick of this fighting! These endless wars are draining the life out of Rome.

**Agrippa:** It's all Antony's doing. He is Rome's major headache, and there will be no peace until he is out of the way.

**Narrator B:** Meanwhile, in 38 B.C., Octavian marries Livia Drusilla, who comes from an established Roman family. She will be his link to the **aristocracy** [prominent citizens], whom Octavian must win over as he establishes power.

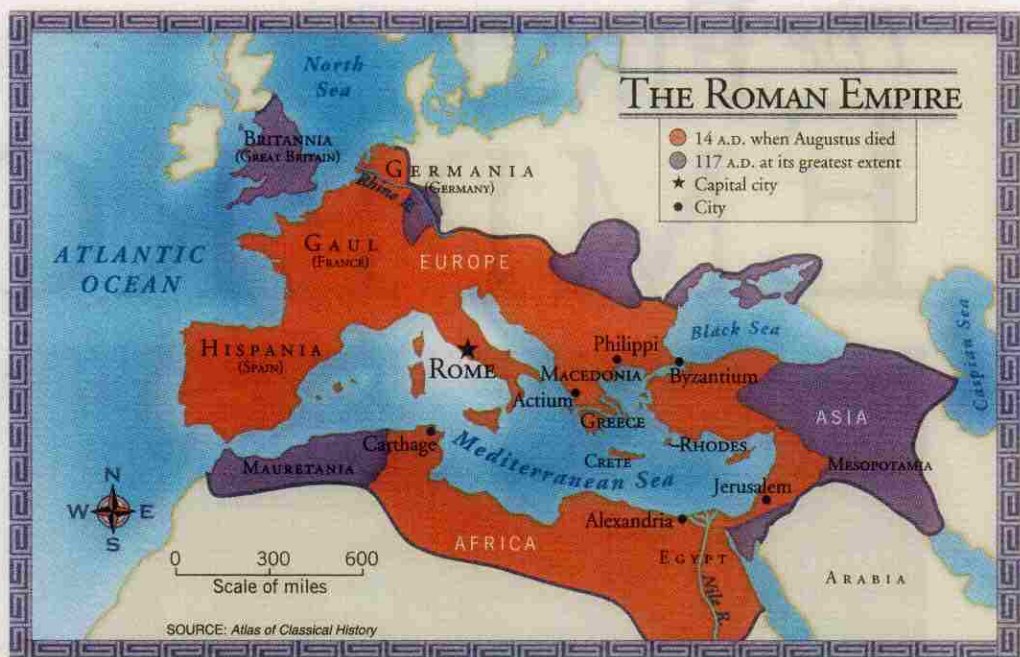
**Livia:** See what we have done in so short a time! Taxes are lower, the streets are safe, and there is plenty of food. The people look upon you as their savior.

**Octavian:** I could not have done it without you, Livia. Yet we still have Antony and Cleopatra to deal with. They will not be satisfied until they rule Rome from Alexandria. We must defeat them once and for all.

**Narrator B:** The two forces meet off the coast of Actium, Greece. There, in 31 B.C., Agrippa's fleet defeats Antony and Cleopatra's. With the victory, more than 20 years of Roman civil war come to an end.

## SCENE THREE

**Narrator C:** Octavian returns to Rome from Egypt in 29 B.C. There, all salute him as a hero.



**Businessman:** The riches Octavian has brought from Egypt have saved us from disaster after years of war.

**Landlord:** He has forgiven our back taxes and lends money without interest.

**Soldier:** He has won the loyalty of all his soldiers.

**Architect:** He is creating great public buildings and roads, making Rome the envy of the world.

**Shopkeeper:** Yet he lives simply, like one of us—not like a king.

**Narrator C:** In the Senate . . .

**Senator 1:** When will Octavian restore the republic that Rome once had?

**Senator 2:** Who cares about the republic? We are finally at peace. The people adore him. *(Octavian arrives.)*

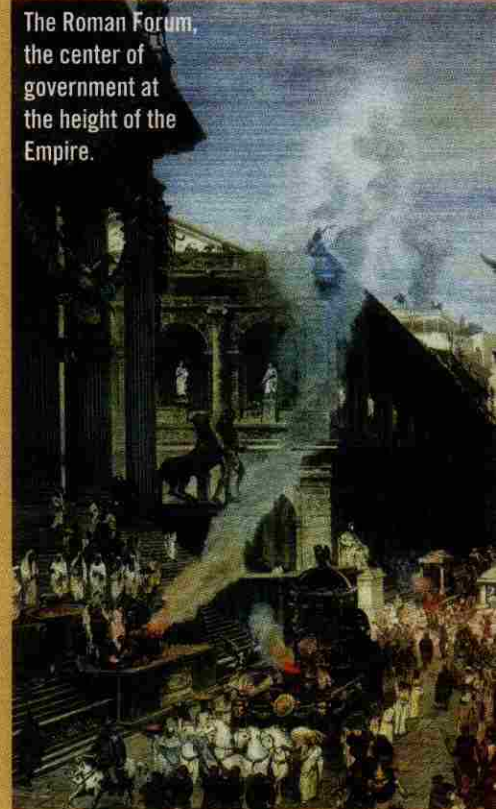
**Octavian:** But I am weary. I'm almost 35 years old. Perhaps I should give up my power and allow the republic to be restored.

**Senator 2:** Heaven forbid! Enough of freedom—we need a strong leader.

**Narrator C:** Octavian calls him-

self the “first citizen” of Rome, but he is in fact the ruler of its growing empire—and its first Emperor. In 27 B.C., the Senate gives him a new title, **Augustus** [the exalted]. He adds it to the title of his adoptive

The Roman Forum, the center of government at the height of the Empire.





father, Caesar. It is by this name—Caesar Augustus—that history will remember him.

#### SCENE FOUR

**Narrator D:** Under Augustus, the Roman Republic ends forever, and the Roman Empire begins. Rome now rules the former kingdoms of the Greeks, the Egyptians, and Alexander the Great. With all power in his hands, Augustus sets out to expand Rome's conquests.

**Senator 1:** Our leader has returned with **Hispania** [Spain] in his pocket.

**Senator 2:** And Gaul is finally **pacified** [subdued].

**Senator 1:** Yes, he conquers kings, then builds roads for them and invites their sons to live in his court. He even allows them to make their own laws—as long as they pay their taxes to Rome.

**Senator 2:** The great Caesar Augustus makes the whole world

citizens of Rome! You must admit it is brilliant policy.

**Narrator D:** But in his personal life, Augustus suffers. He has no sons of his own and longs for an heir. Still, he resists adopting Livia's son, Tiberius.

**Tiberius (to his mother):** Your husband has never loved me! I have led armies for him and divorced my wife to marry his daughter, as he wished. And still he has not made me his heir.

**Livia:** Be patient. Time is on our side.

**Tiberius:** I am tired of waiting. I am quitting this whole mess!

**Narrator D:** Tiberius resigns and retires to the island of Rhodes.

#### SCENE FIVE

**Narrator E:** The larger the empire grows, the harder it is to keep peace. By 2 A.D., Augustus is old and ill. He must summon Tiberius to **repress** [put down] rebellions in Rome's captured provinces. In desperation, Augustus then adopts Tiberius as his son.

**Citizen 1:** We have called Tiberius "the old man" since he was a boy. He always looks so glum.

**Citizen 2:** Better get used to him. In every way but name he is co-Emperor with Augustus. I dare say the empire even needs him.

**Citizen 1:** The empire—what a price we have paid for it! No sooner do we make progress in one province than another revolts, massacring our soldiers.

**Citizen 3:** Have you heard the latest? Disaster in Germania—the Roman armies have been slain. Augustus wanders around his house, dashing his head against walls and wailing, "Give me back my armies!"

**Narrator E:** In 9 A.D., Augustus

orders Tiberius to abandon his conquest of Germania. The Roman armies retreat to the Rhine River. There, the eastern border of the empire is fixed. Tiberius returns to Rome to assume the powers of co-leader.

**Augustus:** I am done with conquest, Tiberius. Be content with what we now have. Rome is already the largest power the world has ever known.

**Tiberius:** Through with conquering? What would Alexander the Great say?

**Augustus:** Frankly, I am surprised that he did not concentrate on keeping order in the empire he had. Instead, he tried to win more land than he could handle and died an unhappy man. That will not be my fate.

#### EPILOGUE

When Caesar Augustus died in 14 A.D., Rome controlled an area larger than the U.S. today. Future Roman emperors would extend the empire (*see map*). But it was Augustus who brought stability to the Western world for almost 200 years. That time came to be known as the *Pax Romana*—the Roman peace. **JS**

#### Your Turn

##### WORD MATCH

- |                |                       |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. avenge      | A. prominent citizens |
| 2. plunder     | B. get even with      |
| 3. triumvirate | C. put down           |
| 4. aristocracy | D. three-way alliance |
| 5. repress     | E. take by force      |

##### THINK ABOUT IT

Why was Augustus so successful in building an empire?

