

## CA Ancient History A Level Prescribed Source Translations

### Roman Period Study: Timespan 2

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:

John Hazel  
Dr John Holton  
Dr Stephanie Holton  
Simon MacPherson

#### 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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### 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**

[Tiberius](#), 23–24; 26–27; 29–33; 36; 39–41; 47–48; 61–63; 65; 75

#### **Tacitus**

[Annals](#), 1:6–1.18; 1.21–1.25; 1.28–1.35; 1.38–1.43; 1.46–1.47; 1.49; 1.52;  
1.61–1.62; 1.72; 2.52; 2.53; 2.55; 2.57; 2.59–2.60; 2.69–2.71; 2.73; 3.20–3.21; 3.32;  
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## Dio Cassius

Sections: *The Roman History* [58.4.1–4](#); [58.5](#); [58.6–7.3](#); [58.8.4–11.7](#)

### 58.4.1-4

#### The rise of Sejanus

1 Now Sejanus was growing greater and more formidable all the time, so that the senators and others looked up to him as if he were actually emperor and held Tiberius in contempt. When Tiberius learned this, he did not treat the matter lightly or disregard it, since he feared they might declare his rival emperor outright. He certainly did nothing openly,

2 for Sejanus had completely won over the entire Praetorian Guard and had gained the favour of the senators, partly by the benefits he granted, partly by the hopes he inspired, and partly by intimidation: furthermore he had made all the associates of Tiberius so completely his friends that they immediately reported to him absolutely everything the emperor either said or did, whereas no one informed Tiberius of Sejanus' actions.

3 Therefore Tiberius proceeded to attack him in another way; he appointed him consul and termed him the Sharer of his Cares; he often repeated the phrase 'My Sejanus' and published the same by using it in letters addressed to the Senate and to the people.

4 Men were accordingly deceived by this behaviour, taking it to be sincere, and so set up bronze statues everywhere to both alike, wrote their names together in the records, and brought gilded chairs into the theatres for both. Finally it was voted that they should be made consuls together every five years and that a body of citizens should go out to meet them both whenever they entered Rome. And in the end they sacrificed to the images of Sejanus as they did to those of Tiberius.

### 58.5

#### Sejanus' status in AD 31

1 Sejanus was such a great person by reason both of his excessive pride and of his vast power, that, to put it briefly, he himself seemed to be the emperor and Tiberius a kind of island ruler, since he spent his time on the island of Capri.

2 There was rivalry and jostling about Sejanus' doors, the people fearing not merely that they might not be seen by their patron, but also that they might be among the last to appear before him; for every word and look, especially in the case of the most prominent men, was carefully observed.

3 Those who hold a prominent position as the result of their inherent character are not very interested in seeking signs of friendship from others, and if such signs are lacking on the part of these others, they do not tax them with it, since they know well that they are not being looked down upon; but on the other hand, those who enjoy an accidental greatness are very eager to seek all such attentions, feeling them to be necessary to consolidate their position, and if they fail to obtain them, they are as annoyed as if they were being slandered, and as angry as if they were being insulted.

4 Consequently the world takes more care and pays more attention in the case of such people than in the case of the emperors themselves, one might almost say; since for emperors it counts as a virtue to pardon anyone in case of an offence, but by the former such conduct is thought to prove their weakness, whereas to attack and to exact vengeance is considered to offer proof of great power.

5 Now one New Year's day, when all were assembling at Sejanus' house, the couch that stood in the reception room completely collapsed under the weight of the crowd seated on it; and, as he was leaving the house, a weasel darted through the middle of the crowd.

6 After he had sacrificed on the Capitol and was now going down to the Forum, the servants who were acting as his body-guard turned aside along the road leading to the prison, being unable to keep up with him because of the crowd, and while they were descending the steps down which condemned criminals were cast, they slipped and fell. Later, as he was taking the auspices, not one bird of good omen appeared, but many crows flew round him and cawed, then all flew off together to the jail and perched there.

### **58.6.1–7.3**

#### **Tiberius toys with Sejanus**

1 Neither Sejanus nor anyone else took these omens to heart. For, in view of the way matters stood, not even if some god had plainly foretold that such a great change would take place in a short time, would anyone have believed it?

2 So they constantly swore by his fortune and called him Tiberius' colleague, covertly referring to the supreme power rather than to the consulship. Tiberius, however, who was no longer ignorant of anything that concerned his minister, was planning how he might put him to death; but, not finding any way of doing this openly and safely, he handled both Sejanus himself and the Romans in general in a remarkable fashion, so as to learn exactly what was in their minds.

3 He kept sending all kinds of despatches about himself both to Sejanus and to the Senate, at one point saying that he was in a bad state of health and almost at the

point of death, and at another point that he was extremely well and would arrive in Rome shortly.

4 At one moment he would heartily praise Sejanus, and again would as heartily denounce him; and, while honouring some of Sejanus' friends out of regard for him, he would be disgracing others. Therefore Sejanus, filled in turn with extreme elation and extreme fear, was in constant suspense; for it never occurred to him, on the one hand, to be afraid and so attempt a revolution, as he was still held in honour, nor, on the other hand, to be bold and attempt some desperate venture, considering that he was frequently being belittled.

5 So also with the people at large: they kept hearing alternately the most contradictory reports which came at brief intervals, and so were unable either to regard Sejanus any longer with admiration or, on the other hand, to hold him in contempt; while as for Tiberius, they were kept guessing whether he was going to die or return to Rome; as a result they were in a constant state of uncertainty.

### **58.7**

1 Sejanus was disturbed by all this, and much more disturbed when one of his statues first emitted smoke, and then, when the head was removed so that the trouble might be investigated, a huge serpent leapt up; then, when a new head was immediately placed upon the statue, and Sejanus was about to offer sacrifice to himself on account of the omen

2 (for he was accustomed to include himself in such sacrifices), a rope was discovered coiled about the neck of the statue. Again, there was the behaviour of a statue of Fortune, which had belonged, they say, to Tullius, one of the former kings of Rome, but was at this time kept by Sejanus at his house and was a source of great pride to him:

3 he himself while he was sacrificing saw this statue turn its back to him.

### **58.8.4–11.7**

#### **The Fall of Sejanus**

### **58.8**

4 And in a letter to the Senate about the death of Nero<sup>1</sup>, Tiberius referred to Sejanus by that name alone, without the addition of the customary titles. Moreover, because sacrifices were being offered to Sejanus, he forbade such offerings to be made to any human being; and because many honours were being voted to Sejanus, he forbade any measure to be deliberated which proposed honours for himself. He had, to be sure, forbidden this practice earlier too, but now, because of Sejanus, he

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<sup>1</sup> Nero Julius Caesar, one of the sons of Germanicus.

renewed his injunction; for someone who allowed nothing like this to happen for himself would naturally not permit it for anyone else.

## **58.9**

1 In view of all this, people began to hold Sejanus more and more in contempt; in fact they even avoided meeting him or being left alone with him, in a manner too obvious not to be noticed. Therefore when Tiberius learned of this, he took courage, believing that he had both the people and the Senate on his side, and attacked him.

2 And first, in order to take him off his guard as completely as possible, he spread the rumour that he was going to give him the tribunician power. Then he sent a communication against him to the Senate through Naevius Sertorius Macro, whom he had already secretly appointed to command the bodyguards and had instructed about everything that needed to be done.

3 Macro entered Rome by night, as if on some other business, and communicated his instructions to Memmius Regulus, then consul (his colleague sided with Sejanus), and to Graecinius Laco, commander of the night-watch.

4 At dawn Macro went up to the Palatine (for the Senate was to sit in the temple of Apollo), and bumping into Sejanus, who had not yet gone in, and seeing that he was troubled because Tiberius had not sent him a message, he encouraged him, telling him privately and in confidence that he was bringing him the tribunician power.

5 Overjoyed at this announcement, Sejanus bounded into the Senate-chamber. Macro now sent back the Praetorians who were guarding Sejanus and the Senate to their camp, after revealing to them his authority and declaring that he was carrying a letter from Tiberius which granted them rewards.

6 Then, after stationing the night-watch around the temple in their place, he went in, delivered the letter to the consuls, and came out again before a word was read. He then instructed Laco to keep guard there and hurried away himself to the camp to prevent any uprising.

## **58.10**

1 In the meantime the letter was read. It was a long one, and did not contain a concentrated attack on Sejanus, but first some other matter, then a slight criticism of his behaviour, then something else, and after that some further objection to him; and at the end it said that two senators who were among his closest associates must be punished and that he himself must be kept under guard.

2 For Tiberius refrained from giving orders openly to put him to death, not because he did not wish to give such orders, but because he feared that some disturbance might result from this. At any rate, he pretended that he could not safely even make

the journey to Rome, and therefore summoned one of the consuls to him. Now the letter disclosed no more than this; but it was easy to hear and see the many and various effects caused by it.

3 At first, before it was read, they had been praising Sejanus, thinking that he was about to receive the tribunician power, and had kept cheering him, anticipating the honours for which they had hoped and indicating to him their support for the granting of them.

4 However, when nothing of the sort appeared, but they heard again and again just the reverse of what they had expected, they were at first confused, and then very downcast. Some of those seated near him actually got up and left him; for they now no longer wished to share the same seat with the man whom previously they had prized having as their friend.

5 Then praetors and tribunes surrounded him, to prevent his causing any disturbance by rushing out, as he certainly would have done, if he had been startled at the outset by hearing any general denunciation. As it was, he paid no great attention to the successive charges as they were read, thinking each one a slight matter which stood on its own, and hoping that, at best, no further charge, or, in any event, none that could not be disposed of, was contained in the letter; so he let the time slip by and remained in his seat.

6 Meanwhile Regulus summoned him to go forward, but he paid no attention, not out of contempt - for he had already been humbled - but because he was not used to having orders addressed to him. But when the consul, raising his voice and also pointing at him, called the second and third time, "Sejanus, come here," he merely asked him, "Me? You are calling me?" At last, however, he stood up, and Laco, who had now returned, went and stood right next to him.

7 When the reading out of the letter was finally finished, all with one voice denounced and threatened him, some because they had been wronged, others through fear, some to hide their friendship with him, and still others out of joy at his downfall.

8 Regulus did not put the vote to all the senators or propose to any the death penalty, fearing opposition from some quarter and a disturbance as a result; for Sejanus had numerous relatives and friends. He merely asked a single senator if he should be imprisoned, and when he got an affirmative answer, he led Sejanus out of the Senate and, together with the other magistrates and Laco, took him down to the prison.

## 58.11

1 At that moment it was possible to witness a sight of human frailty so extraordinary as to prevent anyone ever again becoming puffed up with pride. For the man who at dawn they had escorted to the Senate-house as a superior being, they were now dragging to prison as if he were the lowest of the low; they now placed chains on the man who they had previously thought worthy of many crowns;

2 the man who they were accustomed to protect as a master, they now guarded like a runaway slave, uncovering his head when he covered it; the man who they had adorned with the purple-bordered toga, they struck in the face; and the man who they were accustomed to adore and worship with sacrifices as a god, they were now leading to execution.

3 The people also attacked him, shouting at him for the lives he had taken and many jeers for the hopes he had cherished. They hurled down, beat down, and dragged down all his images, as though they were abusing the man himself, and so he became a spectator of what he was destined to suffer.

4 For the moment, it is true, he was merely thrown into prison; but a little later, in fact that very day, the Senate met in the temple of Concord not far from the jail, when they saw the attitude of the people and that none of the Praetorian Guard was about, and condemned him to death.

5 By their order he was executed and his body thrown down the stairway<sup>2</sup>, where the mob abused it for three whole days and afterwards threw it into the river. His children also were put to death by decree, the girl (who had been promised in marriage to Claudius' son) was first raped by the public executioner on the grounds that it was unlawful for a virgin to be put to death in the prison.

6 His wife Apicata was not condemned, to be sure, but on learning that her children were dead, and after seeing their bodies on the stairway, she went inside and composed a statement about the death of Drusus, directed against Livilla, his wife, who had been the cause of a quarrel between herself and her husband, resulting in their separation; then, after sending this document to Tiberius, she committed suicide.

7 It was in this way that Tiberius came to read her statement; and when he had obtained proof of the information given, he put Livilla and all the others mentioned in it to death. I have, indeed, heard that he spared Livilla out of regard for her mother Antonia, and that Antonia herself of her own accord killed her daughter by starving her. These events, however, were later.

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<sup>2</sup> This stairway was a flight of steps leading up to the Capitoline Hill past the prison, onto which the bodies of certain executed criminals were thrown and left exposed.

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## Seneca

Section: *On Benefits* 3.26.1–2

A failed attempt to charge a man of praetorian rank with treason

1 I shall also include examples from our own times. In Tiberius Caesar's reign informing became a widespread almost universal obsession. The burden it caused to Roman citizens was almost worse than the civil war itself. Drunken conversations found their way to the authorities. So did examples of tactless humour. Nowhere was safe. Every opportunity for brutal ferocity was taken. No longer did people wait for the verdicts on the accused. For they were always the same.

Paulus, a man of praetorian rank, was having dinner. It was at a party and he was wearing a ring with an image of Tiberius Caesar engraved on the gemstone.

2 Trying to pick one's words tactfully at this point would be ridiculous. The simple fact is that he picked up a chamber-pot. This action was noticed at the same moment by Maro, a well-known informer, and by a slave of the man who was being targeted.<sup>3</sup> He pulled off the ring of his drunk master. Maro called the guests to witness that the image had been, as he put it, "polluted by foulness". He was already putting together a statement for signing when the slave showed people the ring on his own hand. That slave deserved to be called a slave about as much as Maro deserved to be called a guest.

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<sup>3</sup> i.e. Paulus

## Velleius Paterculus

Sections: *History of Rome*, 2:125.1–130.5

### 2:125.1–130.5

Mutinies in the legions after Tiberius' accession in AD 14; praise for Tiberius as emperor; praise for Sejanus as Tiberius' assistant; highlights of Tiberius' reign, his buildings, and his misfortunes.

#### 2.125

1 The state soon reaped the reward of its wisdom in seeking Tiberius, and it was not long before it was clear what we would have had to suffer had our request been refused, and what we had gained in having it granted. For the army serving in Germany, commanded by Germanicus in person, and the legions in Illyricum, were seized at the same moment by a form of madness and a deep desire to throw everything into confusion, and wanted a new leader, a new order of things, and a new Republic. Indeed, they even dared to threaten to dictate terms to the Senate and to the emperor.

2 They tried to fix for themselves the amount of their pay and their period of service. They even resorted to arms; the sword was drawn; their conviction that they would not be punished came near to breaking out into the worst excesses of arms. All they needed was someone to lead them against the state; there was no lack of followers.

3 But all this disturbance was soon calmed and suppressed by the experience of the veteran commander, who used coercion in many cases, made promises where he could do so with dignity, and by the combination of severe punishment of the most guilty with milder treatment of the others.

4 In this crisis, while in many respects the conduct of Germanicus was sufficiently firm, Drusus<sup>4</sup> showed the severity of the Romans of old. Sent by his father right into the middle of the inferno, when the flames of mutiny were already bursting out, he preferred to hold to a course which involved danger to himself than one which might set a disastrous example, and used the actual swords of the men who had besieged him to restrain his besiegers.

5 In this task he had in Junius Blaesus<sup>5</sup> a remarkable assistant, about whom it is impossible to know whether he is more useful as a soldier or better as a citizen. A few years later, as proconsul in Africa, he earned the decoration of a triumph, with the title of imperator. The two provinces of Spain, however, and the army in them, were kept in peace and tranquillity, since Marcus Lepidus, of whose virtues and

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<sup>4</sup> Drusus Julius Caesar, the natural son of Tiberius who died in AD 23

<sup>5</sup> Junius Blaesus was the uncle of Sejanus, so it is not a surprise that Velleius speaks well of him

distinguished service in Illyricum I have already spoken, was there in command, and since he was capable of instinctively knowing the best course and the firmness to hold to his views. On the coast of Illyricum his vigilance and loyalty was followed in all respects by Dolabella, a man of honourable openness.

## **2.126**

1 Who would try to tell in detail the accomplishments of the past sixteen years<sup>6</sup>, since they are quite clear to all? Tiberius deified his father, not by exercise of his imperial authority, but by his attitude of reverence; he did not call him a god, but made him one.

2 Credit has been restored in the forum, strife has been banished from the forum, canvassing for office from the Campus Martius, discord from the Senate-house; justice, equity, and industry, long forgotten, have been restored to the state; the magistrates have regained their authority, the Senate its majesty, the courts their dignity; rioting in the theatre has been suppressed; all citizens have either been impressed with the wish to do right, or have been forced to do so by necessity.

3 Right is now honoured, evil is punished; the humble man respects the great man but does not fear him, the great overshadows the lowly but does not despise him. When was the price of grain more reasonable, or when were the blessings of peace greater? The Peace of Augustus, which has spread to the regions of the east and of the west and to the boundaries of the north and of the south, preserves every corner of the world safe from the fear of war.

4 The generosity of the emperor claims as its object the losses inflicted by fortune not merely on private citizens, but on whole cities. The cities of Asia have been restored, the provinces have been freed from being oppressed by their magistrates. Honour is always given to those who deserve it; for criminals punishment is slow but sure; fairness now has precedence over influence, and merit over ambition, for this best of emperors teaches his citizens to do right by himself doing it, and though he is greatest among us in authority, he is still greater by the example which he sets.

## **2.127**

1 It is unusual that powerful men have failed to use great men as helpers in directing their fortune, as the two Scipios employed the two Laelii, whom in every way they treated as their equals, or as the deified Augustus employed Marcus Agrippa, and after him Statilius Taurus. In the case of these men their low birth was no obstacle to their rise to successive consulships, triumphs, and numerous priesthoods. For great tasks require great helpers,

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<sup>6</sup> i.e. August AD 14 to August AD 30

2 and it is important to the state that those who are necessary to its service should be given prominence in rank, and that their usefulness should be fortified by official authority.

3 With these examples before him, Tiberius Caesar has had and still has Sejanus Aelius as his incomparable associate in all the burdens of the principate, the son of a father who was among the foremost in the equestrian order, but connected, on his mother's side, with old, famous families, distinguished by public honours; while he had brothers, cousins, and an uncle who had reached the consulship. He himself combined great capacity for effort with loyalty to his master, and the structure of his body matched the energy of his mind; of lighthearted sternness,

4 cheerful yet strict; busy, yet always seeming to be at leisure. He is one who claims no honours for himself and so acquires all honours, whose estimate of himself is always below the estimate of others, calm in expression and in his life, though his mind is sleeplessly alert.

## **2.128**

1 In valuing the character of Tiberius, the judgement of the whole state has long competed with that of the emperor. Nor is it a new fashion on the part of the Senate and the Roman people to regard as most noble that which is best. For the Romans who, three centuries ago, in the days before the Punic war, raised Tiberius Coruncanius, a "new man," to the first position in the state, bestowing on him not only all the other honours but also the office of pontifex maximus;

2 and those who raised to consulships, censorships, and triumphs Spurius Carvilius, though born of equestrian rank, and soon afterwards Marcus Cato, though a new man and not a native of the city but from Tusculum, and Mummius, who triumphed over Achaia;

3 and those who regarded Gaius Marius, though of obscure origin, as unquestionably the first man of the Roman name until his sixth consulship; and those who yielded such honours to Cicero that on his recommendation he could secure positions of importance for almost anyone he chose; and those who refused no honour to Asinius Pollio, honours which could only be earned, even by the noblest, by sweat and toil - all these certainly felt that the highest honours should be paid to the worthy man.

4 It was only the natural following of past example that drove Tiberius to put Sejanus to the test, and that Sejanus was induced to assist the emperor with his burdens, and that brought the Senate and the Roman people to the point where they were ready to summon for the preservation of its security the man whom they regarded as the most useful instrument.

## 2.129

1 But having set before the reader a general outline of the principate of Tiberius, let us now review some of the details. How wisely he brought to Rome Rhascupolis<sup>7</sup>, the killer of his brother's son Cotys who shared the throne with him; in this transaction Tiberius employed the special services of Flaccus Pomponius, an ex-consul, and a man born to carry out tasks requiring accurate judgement, and who by his straightforward character also deserved glory though he never sought it.

2 With what dignity he listened to the trial of Drusus Libo<sup>8</sup>, not in the capacity of emperor, but as a senator and a judge! How swiftly he suppressed that ungrateful man in his plot for revolution! How well had Germanicus been trained under his instructions, having so thoroughly learned the basics of military science under him that he was later to welcome him home as conqueror of Germany! What honours he heaped upon him, young as he was, making the magnificence of his triumph correspond to the greatness of his deeds!

3 How often and how gladly he honoured the people with donations, whenever he could do so with the Senate's approval. He raised to the required level the fortunes of senators, but in such a way as not to encourage extravagant living, and yet not to allow senators to lose their rank because of honest poverty. With what honours he sent his beloved Germanicus to the provinces across the seas! With what effective diplomacy, carried out through the help and agency of his son Drusus, he forced Maroboduus, who clung to the limits of the territories he had seized like a serpent to its hole, to come out like a serpent under the spell of his salutary charms - a simile which I use with no disrespect to Tiberius. How honourably he treats him while at the same time he holds him securely! How quickly and bravely he repressed the terrible war, stirred up at the instigation of Sacrovir and Florus Julius, so that the Roman people learned that he had won before they knew he was engaged in war, and the news of his victory came before the news of his danger!

4 The African war<sup>9</sup> also, which caused great terror and grew bigger every day, was soon extinguished under his control and in accordance with his plans.

## 2.130

1 What great public buildings he built in his own name or his family's! How generously, beyond belief, he is now building a temple to his father! With what a magnificent control of personal feeling he restored the theatre of Gnaeus Pompey when it was destroyed by fire! For a feeling of family connection leads him to protect every famous monument.

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<sup>7</sup> Augustus had divided the region of Thrace into two separate kingdoms, one ruled by Cotys, the other by Rhascupolis. After Augustus' death, Rhascupolis seized Cotys' kingdom and had him killed in AD 18.

<sup>8</sup> Drusus Libo's trial in AD 16 was the first major treason trial under Tiberius.

<sup>9</sup> This African war refers to the rebellion of Tacfarinas between AD 17 and 24.

2 How generously at the time of the recent fire on the Caelian Hill, as well as on other occasions, he used his private fortune to make good the losses of people of all ranks in life! And in recruiting the army, a thing usually viewed with great and constant dread, how calmly on the part of the people he provides for it, and without any of the usual panic attending conscription!

3 Either if nature permits me, or if a man's weak faculties allow it, I dare to make a complaint to the gods: how did Tiberius deserve, in the first place, to have Drusus Libo plot a treacherous conspiracy against him, or later to earn the hostility of Silius and Piso, though in one case he created his rank, and in the other he increased it? Passing on to greater trials - although he regarded these as great enough - how did he deserve the loss of his sons<sup>10</sup> in their prime or of his grandson, the son of Drusus<sup>11</sup>?

4 So far I have only mentioned the grief; now we must come to the shame. How painfully, Marcus Vinicius<sup>12</sup>, have the past three years<sup>13</sup> torn his heart! How long, what is most pitiful, his soul was racked by fire because of the grief, the indignation, and the shame he was forced to suffer because of his daughter-in-law<sup>14</sup> and his grandson<sup>15</sup>! His sorrow at this time was increased by the loss of his mother<sup>16</sup>,

5 a woman pre-eminent among women, and who in every way was more like the gods than a human, whose power no one experienced except for the relief from danger or the promotion of worth.

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<sup>10</sup> Germanicus (Tiberius' adopted son) died in Syria in AD 19; Drusus Julius Caesar (Tiberius' natural son) died in AD 23.

<sup>11</sup> Germanicus Gemellus, the twin son of Drusus Julius Caesar, died as a young child in AD 23.

<sup>12</sup> Marcus Vinicius, consul in AD 30, was the person to whom Velleius dedicated his work.

<sup>13</sup> AD 27 - 29

<sup>14</sup> Agrippina the Elder, wife of Germanicus, who died in AD 33.

<sup>15</sup> Nero Julius Caesar, son of Germanicus and Agrippina, who died in AD 31.

<sup>16</sup> Livia (aka Julia Augusta from AD 14) died in AD 29.