



Roman Emperor Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus Germanicus

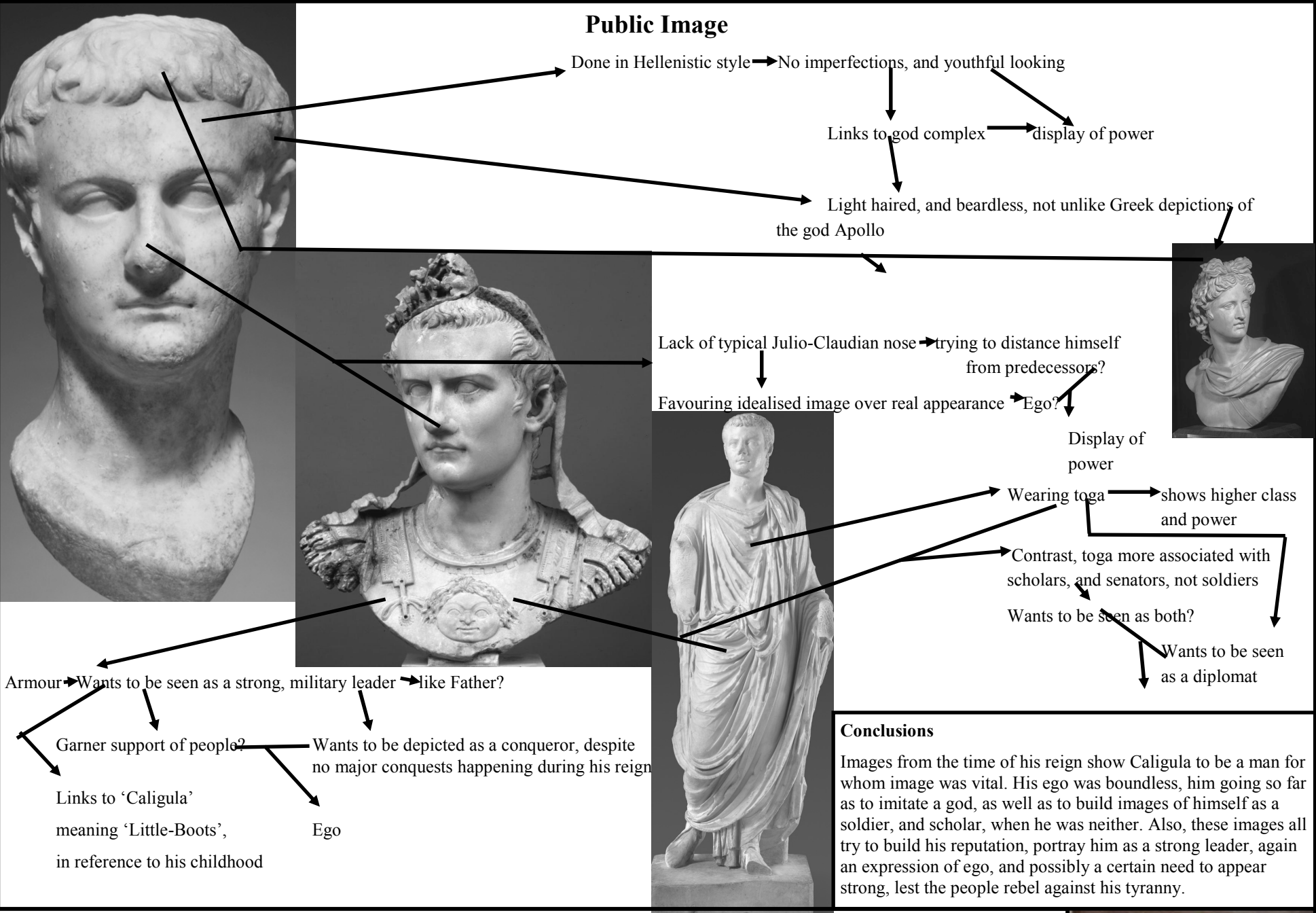


Caligula

About

- Born in 12AD, died 41AD
- Son of a popular Roman General, Germanicus, adopted son, and nephew of Emperor Tiberius, and Great-Grandson of the Emperor Augustus. This dual claim to the Emperorship was vital in his ascent to leader of the Roman Empire; he attempted to use these ties of blood to make him appear to be a legitimate successor, even more so that Augustus was to Julius Caesar.
- Reigned from 31AD, until his death in 41AD. He was the third Emperor of Rome, and the second man to inherit that position.
- Infamous for a short, but tyrannous rule, under which executions, as well as cruel and unusual punishments were common; he once disposed of two senators, simply because they forgot his birthday. More seriously, he took the persecution of the Jews further than his predecessors, effectively forcing them to worship the Roman Pantheon, by placing idols in—and so desecrating—their temples, and punishing with death any and all resistance.
- Also infamous for debauchery; as evidenced by his performing incest with his siblings, turning part of his palace into a brothel, taking other men's wives for his own, after forcing divorces. He went on to brag about these acts.
- Also infamous for insanity; he had a god complex, and — according to some accounts — once made his horse a senator. Arguably, his cruel treatment of senators, and other elite individuals, not to mention Cassius Chaerea, is also evidence of his insanity; he was so overly confident in his position, that he did not consider these people threats, and so treated terribly, rather than with cautious consideration. Perhaps all of these things can be considered aspects of the Emperor's narcissism, he believed so much in his power, and greatness, that he was unable to conceive of the possibility that he might be betrayed.
- In 41AD, a Praetorian Guardsman, Cassius Chaerea, apparently after being humiliated by the Emperor, assassinated him with sword, at the Palatine Games. Despite having done Rome a great service, Chaerea was executed by Claudius, Caligula's successor, and uncle, for treason. Chaerea, it is believed, was acting on the behalf of the senate, and intended to restore power to that body, so it is perhaps to be expected that he would be dealt with so violently by the succeeding Emperor.
- The infamy of this Emperor would go on to shape much of Western society for the next two millennia; so feared was he by the Jews, and early Christians that the Biblical book of Revelation references him with the supposed number of the Devil '616' (in early versions). Given the historical, and even current, prevalence of the Christian faith, it can be said that Caligula's legacy as an evil man has lasted well over the last two millennia, and—fear of his number—has to an extent shaped western culture, which is very much a product of Christi-

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Conclusions

Images from the time of his reign show Caligula to be a man for whom image was vital. His ego was boundless, him going so far as to imitate a god, as well as to build images of himself as a soldier, and scholar, when he was neither. Also, these images all try to build his reputation, portray him as a strong leader, again an expression of ego, and possibly a certain need to appear strong, lest the people rebel against his tyranny.

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