

Tiberius: The Reluctant Emperor

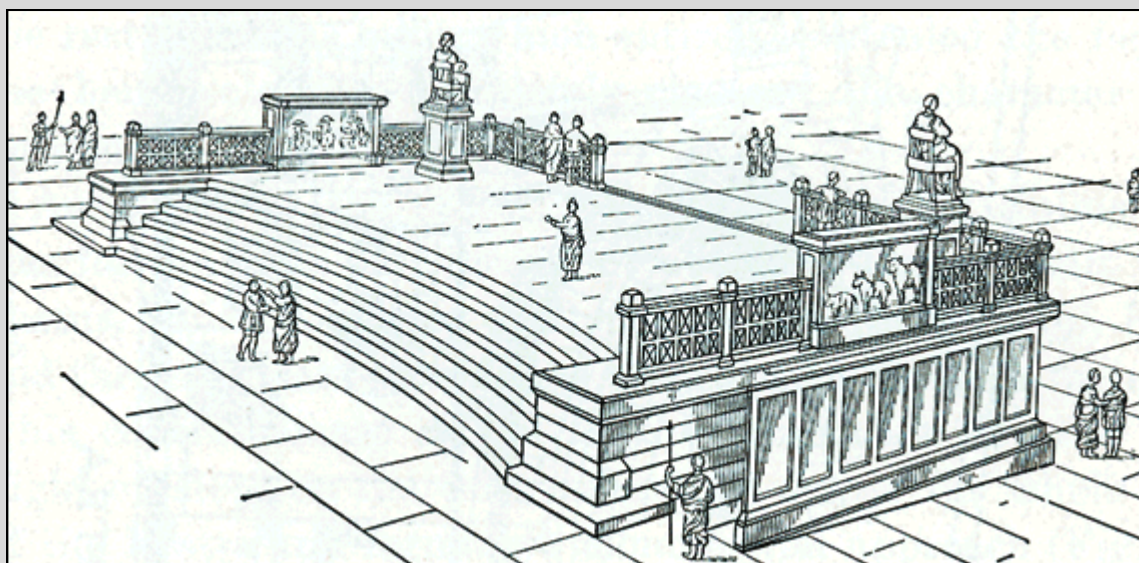
Early life

Suetonius gives an account of Tiberius early life in his works on the lives of Caesars. Tiberius was subject to his parents flight as a result of their support of Antony over Augustus. During this time they fled to Sicily and from there to the Lacedaemonians who were dependents of the Claudii. Whilst taking refuge their the young Tiberius would almost lose his life due to a forest fire in the region. On his return to Rome Tiberius at nine years of age delivered his fathers eulogy from the Rostra.

Suetonius also gives some of the important events during his teenage* years, these being gladiatorial games in honour of his father as well as his grandfather at another time. The former in the Forum and the latter in the Amphitheatre. Alongside these Tiberius gave stage plays,

Suetonius draws attention to the fact he was never present in person as well as its financial drain on his step-father and mother.

His marriages are also mentioned, those between himself and Agrippina which was eventually broken off in favour of a more politically aligned marriage with Augustus’ daughter, Julia. This second marriage is recorded as being relatively stable but gradually fell apart.



S.B. Platner, The Topography and Monuments of Ancient Rome (2nd ed.), p. 223, 1911. Source: www.vroma.org

The End of his Reign

Towards the end of his reign his own personal fear which had been prominent from his early life had fully formed into his way of ruling leading to the imprisonment of his own family and distrust of any individual with the possibility of ruling in his stead, being accused of assassinating Germanicus. All of which would have resulted in the deterioration of Tiberius ability to make calculated decisions without being influenced by his own fear and paranoia of those around him, including his family.

Life before Imperator

Tiberius performed both civil and military services before becoming emperor. Beginning with his defence of king Archelaus and several peoples, Thessaly and Tralles following this was his military services as a tribune. Some of his notable successes were regaining the standards lost by Crassus to Parthia as well as campaigning against the Germanic peoples.

Seeking to withdraw from public life perhaps as Suetonius says to avoid being in opposition to Augustus’ heirs, or maybe to avoid repeating the immediate history of the first and second triumvirs and their accompanying conflicts, and risk his family. He left Rome via Ostia to Rhodes where he sought to live a modest life only once displaying his tribunial power, in anger. During an argument with sophists the he appeared to support one side other the other and as a result had abuse hurled at him by the slighted part, in response Tiberius had him imprisoned. This has been viewed as a flaw in an otherwise virtuous life so far. This was followed by the banishment of Julia for her immoral behaviour in Rome, despite the new Tiberius deciding against returning to

Rome, perhaps because he didn't want to damage his reputation by giving the impression he had left for the sole reason to remove himself from the company of his wife, therefore damaging his own image. Despite the undoubtedly welcome news Tiberius still played the mediator between his now ex-wife and her father, Augustus.



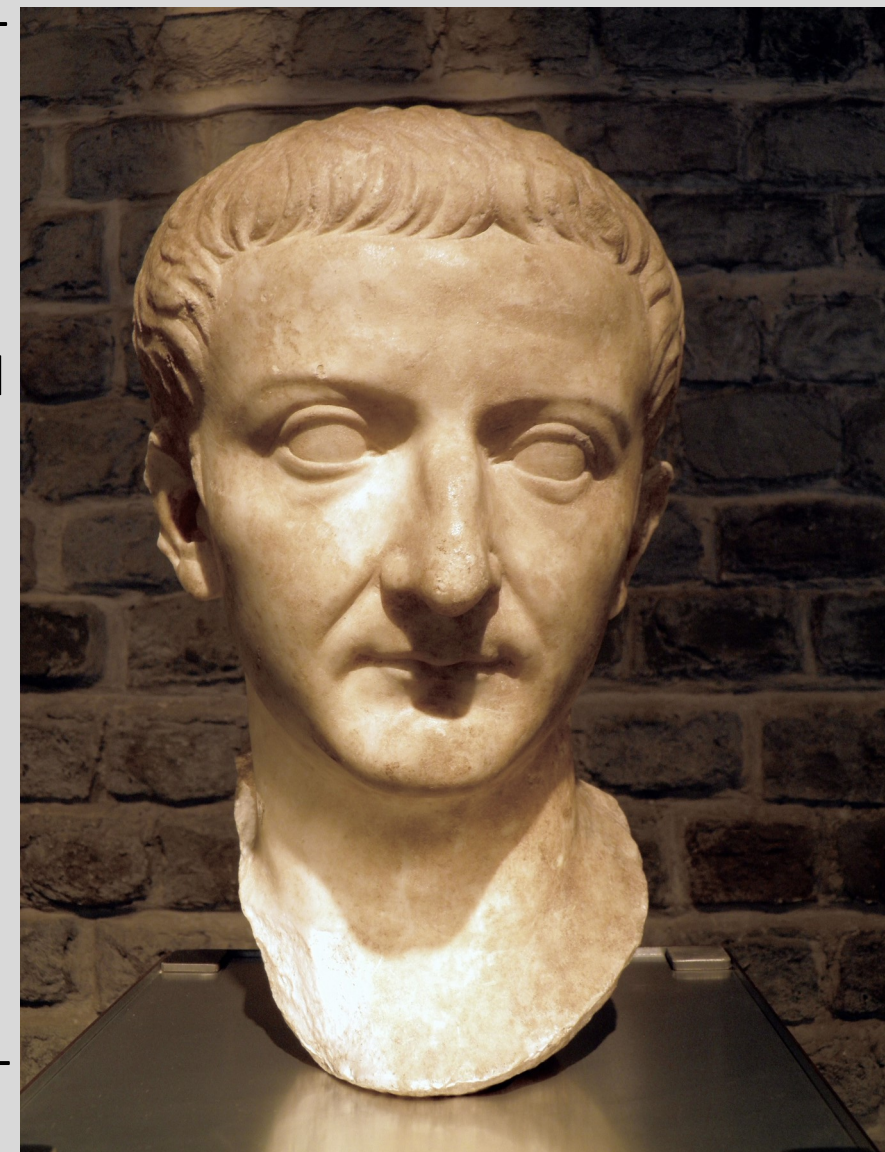
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Becoming Emperor

Upon Augustus death Tiberius was given two thirds of his estates this according to Suetonius added to the suspicions of those senators that suspected Tiberius of being named Imperator as Suetonius quotes, out of “necessity rather than Choice”

On taking up authoritative powers Tiberius is written to have not hesitated in surrounding himself with soldiers and assumed the full powers without claiming the title till much later as a result of senators unhappiness with the situation. Suetonius himself seems to agree with Tiberius in the view that the title of Emperor at this point was a burden and one that Tiberius wanted to pass on to another

“Until I come to the time when it may seem right to you to grant an old man some repose” The hesitation to office may have been largely due to the fact of his earlier experiences in life, essentially running from the authoritative body of the empire in the form of Augustus only to become the heir and eventual ruler of the nation that essentially exiled him. As such he avoided doing anything that might present him as being above his station in life.



Tiberius, Romisch-Germanisches Museum, Cologne, Date: 18th October 2012, Source: Tiberius, [Romisch-Germanisches Museum, Cologne](https://www.romisch-germanisches-museum.de/), Uploaded by [Marcus Cyron](#), Author: [Carole Raddato](#) from FRANKFURT, Germany

Bibliography

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