

Notes on Quiz #6: Crossing the Rubicon

1. Cicero, in his long career, was known for all of the following EXCEPT:
 - a. as a lawyer, successfully prosecuting a corrupt governor, Verres
 - b. as a general, engineering the defeat of Marius's ally, Sertorius, in Spain
 - c. as consul, openly denouncing the conspirator Catiline in a meeting of the senate
 - d. as an ex-consul, suffering exile for executing the Catilinarian conspirators

Cicero was a noted orator and attorney from Arpinium who made his mark in several famous cases, including the very effective prosecution of the corrupt governor, Verres, shortly after the reign of Sulla. Later, as consul, he called Catiline out to his face during a meeting of the senate. After Catiline got away, he summarily executed the other conspirators without trial, leading to an exile engineered by Caesar through the firebrand, Clodius.

2. "Crossing the Rubicon" was such a fateful decision for Caesar because it involved
 - a. recklessly defying the Roman god of vengeance, Rubicon
 - b. stirring up a nation of vicious Gallic warriors, the Rubicon tribe
 - c. crucifying a beloved ally of the senate, Sextus Maenius Rubicon
 - d. illegally violating the boundary between Gaul and Italy, the river Rubicon

In 49 BCE Caesar and Pompey's increasing power as warlords personally controlling great swaths of the Roman empire led senate extremists to attempt to pass the "ultimate decree" against Caesar and have him declared a public enemy. Though vetoed by Caesar's ally Antony, who held a plebeian tribuneship that year, this move by the senate spurred Caesar to action. The tribunes were forced to flee, and Caesar used the defense of the sacred rights of the tribunes as his pretext to end the current government of Rome. — Caesar took the nearby city of Rimini, across the boundary between his province (Cisalpine Gaul) and Italy proper. This boundary was a minor river called the Rubicon. Caesar knew that this would be understood as him invading Italy, and that there was no turning back. Thus his famous use of the quote from Menander, "The die is cast."

3. Speaking of crucifixion, whom did Crassus crucify along the Appian Way (the road to Rome)?
 - a. Spartacus
 - b. Spartacus's captured rebel army (but not Spartacus)
 - c. Athensicus, Spartacus's estranged brother
 - d. Yeshua bar Yosef, king of the Jews

When the gladiator Spartacus led a slave revolt against the Roman aristocracy, Rome had great difficulty putting it down. (This is known as the Third Servile War.) Roman troops were mostly busy in other wars away from Italy. The consuls initially assumed the revolt would be easy to quash, not apprehending quickly enough that Spartacus had amassed a great army of slaves, some with military experience. Spartacus racked up victory after victory over the Roman legions sent against them under the consuls' command. — Finally, the state commissioned Crassus to destroy the revolt. Not underestimating Spartacus as the consuls had, Crassus amassed a powerful Roman force of eight legions and used Spartacus's weaknesses against him. Pompey was still able to gain credit for Spartacus's defeat owing to a minor action, but Crassus demonstrated that the victory was of his making by subjecting 6,000 of the slave rebels to crucifixion—the ancient Roman punishment for treason. Spartacus was not included: he died in battle but his body was not found.

4. All of the following are true of Caesar's dictatorships (49 to 44 BCE) EXCEPT:

- a. He was cruel and vengeful to his political opponents, refusing to extend magnanimity and clemency (*clementia*)
- b. His reforms included weakening the senate, debt relief, free grain, expanded colonization, and calendar reform
- c. He spent a lot of this time at war away from Rome, in Thessaly, Egypt, Africa, Spain, and elsewhere
- d. Before his death he had himself declared dictator *perpetuus* (dictator unending)

Caesar was well known for his populist reforms and for his consistent policy of clemency and magnanimity toward his political rivals. During the five years he was dictator, he was away from Rome fighting wars much of the time, before returning to Rome for the last five months of his life. Shortly before his assassination, he declared that his fifth dictatorship, which was just starting, would be self-renewing, and his title thenceforward would be *dictator perpetuus*.

5. Caesar's assassins on the Ides of March, 44 BCE, included all of the following EXCEPT:

- a. Brutus (M. Iunius Brutus)
- b. Cassius (C. Cassius Longinus)
- c. Casca (P. Servilius Casca Longus)
- d. Antony (M. Antonius)

Caesar was assassinated at a senate meeting by a small group of nobles led by Cassius, a former dissident whom Caesar had treated with clemency, and Brutus, who was known for his virtue (and whose ancestor had evicted Tarquin Superbus nearly 500 years before). Casca was the first to stab Caesar. — The motivations varied. Some, like Cassius, felt slighted by Caesar. Others, like Brutus, feared for the Republic. Caesar's reforms were entirely populist, his every action turning the people and the armies against the senate and the conservative elite. The senate had retained a pretense of control over Caesar's power as they were the ones to grant him his honors, including four successive dictatorships; but when Caesar arranged for an automatically renewing dictatorship (*dictator perpetuum*) this sense of control was lost. — Cicero was not present but later said he wished he were, and that the assassins should have killed Caesar's lieutenant, Antony, as well.

Optional Extra Credit

EC. What role does Pompey the Great play in the civil wars? How would you describe his motivations?

After pledging himself and his illegal private army to Sulla, Pompey was then ordered to mop up Sulla's enemies, including the Marian holdout Sertorius, who controlled part of Roman Spain. He then allied with Crassus, joining him in a consulship that finished the unraveling of Sulla's pro-senate reforms. Pompey and Crassus then joined with a young Caesar to form the so-called first triumvirate, an informal union of three powerful men to control Roman politics behind the scenes. — The senate, trusting him more than Crassus and Caesar, sent him on more extraordinary commands, first to wipe out the pirates of southern Italy, then to reorganize the Roman east. Pompey's arrangements in the east were long-lasting, shaping Rome's relationship with its Hellenistic provinces for centuries to come; but his absence from Rome left it in political disorder, and Caesar strove to match his power as governor of the three Gauls. Finally, the senate called on Pompey to defend Italy against the invasion by Caesar. — Pompey is generally seen as an opportunist, using his advantages (mainly control over an army inherited from his father and the division of the nobles) to establish himself as a warlord who was not to be ignored. Though he joined with Sulla, and later fought for the senate, this was not out of loyalty to their platform, and he was just as happy to work with Crassus to dismantle Sulla's aristocratic constitution.