

Age of Nero
Paper 1 / 1600 Words
Due September 17 by 11:50 am

One of the problems ancient historians must confront is two sources that have very different points of view. For this paper, you will analyze excerpts from Tacitus's *Annals* (13.14.2-17.3) and Suetonius's *Life of Nero* (33.2-3) dealing with the death of Britannicus. Britannicus was Claudius's natural son, and so Nero's brother through adoption. Nero had him poisoned in 55. Tacitus and Suetonius were both writing approximately 50-60 years after this event, Tacitus as part of his larger history of the Julio-Claudians, Suetonius as part of his biographies of the first emperors.

Some points you should consider as you compare and contrast these two accounts:

- What details are present in one author, but not the other, and what does this show about what they think is important?
- Do the two authors contradict in any places? What might the preference of an author for one version over another show about what they consider important?
- Why does each author say Nero murdered Britannicus? How does this fit the larger narratives of Nero's reign that each author is writing?
- How is Nero characterized overall in each account, and does this fit the overall depictions of Tacitus and Suetonius?

Based on this, explain how the two historians present the death of Britannicus differently, how it fits into their overall accounts, and what it ultimately shows us about their understanding of Nero and their own concerns with an emperor. Since this assignment is to better understand the historians' points of view, purposes, and methods, you should not worry about which account is ultimately more accurate here. Do not be judgmental about these accounts, and remember, ancient historians have different standards than modern historians. You are to limit your analysis to Tacitus and Suetonius alone – do not look at modern scholarship or other sources. I want to read what you have to say, not what someone else has to say. Looking at outside sources will result in an automatic F on the assignment.

Use direct quotes sparingly and when they will specifically illustrate the point you are trying to make. Try to avoid excessive summary. Whenever you quote or paraphrase, be sure to cite the ancient author. Cite the text by the section numbers I have given, either in the sentence or parenthetically; e.g. "As Suetonius says at 33.2..." or "as explained by Tacitus (13.14.2)." Use Times New Roman or a similar serif font, double-spaced, with 1" margins all around. Don't forget to put a page number at the bottom of each page. Papers are due on September 17 before the start of class. Send your paper as a .doc, .docx, or .rtf attachment to cmuntz@uark.edu. Late papers will not be accepted except in cases of documented emergencies