Ancient History Quotes

Pompey

* He was powerful without destroying freedom – Lucan.
* The glory of men’s ancestors is… like a shining on their descendants which allows neither their virtues nor their vices to be hidden… - Sallust.
* … he maintained a doubtful and neutral attitude between the two parties, so that he seemed to be acting entirely in his own interest and to be watching his chance, turning with his army now to one side now to the other, according as each offered a greater promise for power himself – Velleius Paterculus, Roman History, 2.21.
* From the day on which he had assumed the toga (Pompey) had been trained to military service on the staff of that sagacious general, his father, and by a singular insight into military tactics… developed his excellent native talent – ibid., 2.29.
* There was one reason and one only for the hatred felt against Strabo, namely his insatiable love of money – Plutarch, Pompey, 1.
* Strabo was a sinister character, “hated by heaven and by the nobility”, for good reasons. There were no words to describe Cn. Pompeius the son – Syme, The Roman Revolution,28.
* At the time that Pompey’s father died, Pompey had little experience other than of the camp. Moreover, as he seems to have remained under his father’s command, he had spent the impressionable years from the age of sixteen or seventeen to nineteen owing the twofold duty of a son and a military cadet to a general whose career was marked by disloyalty, brutality, self-interest and apparently a lack of any firm political convictions – Rawson, The Politics of Friendship, 23.
* From his father… Pompey had inherited a large band of loyal veterans who had been richly rewarded by the elder Pompey; he has also inherited masses of clients in Picenum, where his father had vast estates… The elder Pompey had also won a large following both in the Gallic cities south of the Po and in the teeming and vigorous population north of the Po, where he had, under a consular law, bestowed Latin rights on the towns. He also had numerous clients in Spain, to many of whom he gave citizenship – Taylor, Party Politics in the Age of Caesar, 45.
* But perhaps the most enjoyable of all spectacles to the people was the one which Pompey afforded himself when he appeared in person to ask for his discharge from military service. It is an old custom at Rome that those who belong to the propertied class outside the senate should, at the conclusion of the legal period of their military service, come into the forum, each leading his horse, and appear before the two officials called censors. Each man gives the names of his generals and imperators under whom he has served, and some account of his own actions in war, and then receives his discharge. According to his record he receives from the censors words either of praise or blame. On this occasion the censors Gellius and Lentulus were sitting in state, and the gentleman with their horses were passing in review in front of them when Pompey was seen coming down the hill into the forum. He had all the insignia of a consul, but he was leading his horse with his own hand. When he came nearer so that he could be seen by everyone, he ordered his lictors to make way for him and then led his horse up to the bench where the censors were sitting. The people were amazed and stood in complete silence; the censors too were awed and also delighted at the sight. Then the senior censor questioned him, “Pompey the Great, I require you to tell me whether you have taken part in all the military campaigns that the law demands.” And in a loud voice Pompey replied: “I have taken part in all of them, and all under myself as imperator.” These words were greeted with a great shout from the people, and indeed it became quite impossible to restrain their rapturous applause; the censors rose from their seats and led the procession escorting Pompey home, this giving great pleasure to the people who followed behind, shouting and clapping – Plutarch, Pompey, 22.
* When the Romans could no longer endure the damage and disgrace they made Gnaeus Pompey, who was then their man of greatest reputation, commander by law for three years, with absolute power over the whole sea within the Pillars of Hercules, and of the land for a distance of 400 stades from the coast… They gave him power to raise troops and to collect money from the provinces, and they furnished a large army from their own muster-roll… Never did any man before Pompey set forth with so great authority conferred upon him by the Romans – Appian, Civil Wars, 12.14.94.
* … to make war and peace as he liked and to proclaim nations as friends or enemies according to his own judgement. They gave him command of all the forces beyond the borders of Italy. All these powers together had never been given to any one general before; and this is perhaps the reason why they call him Pompey the Great – Appian, Civil Wars, 12.15.97.
* … following his usual custom of settling down, like some crazy carrion bird, on the bodies that had been killed by others and tearing to pieces the scattered remains of wars. It was in just this way that he had appropriated to himself the victories over Sertorius, Lepidus and the followers of Spartacus, though in fact these victories had been won by Metellus, Catulus and Crassus. There was therefore no reason to be surprised at his present plan of seizing for himself the glory of the Pontic and Armenian wars… - Plutarch, Pompey, 31.
* The wealth that accrued to the conqueror himself was sufficient to make him the richest man in Rome… But more than wealth Pompeius had acquired clientelae on a scale hitherto unwitnessed. Not merely individuals and cities but whole provinces and kingdoms acknowledged him as their patron – Seager, Pompey: A Policital Biography, 55.
* In fact Pompey, from the time when he first took part in public life, could not brook an equal at all. In undertakings in which he should have been merely the first he wished to be the only one. No one was ever more indifferent to other things or possessed a greater craving for glory; he knew no restraint in his quest for office, though he was moderate to a degree in the exercise of his powers. Entering upon each new office with the utmost eagerness, he would lay them aside with unconcern, and, although he consulted his own wishes in attaining what he desired, he yielded to the wishes of others in resigning it… - Velleius Paterculus, Roman History, 2.33.
* His youth was spent in prosecuting through illegality and fraud, treachery and bloodshed the interests of Sulla and his own advancements. His maturity was consumed by a struggle to win recognition of his pre-eminence and acceptance by Sulla’s oligarchy and its accommodation and connection with the younger Cato. Cato’s rebuff drove him into alliance with Caesar, from which he almost immediately tried to extricate himself and with which he was never easy. In the end it was the threat of Caesar in Gaul and the imminence of civil war which drove Cato and his faction, whose pretentions Pompey had overshadowed, whose relatives he had murdered and whose alliance he had desired, to accept and use him. It was their fault the accommodation was so late in coming. Ambitious and blood thirsty, untrustworthy and devious, Pompey was yet no revolutionary – Earl, The Moral and Political Tradition of Rome, 52.
* Pompeius then did not want to destroy the republic… His ambitions are fairly clear… he wanted no more than to be treated with the respect that his standing and achievements deserved consequence to be able to advance and protect his friends and nobilis. But Pompeius’ character did not make matters easy. His conceit and hypocrisy inspired resentment, he deviousness bred distrust. As a result, even in emergencies, the senate would approach him only with reluctance, and took delight in pricking the bubble of his vanity whenever circumstances allowed – Seager, Pompey: A Political Biography, 188.
* But they cut off Pompey’s head and threw the rest of his body naked out of the boat, leaving it there as a spectacle for those who desired to see such a sight. Philip, however, stayed by the body until they had their fill of gazing at it. He then washed it in sea water and wrapped it in one of his own tunics. Then, since he had no materials, he searched up and down the coast until he found some broken planks of a small fishing boat, old and decaying, but enough to make a funeral pyre, an old man came up who was a Roman and who in his youth had served with Pompey in his first great campaigns. “Who are you” he said, “who are preparing the funeral for Pompey the Great?” Phillip said that he was Pompey’s ex-slave and the old man said: “But you must not have this honour all to yourself. Let me too share in the pious work now that the chance has come to me. I shall not altogether regret my life in a foreign land if, in return for many hardships, I find this happiness at last – to touch with my hands and to prepare for burial of the greatest Imperator that Rome has seen” – Plutarch, Pompey, 80.

Crassus

* … a man distinguished among the Romans for birth and wealth – Appian.
* He had been in Spain before, when his father was praetor there, and he had made friends in the country – Plutarch, Crassus, 4.
* I give you as an escort… your father, your brother, your friends, and your relations who have been put to death without law or justice and whose murderers I am going to punish – Plutarch, Crassus, 6.
* It is said that in Bruttium he actually added man’s name to the proscription lists purely in order to get hold of his property and with no authority from Sulla; and what Sulla was so indignant at this that he never employed him again in public affairs – Plutarch, Crassus, 6.
* This war, so formidable to the Romans (although ridiculed and despised in the beginning, as being merely the work of gladiators), had now lasted three years. When the election of new praetors came on, fear fell upon all, and nobody offered himself as a candidate until Licinius Crassus, a man distinguished among Romans for birth and wealth, assumed the praetorship and marched against Spartacus with six new legions – Appian, Civil Wars, 1.14.118.
* The consuls (of 72BC) were told to return to civilian life, and Crassus was appointed to the supreme command of the war. Because of his reputation or because of their friendship with large numbers of the nobility volunteered to serve with him – Plutarch, Crassus, 10.
* The glory of ending this war belongs to Marcus Crassus, who was soon by unanimous consent to be regarded as the first citizen in the state – Velleius Paterculus, Roman History, 2.30.6.
* Crassus accomplished his task within six months, whence arose a contention for honours between himself and Pompey. Crassus did not dismiss his army, for Pompey did not dismiss his. Both were candidates for the consulship. Crassus had been praetor as the law of Sulla required. Pompey had been neither praetor nor quaestor, and was only thirty four years old, but he had promised the tribunes of the people that much of their former power should be restored – Appian, Civil Wars, 1.14.121.
* … what seemed the most remarkable proof of his (Pompey’s) extraordinary distinction was that Crassus, the richest statesman of the time, the best orator and the greatest man, Crassus, who looked down upon Pompey and everyone else, had not ventured to put himself forward as a candidate for the consulship until he had first asked Pompey to support him. Pompey was delighted to do so – Plutarch, Pompey, 22.
* In fact they differed on practically every point that came up; they were constantly quarrelling, each trying to get the better of the other, and, as a result, they made themselves as consuls politically ineffective and achieved nothing – Plutarch, Crassus, 12.
* In the senate Crassus was the more influential of the two, but Pompey had great power with the people – Plutarch, Pompey, 22.
* As soon, however, as Tarquinius named Crassus, a noble of great wealth and of the highest rank, some thought the charge incredible; others believed it to be true, but thought that in such a crisis so powerful a man ought to be propitiated rather than exasperated. There were many, too, who were under obligation to Crassus though private business relations. All these loudly insisted that the accusation was false, and demanded that the matter be laid before the senate. Accordingly, on the motion of Cicero, the senate in full session voted that the testimony of Tarquinius appeared to be false… - Sallust, The War with Catiline, 48.5.
* He (Caesar) observed that Pompey and Crassus were once again on bad terms with each other and, while he had no wish to make and enemy of one of them by seeking support from the other, he felt that without the help of either of them, his own prospects would be hopeless. He therefore set to work to reconcile them – Plutarch, Crassus, 14.
* Pompey was indignant and made friends with Caesar and promised under oath to support him for the consulship. The latter thereupon brought Crassus into friendly relations with Pompey. So these three powerful men pooled their interests – Appian, Civil Wars, 2.2.9.
* He (Caesar)… actually reconciled the men themselves, not because he was desirous that they should agree, but because he saw that they were most powerful. He understood well that without the aid of both, or at least one, he could never come to any great power… Pompey and Crassus, the moment they really set about it, made peace with each other, for reasons of their own and they took Caesar into partnership in their plans – Cassius Dio, Roman History, 37.55.1-2.
* Pompey, Caesar and Crassus now formed a triple pact, jointly swearing to oppose all legislation of which any one of them might disapprove – Suetonius, Julius Caesar, 19.
* It was in Caesar’s consulship that there was formed between himself, Gnaeus Pompeius and Marcus Crassus the partnership in political power which proved so baleful to the city, to the world, and subsequently at different periods to each of the triumvirs themselves… while Crassus hoped that by the influence of Pompey and the power of Caesar he might achieve a place of pre-eminence in the state which he had not been able to reach single-handed – Velleius Paterculus, Roman History, 2.44.1-2.
* When Caesar came south from Gaul to the city of Luca a great many Romans went there to meet him. Among these were Pompey and Crassus. At the private conferences which the three men held together they decided to tighten their grip on public affairs and to take over the entire control of the state. Caesar was to retain his army and Pompey and Crassus were to have other province and armies. The only way to carry out this plan was to stand for a second consulship. Pompey and Crassus were to put themselves forward as candidates, and Caesar was to cooperate by writing to his friends and sending back large numbers of his soldiers to support them at the elections. Plutarch, Crassus,14
* Pompey and Crassus, his partners in the triumvirate, came also. IN their conference it was decided that Pompey and Crassus should be elected consuls again and that Caesar’s governorship over his provinces should be extended for five years more. Appian, Civil Wars,2.3.17
* Gnaeus, Pompeius and Marcus Crassus, who had once before been consuls together, now entered upon their second consulship, which office they not only won by unfair means, but also administered without popular approval. In a law which Pompey proposed in the assembly of the people, Caesar’s tenure of office in his provinces was continued for another five years, and Syria was decreed to Crassus, who was now planning to make war upon Parthia. Velleius Paterculus, Roman History,2.46.1-2
* … in the case of Crassus a new passion, in addition to his old weakness of avarice, began to show itself. The glorious exploits of Caesar made Crassus also long for trophies and triumphs- the one field of activity in which he was not, he considered, Caesar’s superior. Plutarch, Crassus,14.
* Crassus took Syria and the adjacent country because he wanted a war with the Parthians, which he thought, would be easy as well as glorious and profitable. Appian, Civil Wars, 2.3.18
* Crassus was so temperate and moderate in his way of life...with regard to his relations with women his conduct was as exemplary as that of anyone in Rome. Plutarch, Crassus, 1
* Crassus was eager to show his kindness and hospitality. His house was open to all, and he used to lend money to his friends without interest…the people he invited to his dinner parties were usually ordinary people and not members of the great families; and these meals were not expensive, but they were good and there was a friendliness about them which made them more agreeable than more lavish entertainments…Another thing which made him more popular was the courteous unaffected way in which he greeted people and spoke to them. However humble and obscure a man might be, Crassus, on meeting him, would invariably return his greeting and address him by name. ibid., 3
* Crassus…was continually ready to be of use to people, always available and easy to be found; he had a hand in everything that was going on, and by the kindness which he was prepared to show to everyone he made himself more influential than Pompey was able to do with his high-handed manners. ibid., 7
* …he dedicated a tenth of his property to Hercules, he provided a banquet for the people, and he gave out of his own fund to every Roman citizen enough to live on for three months; yet after all this, when he made up his account before setting out on the expedition to Parthia, he found that he was worth 7 100 talents…he amassed most of this property by means of fire and war; public calamities were his principal source of revenue.

ibid., 2

* He therefore turned for help to Crassus, who was the richest man in Rome…Crassus met the demands for those creditors who were most difficult to deal with and would not be put off any longer, and gave his personal guarantee for 830 talents. Plutarch, Caesar, 11
* So far as his general culture was concerned, he gave most attention to the art of speaking and to those aspects of it which would be useful in dealing with numbers of people. He became one of the best speakers in Rome and, by care and application, was able to surpass those who were more highly gifted by nature. He never appeared in the law courts without having prepared his speech beforehand, however small or inconsiderable the case might be with he was dealing, and often when Pompey and Cicero and Caesar were reluctant to speak, he undertook the whole management of the case himself, thereby gaining an advantage over them in popularity, since people thought of him as a man willing to take trouble and to help others. Plutarch, Crassus, 3
* On Crassus’ involvement in the Catiline conspiracy: …others regarded it as a story trumped up by the accused, in order that they might thereby receive some aid from him, because he possessed the greatest influence. Cassius Dio, Roman History, 37.35.1-2
* Here by taking pains, by helping people in the law courts or with loans, or with the canvassing and questioning which has to be done and undergone by candidates for office, he acquired an influence and a reputation equal to that which Pompey had won by all his great military expeditions…when he [Pompey] was present [in Rome], he was often less important than Crassus. Plutarch, Crassus, 7
* In the senate Crassus was the more influential of the two, but Pompey had great power with the people. Plutarch, Pompey, 22
* Pompey, Caesar and Crassus now formed a triple pact, jointly swearing to oppose all legislation of which any one of them might disapprove. Suetonius, Julius Caesar, 19
* Although Crassus was, in his general character, entirely upright and free from base desires, in his lust for money and his ambition for glory, he knew no limits, and accepted no bound Velleius Paterculus, Roman History, 2.46.2
* Caesar is said to have been tall, fair, and well-built, with a rather broad face and keen, dark-brown eyes. His health was sound, apart from sudden comas and a tendency to nightmares which troubled him towards the end of his life; but he twice had epileptic fits while on campaign. He was something of a dandy, always keeping his head carefully trimmed and shaved; and has been accused of having certain other hairy parts of his body depilated with tweezers. His baldness was a disfigurement which his enemies harped upon, much to his exasperation; but he used to comb the thin strands of hair forward from his poll, and of all the honours voted by the Senate and People, none pleased him so much as the privilege of wearing a laurel wreath on all occasions-he constantly took advantage of it. His dress was, it seems, unusual: he had added wrist-length sleeves with fringes to his purple-striped senatorial tunic, and the belt which he wore over it was never tightly fastened-hence Sulla’s warning to the aristocratic party: “Beware of that by with loose clothes!

Suetonius, Julius Caesar, 45

* …in Spain, when he was at leisure and was reading from the history of Alexander, he was lost in thought for a long time, and then burst into tears. His friends were astonished, and asked the reason for his tears. “Do you not think”, said he, “It is a matter for sorrow that while Alexander, at my age, was already king of so any peoples, I have as yet achieved no brilliant success?” Plutarch, Caesar, 11
* Rome in the following summer with equal haste-not waiting until he had been relieved- to demand a triumph and stand for the consulship. But the day of the consular elections had already been announced. His candidacy could therefore not be admitted unless he entered the city as a civilian; and when a general outcry arose against his intrigues to be exempted from the regulations governing candidatures, he was faced with the alternative of forgoing the triumph or forgoing consulship.

There were two other candidates; Lucius Lucceius and Marcus Bibulus. Caesar now approached Lucceius and suggested that they should join forces; but since Lucceius had more money and caser greater influence, it was agreed that Lucceius should finance their joint candidacy by bribing the voters. The aristocratic party got wind of this arrangement and, fearing that if Caesar were elected Consul, with a pliant colleague by his side, he would stop at nothing to gain his own ends, they authorised Marcus Bibulus to bribe the voters as heavily as Lucceius had done. Many aristocrats contributed to Bibulus’s campaign funds, and Cato himself admitted that this was an occasion when even bribery might be excused as a legitimate means of preserving the constitution.

Caesar and bibulous were elected Consuls… Suetonius, Julius Caesar, 18-19

I wish, Conscript Fathers, to be merciful. I wish not to seem lax when the perils of the state are so great, but now I condemn myself for inaction and remissness. There is in Italy a camp of enemies of the Roman people, situated in the passes of Etruria, their numbers is increasing daily: but you behold the commander of that camp and the leader of the enemy inside the wall and even in the senate plotting daily from within the city the destruction of the stated. But if, Catiline, I shall order you to be seized, to be executed, I shall have to fear. I suppose, not that all respectable people may say I acted too tardily, but that someone may say that I acted too cruelly!

Cicero, In Catilinam, 1.2.4-5

The greater number o0f those who have expressed theior opinions before me have deplored the lot of the commonwealth in finished and noble phares: they have dwelt upon the horros of war, the wretched fate of the conquered, the rape of madians and boys, children torn from their parents’ arms matrons subjected to the victors, temples and homes pillaged, bloodshed and fire:in short, arms and corps everywhere, gore and grief. But, Oye immotral gods! What was the purpose of such speeches? Was it to mmake you detest the conspriacy? You think that a man who has been affected by a crime so monstrous and so cruel will be fired by a speech! Nay, not so: mo mortal man thinks his own wrongs unimportant: many, indeed, are wont to resent them ,ore than is right. But not all men, Fathers of the Senate, are allowed the same freedom of action. If the humble, who pass their lives in obscurity, commit any offence through anger, it is known to few; their fame and fortune are alike. But the actions of those who hold greater power, and pass thioer lives in a lofty station, are known to all the world. So it comes to pass that in the highest position there is the least freedom of action. There neither partiality noe dislike is in place, and anger least of all; for what in others is called wrath, this in a ruler is termed insolence and cruelty.

For my own part, Fathers of the Senate, I consider no tortures sufficient for the crimnes of these men; but most mortals remember only that which happens last, and in the case of godless men forget their guilt and descant upon the punishment they have received, if it is a little more severe than commom…

For my own part, I fear nothing of that kind fro Marcus Tullius or for our times, but in a great commonwealth there are many different natures. It is possible that at anoither time, when someone ese is consul ans is likewise in command of an army, some falsehood may be believed to be true. When the consul, weith this precentdent befor ehim, shall draw sword in obedience to the sentae’s decree, who shall limit or restrain him?...

Do I then recommend that the prisoners be allowed to depart and swell Catiline’s forces?By no means! This rather, is my advise: that their goods be confiscated and that they themselves be kept imprisoned in the strongest of the free towns; further, that no one hereafter shalkl refer their case to the senate or bring it before the people, under pain of being consdidered by the senate to have designs against the welfare of the state and common safety.

Sallust, The War with Cataline, 51

But to reaume. It was in Caesar’s consulship that there was formed between himself, Gnaeus Pompeius and Marcus Crassus the partnership in political power which proved sp balful to the city, to the world and, subsequently at different periods to each of the triumvirs themselve. Pompey’s motive in the adoption of this policy had been to secure through Ceasar as consul the long delay ratification of his acts in the provinces across the seas, to which, as I have already said, many still raised objections; Caesar agreed to it because he realized that in making this concession to the prestige of Pompey he wouyld increase his own, and that by throwing on Pompey the odium for their joint control he would add to his own power; while Crassus hoped that by the influence of pompey and the power of Caesar he might achieve a place of pre-eminence in the state which he had not been able to rrewach single-handed. Futhermore, a tie of marriage was cemented between Caesa and Pompey, in that Pompey now wedded Julia, Ceasar’s daughter.

In this consulship, Ceasar, with Pompey’s backing, passes a law authorizing a distribution to the plebs of the public domain in Campania. And so about twenty thousand citizens were established there, and its right as a city were restored to Capua one hundred and fifty-two years after she and been reduced to a prefecture in the Second Punic War. Bibulus, Caesar’s colleague, with the intent rather than power of hindering Caesar’s acts, confined himself to his house for the gretaer part of the year. By this conduct, whereby he hoped to increase his colleague’s unpopularity, he only increased his power. At this timw the Gallic proviences were assigned to Caesar for a period of five years.

Velleius Paterculus, Roman History, 2.44

In the meantime Pompey, who had acquired great glory and power by his Mithridatic war, was asking the Senate to ratify numerous concessions that he had granted to kings princes, and cities. Most Senators, however moved by envy, made opposition, and especially Lucullus, who had held the command against Mithridates befoire Pompey, and who cosidered that the victory was his,since he had left the king for Pompey in a state of extreme weakness. Crassus co-operated with Lucullus in this matter.

Pompey was indignent and made friends with Caesar and promised under oath to support him for the consulship. The latter there upon brought Crassus inot friendly relations with Pompey. So these three most powerful men pooled their interests. This coalition the Romanm writer Varro treated of in a book entitled Tricaranus (the three-headed monster).

Appian, Civil Wars, 2.2.9