

# Notes on Quiz #8: Succession and Empire

1. After Tiberius succeeded Augustus, in the words of the Roman historian Tacitus, “the first crime of the new principate” was the execution of Augustus’s
  - a. daughter Julia
  - b. grandson/adopted son Agrippa Postumus
  - c. ex-wife Scribonia
  - d. uncle Mortimer

Tiberius had Agrippa Postumus, his only potential rival as heir to Augustus, executed as soon as it was known Augustus had died.

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2. Highlights of Tiberius’s reign include all of the following EXCEPT:
  - a. Tiberius laying a trap for his treacherous aide, Sejanus, via a twisty letter read to the Senate
  - b. wasteful administration and the appointment of incompetent and immoral provincial governors
  - c. resentment and hostility between Tiberius and his mother, Livia
  - d. increasing use of the treason law, *majestas*, to prosecute Tiberius’s enemies

As princeps, Tiberius’s main concern was effective administration of Rome and the provinces. He managed the treasury carefully and with great skill, and made sure to appoint capable and conscientious governors. — After discovering his treachery, Tiberius trapped Sejanus via a letter read to the Senate that Sejanus was sure would praise and promote him. After the fall of Sejanus, who was rumored to have killed Tiberius’s son Drusus, Tiberius’s fears and suspicions only increased. As a result, Rome’s only legal means of capital punishment, *majestas* (treason), became more and more broadly and frequently applied. Men and women from the noble classes were prosecuted for slander, adultery, rape, incest, murder, even consultation with astrologers about the emperor’s future health and welfare. Most insidiously, informers sprang up, seeking the legally allowed one-fourth cut of the convicted man’s property. Though their role has been exaggerated, the possibility of a grudge or fight leading to an accusation of *maiestas* had an effect on noble society. — Meanwhile, Tiberius mistrusted his mother, Livia Augusta, who refused to reveal the secret code to the intelligence files she had amassed. As a result, he refused her funeral honors and deification after her death.

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3. Caligula died as a result of
  - a. old age after a long and successful reign
  - b. angry Roman gods smiting him with lightning
  - c. being viciously stabbed by a guard he’d insulted
  - d. wounds received leading his legions into battle

In January of 41 CE, Caligula was assassinated by the Praetorian tribune Cassius Chaerea, his associate Cornelius Sabinus, and a number of centurions. Cassius, a fervent Republican idealist, was regularly insulted and mocked by Caligula for his supposed soft-heart as well as his supposed weak and high-pitched voice. Caligula was surprised in a narrow space in the tunnels under the palace as he was prepping for games in honor of the god Augustus.

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4. The Year of Four Emperors (69 CE) ended with the surviving, firmly established principate of
- Ser. Sulpicius Galba
  - M. Salvius Otho
  - A. Vitellius
  - T. Flavius Vespasianus

The successors to Nero each reigned briefly in turn after his death in 68 CE, leading to a year in which four men—Galba, Otho, Vitellus, and Vespasian—successively claimed the principate. Only Vespasian had solid support for his reign, resulting in a stable and successful reestablishment of the principate as it was under Augustus.

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5. The tragic siege of Masada (73 CE) was a part of the Romans' war with
- Jewish rebels in Judea
  - Vindex, a mutinous governor in Gaul
  - the fractious territory of Dacia
  - Boudicca, queen of the Britons

The Jewish War under Vespasian and Titus led to great casualties on both sides. When the Romans finally stormed the besieged fortress of Masada, the thousand or so zealous rebels within chose to die rather than submit to Rome.

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### Optional Extra Credit

EC. What do you think are the main reasons Nero's principate turned out the way it did?

Nero was never trained for statemanship, it being expected that Claudius's own son Britannicus would succeed. The principates of Tiberius and Caligula provided many dark precedents for capricious actions and the persecution of perceived enemies, so that the office as Nero received it was warped and very much dependent on the character and moral stability of the occupant. — Hostility toward Nero increased after the Great Fire among nobles, masses, provincials, and the army alike. His rebuilding of Rome included many improvements (e.g., a better street plan), but also the confiscation of land from wealthy families and the construction of a huge and splendid palace, the Golden House; this opportunism fueled rumors that he started the fire to bring about this result, and the huge sums spent crippled imperial finances. As a result, he demanded higher taxes from the provinces, cut food distribution to the masses in Rome, held back pay to the soldiers, and caused inflation by debasing the coinage. His cruelty while scapegoating of Christians, abuse of his wife, and impulsive execution of several noble men and women made many recoil, while his efforts at a career as a musician bred more discontent. Meanwhile, provincial governors, in danger of assassination by Nero's fear of conspiracy, eventually realized they must act first against him to survive.