



# Cleopatra's Daughter

*Michelle Moran*

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## **Cleopatra's Daughter** Michelle Moran

At the dawn of the Roman Empire, when tyranny ruled, a daughter of Egypt and a son of Rome found each other...

Selene's legendary parents are gone. Her country taken, she has been brought to the city of Rome in chains, with only her twin brother, Alexander, to remind her of home and all she once had.

Living under the watchful eyes of the ruling family, Selene and her brother must quickly learn how to be Roman – and how to be useful to Caesar. She puts her artistry to work, in the hope of staying alive and being allowed to return to Egypt. Before long, however, she is distracted by the young and handsome heir to the empire...

When the elusive 'Red Eagle' starts calling for the end of slavery, Selene and Alexander are in grave danger. Will this mysterious figure bring their liberation, or their demise?

## **Cleopatra's Daughter Details**

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Author : Michelle Moran

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# From Reader Review Cleopatra's Daughter for online ebook

## Liza Fireman says

Cleopatra's daughter, a 10 year old, telling a story when she is 10, in a really unbelievable way (same issue bothered me in *A Memory of Violets: A Novel of London's Flower Sellers* lately). And, when her father committed suicide and her mother is devastated and worried about her life, children and crown, she is talking about what people are wearing and their faces, and how many languages her mother speaks, and in what accent. Terrible, in addition to boring.

Very flat, almost no characterization and therefore, pretty impossible to empathize with the characters.

Reading the wikipedia entry about Cleopatra and Marc Anthony will easily draw more emotion (I'm not kidding).

1 star. Read other historical fiction.

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## Becky says

This book was chosen for the May/June 2010 group read in the historical fiction group that I moderate here on Goodreads, and I couldn't wait to read it, so I started a teensy bit early. \*blush\* I'd been wanting to read one of Michelle Moran's books for a while, since I hear so much praise for them, and I'd planned on starting with "Nefertiti" with a friend, but that kind of fell apart due to other obligations. So I was thrilled when "Cleopatra's Daughter" was chosen, as it gave me the perfect excuse to shove all of my obligations off to the side for a day and read this.

And it literally only took me a day to read it. I could not put it down. I've always been fascinated by Ancient Egypt and Rome, so this one was right up my alley. (All of Moran's books at this point are right up my alley, actually!) I was not disappointed. The book starts with a bang with Cleopatra's rule crumbling around her, and follows Selene (Cleopatra's daughter) as she's taken from her home and country to Rome, which is rife with danger, uncertainty, spies, cattiness and political roller-coasters. Selene and her twin brother, Alexander, are guest/prisoners of the royal family, and never know what the next day will bring - an unwanted and unhappy marriage, slavery, death?

It's fascinating. I would have gladly read another 400 pages. There was so much going on between these covers that even though it was not action-packed, it felt like it was, and I just had to know what would happen next. This is the kind of book that made me love historical fiction - books that can bring a name and date-range to life, and make me not only intrigued by their life, but care about them, and empathize with them. So much in history is distant and boring that unless you have a real interest and passion for it, we forget to keep it alive. And much of history was so brutal and harsh that we forget that people who lived it were really people, and had hopes and dreams and fears that were probably cut short by the brutality and upheaval. It's easy to distance ourselves from that brutality, so that 30,000 deaths in such and such battle becomes just a number, and not a staggering atrocity.

But this book brought these ancient people to life, and I crossed my fingers for them, and mourned with them, and was angry on their behalf even though they've all been dead for 2000 years. I loved Selene's character. I admired her courage to do the right thing even when it could have cost her her life at any time. Her life was one thread away from forfeited as soon as she stepped foot off of Egyptian soil, but she still spoke up for those who could not speak for themselves. And this, in a time when callousness and bloodlust

seemed to be an artform, is admirable.

I also loved the way that Octavian Caesar's loyal men were humanized, rather than just being expressionless moving statues which do the Caesar's bidding, they were men who were able to think and feel and hope themselves.

I also loved the political and societal issues depicted. Octavian's fear of any potential threat, his genius political maneuvering and manipulation, his ruthlessness all gave me chills. Livia's too, and her pure maliciousness made me want to slap her. I couldn't imagine living under the thumb of people like that. But then to counter them, Octavia, his sister, was kind and compassionate and charitable, even when she had cause not to be, and when it was almost pointless given the attitudes of the time.

Moran pulls no punches with this book, and shows the harshness of living in Rome at this time. Slaves were everywhere and harshly ruled and even more harshly punished at their owners' and/or corrupt judges' whims. Babies are cast out for being born the wrong sex, or for having a deformity, or for no reason at all other than that they are unwanted and are left to die of starvation or by the elements if not for charitable wet-nurses. It's appalling, but all of this combined to create a Rome that felt real to me.

I also liked the subtle nod to homosexuality in the book, and how it's accepted in private, but kept quiet in public. I'm glad that we're at a point now where being gay is socially accepted (by most) and doesn't need to be hidden.

Anyway, in short, I loved this book. The only thing that I can think of to complain about is a single misspelling: quite should have been quiet, and that should have been caught by an editor. ;) I will definitely be reading more of Moran's books. If they are half as good as this one it will be well worth it. :)

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### **Doreen Petersen says**

This book just blew me away! I'm not really into historical fiction but this book was soo good to the point I got to the last 275 pgs and just couldn't put it down until I finished. The author did a phenomenal job. A must read!

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### **Hilda says**

Semua orang tentu mengetahui Kleopatra, sang ratu Mesir yang terkenal dengan kecantikan dan kelicikannya. Kleopatra VII, yang kisah cintanya dengan Marc Anthony adalah salah satu cerita cinta terbesar pada waktu Sebelum Masehi. Tapi setelah kematian Kleopatra yang menyedihkan, kehidupan Mesir tidak berakhir begitu saja. Masih ada anak-anak Kleopatra dan Marc Anthony, yang terus hidup dan menderita.

Setelah kematian Kleopatra dan Marc Anthony, ketiga anak mereka diambil oleh Octavian, kaisar Romawi yang berhasil menduduki Mesir. Si kembar berusia 12 tahun Kleopatra Selene dan Alexander Helios, serta adik mereka Ptolemy yang masih berusia 3 tahun, sengaja dibiarkan hidup untuk dibawa ke Roma dalam Perayaan Kemenangan Octavian. Octavian sengaja membiarkan mereka hidup karena itu akan membuatnya terlihat bermurah hati, dan agar mereka dapat berguna dalam perkawinan politik yang akan disusun olehnya.

Selene dan Alexander kehilangan hampir segalanya; harta mereka, posisi mereka sebagai Pangeran dan Putri, rumah mereka di Mesir, orang tua mereka, bahkan adik mereka Ptolemy yang sakit keras dan akhirnya mati. Mereka dipaksa menyesuaikan diri dan mengakui diri mereka sebagai warga Roma. Memakai pakaian ala orang Roma, pulasan seperti warga Roma, dan menilai sesuatu dari sudut pandang Roma. Selene yang cantik dan cerdas, meskipun keras kepala, menemukan kebebasannya dalam melukis arsitektur gedung-gedung. Kakak kembarnya Alexander yang tampan dan ramah lebih memilih pacuan kuda dan bersosialisasi dengan anak-anak Roma lainnya. Mereka melindungi satu sama lain, dan bersumpah akan kembali ke Mesir bersama-sama suatu hari nanti.

Di umur yang masih belia, para anak-anak bangsawan Roma sudah mengerti bahaya dan kewajiban mereka pada Roma. Tindakan-tindakan dan ucapan mereka bagaikan anak berumur 15 atau 16 tahun di masa kini. Sekali, saudara tiri Selene dan Alexander yang masih berumur 10 tahun datang dan memperingatkan mereka agar berguna untuk Octavian, karena itulah satu-satunya cara untuk bertahan hidup di Roma. Kemiskinan dan bayi-bayi yang ditelantarkan bukanlah hal yang aneh di Roma. Perkawinan bagi wanita adalah kewajiban, dan ayah serta saudara lelaki merekalah yang memutuskan perkawinan itu. Budak-budak adalah pihak yang tak bisa menuntut. Kaum bangsawan dan senat adalah pihak yang akan selalu memerintah Roma.

Meskipun tidak seratus persen sama dengan sejarah, Cleopatra's Daughter berhasil menyuguhkan kisah yang menawan dengan setting Sebelum Masehi. Istilah-istilah Latin seperti *chitos* dan *domina* mewarnai cerita, dan kebiasaan-kebiasaan orang Romawi digambarkan dengan begitu baik. Setiap tokoh dalam cerita memegang peran yang penting, terutama tokoh Red Eagle yang digambarkan sebagai tokoh misterius yang ingin menghentikan perbudakan di Roma. Aku terutama mengagumi tokoh Selene yang pandai, tegar, dan tak pernah berhenti menyerah dalam memerangi ketidakadilan.

Cleopatra's Daughter membuatku menangis dan tertawa. Efek yang ditimbulkannya begitu dahsyat, dan aku yakin seperti setiap buku yang luar biasa, buku ini akan tetap mempengaruhi dalam waktu yang lama. Aku bahkan merasa sedih ketika aku mencapai halaman terakhir, dan membaca halaman terakhir kisah ini.

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### **Tanzanite says**

I loved this book! As with her previous books, Moran has a knack for bringing the ancient world alive. Following the defeat and death of her parents, Cleopatra Selene (along with her two brothers) are taken to Rome by Octavian where they will be raised by his sister Octavia (the wife Marc Antony left for Cleopatra - the woman must have been a saint). The book covers about a 3 year period as Selene grows up under the watchful eye of Octavia and learns about life and love. If you don't know much about her, don't Google her or you'll ruin the end of the story!

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### **Alaine says**

I have to say that Michelle Moran is a master story teller and if it's possible her third book is even better than the previous two. This book swept me into a world I had never imagined, it is filled with tragedy and yet has an ending that will take your breath away. Selene and Alexander (twins) are the last remaining children of Marc Anthony and Cleopatra who die by suicide when Egypt is conquered by Caesar. Selene and Alexander are taken to Rome to be raised by Octavia, Caesar's sister. While Alexander is able to find enjoyment in his new life, Selene lives with much fear for their future. However, through Octavia's care and generosity she is

trained as an architect, an unheard of privilege for a woman in Rome. This gives Selene hope for the future.

What moved me most about this book is the attention to the details of the setting, yet at no time was I bored, if anything I was captivated. Michelle describes the events of everyday life for Romans and the slaves in a way that makes you realise what fear many of these people lived with especially women. It is a good reminder of how lucky we are to be living in this time in history. This isn't just a story about the ruling family of Rome, it describes in detail what it's like to live as a citizen, slave or Senator.

There are no words that I can use to do this book justice, I can only say that if you like historical novels then this is a must read. It is a fantastic book!

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### **Nora says**

so I gave up after 120 pages. The perspective was from a 10 year old in 27BC who sounds like a 25 year old in 2010 AD. very Dawson's Creek, but not in a good way.

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### **Jim says**

I read a lot of Roman material: fiction, history, contemporary letters, etc. So when an author's view of Rome significantly departs from what is known about the period, it yanks me out of the story. My wife and I had recently finished Colleen McCullough's masterful multi-volume series on Rome, which ended with the event at which this book begins. The contrast was jarring. Perhaps it says more about the quality of writing, but I think it says more about the comparative depth of research. McCullough's bibliography runs to nearly 50 pages of primary sources.

Perhaps it's the narrator's voice - a teenage Egyptian princess in Rome is a typical fish out of water, and her upbringing and youth would provide a much smaller lens from which to view the Rome to which she's been forcibly brought. But the author gets enough things wrong - the value of a denarius, the appropriate size of a dowry, the value of daughters to noble Roman males as political assets, injecting 21st-century political issues (same-sex marriage?) into 1st century BCE heads - that I had serious trouble staying in the world Moran created. But it was a Christmas gift, so we persisted.

Frustrations with historicity aside, the novel was predictable, and few of the characters felt fully rendered, none of them men. Livia is little more than a snarling harpy. You are left to wonder how Moran's Octavian managed to conquer the Roman world.

But no matter. It's safe to say I was not the intended audience. But it's an odd book; not romantic enough to be a romance, insufficient *veritas* to stand as reliable historical fiction.

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### **Ashley Marsh says**

I really enjoyed this. Selene was a fantastic narrator, and the story was beautifully written. The pacing was perfect, in my opinion. It was great getting to know all these characters. My historical fiction reading is generally limited to British, French, and German stories, so I went into this knowing little and expecting less.

I'm glad I finally picked this up, though. It's definitely worth a read.

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## Margaret Chind says

Originally posted on Creative Madness Mama.

The marriage of Marc Antony and Cleopatra is one of the greatest love stories of all time, a tale of unbridled passion with earth-shaking political consequences. Feared and hunted by the powers in Rome, the lovers choose to die by their own hands as the triumphant armies of Antony's revengeful rival, Octavian, sweep into Egypt. Their three orphaned children are taken in chains to Rome; only two—the ten-year-old twins Selene and Alexander—survive the journey. Delivered to the household of Octavian's sister, the siblings cling to each other and to the hope that they will return one day to their rightful place on the throne of Egypt. As they come of age, they are buffeted by the personal ambitions of Octavian's family and court, by the ever-present threat of slave rebellion, and by the longings and desires deep within their own hearts.

The fateful tale of Selene and Alexander is brought brilliantly to life in *Cleopatra's Daughter*. Recounted in Selene's youthful and engaging voice, it introduces a compelling cast of historical characters: Octavia, the emperor Octavian's kind and compassionate sister, abandoned by Marc Antony for Cleopatra; Livia, Octavian's bitter and jealous wife; Marcellus, Octavian's handsome, flirtatious nephew and heir apparent; Tiberius, Livia's sardonic son and Marcellus's great rival for power; and Juba, Octavian's watchful aide, whose honored position at court has far-reaching effects on the lives of the young Egyptian royals.

Selene's narrative is animated by the concerns of a young girl in any time and place—the possibility of finding love, the pull of friendship and family, and the pursuit of her unique interests and talents. While coping with the loss of both her family and her ancestral kingdom, Selene must find a path around the dangers of a foreign land. Her accounts of life in Rome are filled with historical details that vividly capture both the glories and horrors of the times. She dines with the empire's most illustrious poets and politicians, witnesses the creation of the Pantheon, and navigates the colorful, crowded marketplaces of the city where Roman-style justice is meted out with merciless authority.

Based on meticulous research, *Cleopatra's Daughter* is a fascinating portrait of imperial Rome and of the people and events of this glorious and most tumultuous period in human history. Emerging from the shadows of the past, Selene, a young woman of irresistible charm and preternatural intelligence, will capture your heart.

What does it say when you can finish reading a book in three days from receiving it with a five week old baby causing a hiatus every two to four hours for food, changes, or just plain attention. Well... I would say that means it is a really good book!

Michelle Moran does not disappoint with her third novel, and I am excited for the four. She is one of those authors who writes a good book and as a reader you assume that was it, but each next novel is full of such entertainment that you are excited and cannot decide if it was better than the last.

Through the words of these pages, a reader gets to travel from Egypt to Rome and become immersed in the lives of historical figures in a way intangible before. The characters and people are brought to life on the pages and their emotions and causes are strongly felt as if a reader was a participant in their day to day lives.

This is a general market novel that I thoroughly enjoyed and would easily say it could be meant for any audience, young adult or adult. The only caution with a young adult I would say is for maturity. Be forewarned of the historically accurate references to the indulgences that the Romans participated in that may be distasteful. Each page brings to light the good and the bad of history and makes me want to delve a bit deeper and just go get a textbook and read. (Yet this is so much more entertaining!)

My favorite part is basically a Roman version of a Robin Hood wanting to bring out the very best. With issues of slavery, indiscretion, betrayal, kidnapping, murder, suicide, illness, birth, adventure, travel, romance, secrets, true love, and long lasting truth every page keeps a reader on their toes. I highly recommend this and every other novel by author Michelle Moran.

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.Also see my review of Nefertiti and The Heretic Queen.

[Q&A with Michelle Moran \(2009\)](#)

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I just love that book cover!!

This review was originally posted on Creative Madness Mama.

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## Alice says

Que dire de ce livre... Si ce n'est qu'il est absolument génial? Je n'avais jamais lu de livre sur l'Egypte ancienne, et ça a été une découverte totale.

Cleopatra Selene, et son jumeau, Alexander Helios, sont amenés à Rome comme prix de guerre après la mort de leurs parents, Marc Anthony et Cleopatra. La, ils seront élevés par la sœur d'Octavian, Octavia, et sont amenés à découvrir le monde romain, dans une des cours les plus fascinantes du monde.

Ce livre m'a accrochée dès les premières pages: par les personnages, l'intrigue, la reconstruction de l'époque, et l'écriture. C'est un des bénéfices de lire dans la langue originale: on ne perd rien à cause d'une traduction, et on peut lire le roman comme l'auteur l'a écrit.

Bien qu'une œuvre de fiction, ce livre s'inspire d'une réalité et de personnages historiques. Le portrait de Selene était magnifiquement réalisé: on retrouvait la fille de sa mère, sans pour autant qu'être la fille de sa mère soit ce qui la définit. C'était un personnage ayant une vraie profondeur, caractérisée psychologiquement et avec une vraie réflexion, et pas simplement une figure ballotée par les événements. Ses relations avec les autres personnages, par exemple, en particulier avec son frère et Octavian: la complexité et la nature de leur relation étaient vraiment creusées et exploitées au maximum, ce qui rendait son personnage parfaitement crédible et véritable.

De même, les personnages secondaires étaient également bien composés, et crédibles de la même façon, surtout pour les personnages de Livia et de Gaïa. Bien qu'ils n'apparaissent pas excessivement dans le livre, ils sont toujours présents en arrière plan, et servent beaucoup à l'histoire. Une bonne caractérisation était donc essentielle ici, et Michelle Moran l'a réussie avec succès.

Le portrait de cette époque du monde romain était également très bien réalisé: non seulement la géographie et l'apparence de Rome et de l'Italie à cette époque, mais aussi les habitudes et les vies des habitants, ce qui était également un très bon moyen de faire contraster la façon dont vivait Selene et Alexander avant de venir à Rome avec ce qu'il découvre en venant y habiter. Les bâtiments, les courses de char, les jeux du cirque...

Selene est elle passionnée par le dessin et l'architecture, et en vient à travailler avec l'architecte Vitruvius, ce qui la démarque encore plus de ceux habitants avec elle. C'est une jeune femme passionnée, forte, et capable de se défendre. Elle est une des plus appliquée dans sa scolarité, mais tient également à ceux qu'elle aime et n'est pas égoïste. Sans pour autant avoir l'air d'un personnage trop idéalisé, c'en est un crédible et appréciable.

Un autre bon point pour ce livre: le très bon mélange de réalité et de fiction. Malgré le fait que les histoires racontées dans le livre ne soit que fiction, elle se mêlent très bien avec les vrais faits historiques, et forment un très bon ensemble: tout était dit de façon tellement précise que je n'avais aucun mal à me le représenter dans le contexte de la Rome Ancienne, sans pour autant que ça ne jure.

Les relations 'amoureuses' de Selene ne prenaient pas non plus trop de place: elle est attirée par Marcellus, neveu de l'empereur, qui lui est déjà fiancé, mais ne remarque pas qu'elle a attiré l'oeil de Juba, garde le plus proche d'Octavian et prince de Numidie. Cette histoire était très bien construite et intégrée à la trame générale, ne paraissant pas trop lourde ni trop peu intégrée.

Michelle Moran inclut également dans ce livre un personnage fictif, l'Aigle Rouge, qui lui représente un combat bien réel: la situation des esclaves à l'époque. Ce personnage s'inscrivait parfaitement bien dans le

récit, et permettait ainsi de le rendre plus vivant et du lui donner encore plus d'authenticité.

J'ai été déçue quand se livre s'est terminé, tant j'aurais voulu pouvoir en lire plus. Il est magnifiquement écrit, avec des personnages solides et une intrigue plausible, intrigante et est ainsi un livre superbe. J'ai adoré le lire, et il m'a donné le goût de lire plus de livre sur cette époque.

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### **Ashley Owens says**

I did not expect to like this as much as I did! But I ended up pleasantly surprised! A great combination of history, action, and angst. I enjoyed Selene as a main character - she was compassionate, lovely, fierce, and loving. The author did a great job of making me feel like I was learning about ancient Egypt and the intricacies of Rome. If all Historical Fiction were written like this, I would read it from any era. I highly recommend this, even if some bits of it were predictable!

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### **Elisha Condie says**

This book was ok, just fine, pretty good . . . so it was nice, but not great. I liked the historical details about the day to day life of Romans under the rule of Augustus. I liked the descriptions of building interiors and places that made them come to life.

The characters I didn't like quite so much. Even Selene, the cool headed 12 year old daughter this book is about was just a little *too* cool - she's so mature that Vitruvius takes her on to help design a mausoleum. Really? A 12 year old? And then the book seemed to want to both linger on everyday details as well as tell years worth of story. So at the end when Selene is reflecting how she came to Italy as a girl and is now a woman I had to go back and do the math. . . and yep, she's 15 when she's talking. Made me not *quite* as touched by her journey.

I found myself wishing this book was about Cleopatra herself, as other characters talked about her and Egypt - now HER I wanted to get to know.

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### **Angele says**

Wow! I loved this book! 'Cleopatra's Daughter' is one of the best books I have read for a long time! Cleopatra Selene, her twin brother, Alexander, and their young brother Ptolemy suffer the loss of their parents, Cleopatra and Marc Antony, when Romans invade Egypt. As the children of the King and Queen of Egypt, Selene and her brothers are forcibly taken to Rome, essentially as prizes of the war. The story takes flight after their arrival in Rome and the twins adjust to a vastly different lifestyle than they knew in Egypt. Octavian is the ruler of Rome and the person responsible for their parents' deaths, but they have no choice to obey and trust him because he is responsible for their livelihood. Octavian has the children live with his kind sister and her son, but still their fates are ominously uncertain. When they arrive in Rome, Selene and Alexander are only eleven and not a threat to Octavian, but will they still be safe when they reach adulthood at 15?

Each and every character leapt off the page and their vivid personalities were based on historical record.

Selene was definitely her mother's daughter, an intelligent, strong girl, not afraid to stand up for herself and what she believes in. Her compassion for the less fortunate showed her soft and caring side. Selene had a passion for drawing and her talent for sketching buildings impressed even Octavian.

Selene's peers were more interested in betting on chariot races and shopping than participating in her scholarly and charitable pursuits, but they were definitely supportive of her and more idealistic than the older generation. Selene loves getting attention from Octavian's nephew and probable heir, Marcellus. Marcellus is handsome, young, and carefree, and clearly admires Selene's beauty as well as her morals. Selene fails to notice that Juba, one of Octavian's most trusted guards, admires her as well for her strength and hope along with her humanitarian endeavors.

I loved the portrayal of Selene's relationship with Alexander. As twins, they had an incredibly close bond that was strengthened by the loss of their family and home. Sometimes they felt like all they had was each other. They were much more learned than most Romans, due to their mother's guidance, and they would speak to each other in languages that no one else could understand. Moran really captured their deep bond, affection for each other, and even playfulness.

The author added the fictional character of the Red Eagle to represent those Romans who fought against slavery. The identity of the Red Eagle is a secret and the mystery surrounding him and his adventures add a lot of excitement to the story.

Michelle Moran really brought Selene's world alive. She told an epic story but never lost sight of the everyday details of ancient Rome. I felt like I could see Juba's statues, Selene's scrolls, and Marcellus and Alexander's betting dice. My only complaint about this book is that at 400 pages, it was over too soon! I feel like there is much more of Selene's story to be told, and really hope that Moran has plans for a sequel!

Reviewed for: <http://inthehammockblog.blogspot.com/>

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### **Lexi says**

While an interesting take on the children of Cleopatra and Marc Antony, there is very little imagination or even characterization going on here. You don't feel attached to the characters, there is little to no reason to keep reading, and even the plot is a play-by-play account and not a real story. The ending feels more like a sop to keep the reader happy than an ending, and even the more intriguing characters seem flat and uncaring. I enjoyed the background because I like historical fiction, but for the most part, it's a shame. There was so much potential with this story, and Moran botched it.

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### **Laura Cleveland says**

What a waste of timber! The plot in this "novel" is paper-thin and the dialogue is perfectly puerile. I am astounded that others have given this punishing volume fine ratings. The breadth of this subject would have

been better left to more finely chiseled authors.

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## **Iset says**

In terms of the recommendation to those who love historical fiction and ancient Egypt, as a voracious reader and someone so interested in history that I've made a career out of it, I've got to say that my response was more of a mixed bag to this book.

There were good and bad things to say about this book. I didn't like the blatant name-dropping, especially as it served little to no purpose and seemed to be added in purely for the "Ooooh, look, there's Ovid! And this is Vercingetorix's daughter!!!" factor. It just seemed unnecessary to drop names when the main characters and plot ought to be able to carry a novel. There were also some implausible moments, such as Octavian taking the children with him out and about in Alexandria, or Octavia befriending them instantly (having the children by another woman of the husband who abandoned you dropped into your care? You'd at least think it'd take a while to bond). Also the twins seem to fit into their new lives and companions in Rome rather quickly, which surprised me given the traumatising experiences they'd been through. It just takes away from a sense that these are real people reacting as real people would. Well-drawn characters react to events around them in a way that makes sense given their personality and experiences, and it shows refinement from an author if they can create characters who seem to react and grow almost naturally.

There's a lot of exposition throughout the book. It's all too obvious that it's exposition for the benefit of the reader, and unfortunately it hasn't been done subtly. The information conveyed consists of all the most iconic trivia about the Romans that has filtered into the public consciousness, and the way it's presented is rather clunky and simplistic in a "oh and by the way did you know..." kind of way, such as Octavian saying "And remember, a third of Rome's population is enslaved". It's not woven into the plot very often, it tends to take the form of one character verbally explaining things to another character. The plot twists can be seen a mile off, and by page 80 I had guessed who the Red Eagle would be and who Kleopatra Selene would end up with (I'm avoiding saying who so as not to give spoilers, but it's become a real trend in historical fiction recently). The inclusion of the fictional Red Eagle plot surprised me because it's such a well worn storyline in so many books before, the classic "masked fighter of injustice in the big city" trope, and I wondered if Moran felt like she had to include it out of fear that readers would think the unembellished true story was too "boring" or "dull".

In addition, the scope of the story felt very insular and small scale, and not just because Kleopatra Selene is the first person narrator. The sense of epic scale is missing from this book, which feels strange given that the events and characters were so important historically. Many scenes are blinkered and narrow in scope, and I felt that there were some missed opportunities to convey a grander scale of events - for example, Octavian's first triumph is covered in only two pages and most of that consists of Kleopatra Selene's internal thoughts with a few titbits of description thrown in, and I was a bit disappointed that it didn't really evoke the magnitude of the occasion. I was pleasantly surprised by the author's note at the back of the book, and really appreciated Moran having a frank discussion about some of the changes she made to the history. However, I was also disappointed that there were so very many inaccuracies which are not mentioned in the author's note. Poor Octavian takes a beating on the historical accuracy front - his description and many of his actions in the novel are in fact made up - and I thought he was too vilified.

On the positive side, the story built up well to the climax, creating tension and probably the most emotion in the entire novel with a certain tragic incident, and then releasing that tension with the double revelation of

the Red Eagle's identity and the identity of Kleopatra Selene's intended husband. Though the writing was rather simplistic, it seemed more forgivable if I approached this as a children's book. I actually think it was a good marketing decision to rate this book as for Young Adults/Adults (her previous two novels were defined only for the Adults group) - I think Moran needs to go further and market it completely at the early teens age group. Viewing it from that perspective, the story comes off as an enjoyable teenaged adventure romp. It's not earth-shattering literature, but it seems really well suited to an enthusiastic young historian, or those times when you just want to kick back and read something fun and unchallenging.

**4 out of 10**

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### **Lexie says**

I went into CLEOPATRA'S DAUGHTER with almost no idea at all about her children by Marc Antony. This isn't to say I had no idea who they were, but I didn't know their fates beyond that they didn't die with Cleopatra. Moran is careful to note any historical changes she made in the Historical Notes section, although she stayed as true to what is factually known as possible, in as much as possible.

There are smaller details that are interesting and noteworthy—such as Livia's (Octavian's obsequious, spiteful wife) purposeful misspelling of Kleopatra, substituting the 'C' for the 'K' or the topical references to Spartacus, not as a historical mark piece, but as a rebellious slave that cost hundreds of thousands of lives. Or Octavian's careful cruelty (challenging a father to duel his son to the death) and fake humbleness (visitors only see the crude wood benches when visiting, not the luxurious silver-gilted tables and couches his friends dine at).

The key is in the details, after all.

We follow Kleopatra Selene and her twin brother, Helios Alexander (Marc Anthony's 'Sun and Moon'), from the age of 11 years old (in 30 B.C.), all the way to 25 B.C. when they are 15 years old. We start with Octavian storming Kleopatra the VII's palace and taking the children captive for his 'Triumph' in Rome, and end things with Selene finally leaving Rome.

Selene is depicted as being willful, clinging to a past that can never be again and searching for a way to keep herself alive in a kingdom where its ruler will kill a trusted friend's son just because he speaks rashly. I felt pity for Selene, for the troubles she had to endure and rise above, but some of that she brought on herself by being stubborn. Her brother, in contrast, tries to fall into line as quickly as possible. He is the more practical one, but also tends to make foolish choices to 'impress' others.

The cast of characters surrounding Selene are all, with the exception of one, true historical personages she met and interacted with. Most interesting to me was Gallia (a Gallic Princess enslaved three decades before by Julius Caesar after his conquering of Gaul) and Octavia, Octavian's sister. Octavia was at times the most caring, compassionate person Selene had ever met, but she was Roman to her core—employing slaves, devoted to her brother's politics (if not his practices, and a worshiper of the Roman Gods).

This is a wonderful, remarkable book that historical fiction lovers will be immensely pleased with.

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## Karina says

Where to start? When I first started this a month ago I was really disappointed in it. In fact, so disappointed that I put it down for 2-3 weeks. I ordered it because I was in the mood for a historical novel that would teach me things through a fantastic story. A story like one by Follett, Gable, Gordon. Those authors make me feel like I just had the best history lecture ever, without it ever feeling like one. Cleopatra's daughter felt like I was reading a middle grade historical novel. Imagine Percy Jackson turned into Cleopatra's daughter. I would have not ordered it had I known that, but all you ever get to read about is how it is an 'intelligent historical novel' and how the author has been working at archaeological sites around the world.

The characters didn't have any depth, they were naive and extremely young (especially the main character, a 12-year-old girl and her spoiled friend), important characters, like the emperor of Rome, acted unrealistically, the story line was flat and rushed. The most exciting thing happened within the last 50p and it happened completely out of nowhere. Just..ugh, irritating.

As far as historical facts and input goes, this really didn't teach me anything. I studied Latin for over 6 years and am familiar with Roman life during that time. It truly was uncomfortable to see how the author build in facts and dropped names in the most obvious way. 'Here is a fact/historical person for you!!!'- was how it felt.

The only people I'd recommend this to would be girls around the age 12-15 who have never read a historical novel before and can relate to silly girl crushes and naive main characters. It probably is a great first step into the genre for a young teen! I remember reading similar things before heading into 'grown-up' historical fiction. So, all in all, somewhere between 1-2 stars for me.

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## Amy says

Many of us know the story of Cleopatra, the beautiful and famed Egyptian queen who wedded Julius Caesar and Marc Anthony and who killed herself after Octavian conquered Egypt. But how many know what happened to her children? *Cleopatra's Daughter* (ironic, really, that the story persists in snobbishly spelling her name Kleopatra when the title spells it with a C) tells the story of Kleopatra Selene, Cleopatra's daughter who was brought to Rome in chains after her parents' defeat. The story follows her transition from girl to young woman as she lives in Rome and interacts with historical characters ranging from Tiberius to Julia to Ovid.

I enjoyed many aspects of *Cleopatra's Daughter*. Michelle Moran is a good writer and she does a great job fleshing out historical characters and events. It really brought history to life. The story flows well and really is interesting. The historical setting and the basically unknown personality of Selene alone provides a setting for a fascinating book. The mystery thrown in kept the plot going as well. It really was a decent, fun, historical read. However, it never got above 3 stars in my mind. I "liked" it, but only just.

Truthfully, I didn't care much for the main character, Selene. She had very few redeeming qualities. She was snobbish, jealous, conniving, and, frankly, boring. She is perfect at everything. Selene is beautiful, excels at school and is so excellent at drawing that a famous architect basically makes her his star apprentice. She whines about how unfair and difficult her life is (\*gasp\*, Octavian will choose a husband for her! The man could be old!) when in fact it only reflected the reality of every Roman girl. She could easily have been sold as a slave, or killed! The farther I got in the book, the harder it was to sympathize with her.

What I disliked most about Selene was her crush on Marcellus. Talk about angst overload! On the one hand, she is supposed to be this intelligent, shrewd woman. On the other hand, she continues to pine after this

dopey guy for years just because he has a handsome face? Ugh. (view spoiler)

Selene also throws out her sense and intelligence when it comes to the mystery of the Red Eagle. It is OBVIOUS who the Red Eagle is, but she continues to stumble about, mentally accusing the same two people. The Red Eagle plot line was stretched out far too long. Once it became obvious who the Red Eagle was, the mystery ceased to be, and instead there were simply endless paragraphs of Selene and the other characters wondering who it was. While the Red Eagle mystery helped pull the plot from utter dullness, it wasn't quite enough to create suspense.

Perhaps it wasn't just the Red Eagle mystery, the book itself was too long. Moran spends a lot of time talking about the social wrongs of Rome, particularly the way unwanted infants were treated. However, while it adds to Selene's frustration with Rome, it doesn't actually add to an overall plot. Julia's friend's baby and its subsequent abandonment might have added pathos to the story, but to be honest, doesn't seem to have a role.

Overall, I would say my biggest frustration with this book (besides my dislike for Selene) was its loose plot. Is it a romance? A mystery? A slice of life? None of elements are developed well enough to make this book a tight, cohesive story. It was a good story, an enjoyable one, but not something that fully satisfied me. The frustrating thing is, it could have been!

While I wouldn't dissuade anyone from reading *Cleopatra's Daughter*, I also wouldn't go out of my way to recommend it either.

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