

Augustus Lesson Plan

Central Historical Question:
What kind of leader was Augustus?

Materials:

- Copies of Augustus Documents A-F
- Copies of Augustus Graphic Organizer

Plan of Instruction:

1. Introduce lesson: *Today we're going to examine the leader Augustus, who became the first emperor of the Roman Empire in 27 BCE and who died in 14 CE. His original name was Octavian, but he took the title "Augustus" when he became emperor. (You might remind students that Octavian conquered Egypt and was present at Cleopatra's death).*

Hand out Documents A and B (map and coins).

Ask students: *Based on just this evidence, what can we learn about the kind of leader Augustus was?*

Have students complete Graphic Organizer for Round One.

2. Discuss student answers.

Students will likely say that Augustus was popular because he expanded the Roman Empire. They might say that the coins provide evidence that he was popular because the presidents that we put on our coins are popular. You might open this point up for discussion: What if Augustus was the one who decided to print those coins (as he was), do they still serve as evidence of his popularity? Students could still argue that they do because they emphasize his territorial conquests and the subsequent wealth that the Roman Empire enjoyed.

3. Hand out Documents C and D and have students complete Graphic Organizer for Round Two.

4. Review student answers.

Students will likely write that Augustus was a powerful and effective leader who also had a touch of humility and compassion. However, they should note that neither source is reliable—the first is written by Augustus himself and the second by a soldier in his army. It is important to note that this

does not mean the claims are false. The documents do offer evidence of Augustus's power and effectiveness and students should say so in their first claim.

5. Hand out Documents E and F and have students complete Graphic Organizer for Round Three.
6. Review student answers.

Documents E and F offer contrasting portraits of Augustus's leadership. Document E suggests that he was power-hungry, manipulative, and politically shrewd. Document F suggests that he was humble and did not seek the spotlight, and saw himself as the equal of the Senators.

7. Use the contradiction between documents E and F to launch discussion about Augustus's character. In particular, focus on the following:
 - Are these contradictions irreconcilable, or is it possible that Augustus was all of these things?
 - What questions remain about Augustus's leadership?
 - What evidence might we find that could answer our questions?
 - Why is it so challenging to find reliable evidence about Augustus?

Citations:

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