

# EMPERORS OF ROME

Augustus was the first in a long series of emperors who ruled the Roman world for over 400 years. Most emperors made a show of consulting the Senate, but in fact they had the power to rule exactly as they pleased. Even though the emperor controlled a huge empire, his life could be in danger if he became unpopular. Jealous rivals and assassins were never very far away.

## BRUTAL BODYGUARDS

The emperor had his own special group of soldiers called the Praetorian Guard, whose job was to protect him and his family. However, these supposedly loyal bodyguards sometimes had their own ideas about who should rule Rome, and several emperors were actually murdered by their own protectors.

## MAD, BAD AND DANGEROUS TO KNOW

After Augustus's death in AD14, the imperial family was plunged into a turbulent time of scheming and betrayal, and some of the emperors from this period behaved with extreme cruelty.

Augustus's stepson, the Emperor Tiberius (AD14-37), was a ruthless and corrupt man, and having power as the emperor made him worse. Worried that people were plotting to assassinate him, he executed dozens of important Romans and then fled to the island of Capri. He stayed there for the last 11 years of his rule, and any visitor he didn't like was thrown over the cliffs to his death.



*This coin shows the Emperor Tiberius wearing a laurel crown - a symbol of military victory often worn by Roman emperors.*

The next emperor, Caligula (AD37-41), may have been insane. He believed he was a god, and it was said that he tried to have his horse elected consul. He once made his soldiers attack the sea, because he was angry with the sea god Neptune.

*Here you can see the actor John Hurt as the Emperor Caligula in the television production I, Claudius*

