

# GAIUS MARIUS



**BIOGRAPHY WORKBOOK**

## GAIUS MARIUS

(157-86 B.C.E.)

Gaius Marius was at this time forty-eight years old. Two-thirds of his life were over, and a name which was to sound throughout the world and be remembered through all ages, had as yet been scarcely heard of beyond the army and the political clubs in Rome.

1. How old was Gaius Marius when he began to enter the public eye?

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Gaius Marius was born at Arpinum, a Latin township, seventy miles from the capital, in the year 157 B.C.E. His father was a small farmer, and he was himself bred to the plow. Gaius Marius joined the army early, and soon attracted notice by his punctual discharge of his duties.

In a time of growing looseness, Marius was strict himself in keeping discipline and in enforcing it as he rose in the service. He was in Spain when Jugurtha was there, and made himself especially useful to Scipio.

2. In what township was Gaius Marius born?

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Marius forced his way steadily upward, by his mere soldier-like qualities, to the rank of military tribune. Rome, too, had learnt to know him, for he was chosen tribune of the people the year after the murder of Gaius Gracchus. Being a self-made man, he belonged naturally to the popular party (the Populares). While in office he gave offense in some way to the men in power, and was called before the Senate to answer for himself. But he had the right on his side, it is likely, for they found him stubborn and impertinent, and they could make nothing of their charges against him. He was not bidding at this time, however, for the support of the mob. He had the integrity and sense to oppose the largesse of corn. He forfeited his popularity by trying to close the public granaries before the practice had passed into a system. He

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seemed as if made of a block of hard Roman oak, gnarled and knotted, but sound in all its fibers.

3. To what political party did Gaius Marius belong?

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Gaius Marius' professional merit continued to recommend him. At the age of forty he became praetor, and was sent to Spain, where he left a mark again by the successful severity by which he cleared the province of *banditti* (bandits). He was a man neither given himself to talking, nor much talked about in the world. But he was sought for wherever work was to be done, and he had made himself respected and valued in high circles. After his return from the Iberian Peninsula (Spain) he had married into one of the most distinguished of the patrician families.

4. What public office did Marius enter at age forty?

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Marius by this marriage became a person of social consideration. His father had been a client of the Metelli. Cæcilius Metellus, who must have known Marius by reputation and probably in person, invited him to go as second in command in the African campaign. Marius was moderately successful. Towns were taken, battles were won: Metellus was incorruptible, and the Numidians sued for peace. But Jugurtha wanted terms, and the consul demanded unconditional surrender. Jugurtha withdrew into the desert and the war dragged on. Marius, perhaps ambitious, perhaps impatient at the general's want of vigor, began to think that he could make quicker work of it.

5. Why did the war with Jugurtha drag on?

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The popular party was stirring again in Rome, the Senate having so notoriously disgraced itself. There was just irritation that a petty African

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prince could defy the whole power of Rome for so many years. Though a democratic consul had been unheard of for a century, the name of Marius began to be spoken of as a possible candidate. Marius consented to stand. The law required that he must be present in person at the election, and he applied to his commander for leave of absence. Metellus laughed at his pretensions, and bade him wait another twenty years. Marius, however, persisted, and was allowed to go. The patricians strained their resources to defeat him, but he was chosen with enthusiasm. Metellus was recalled, and the conduct of the Numidian war was assigned to the new hero of the "Populares."

6. Why did Metellus laugh at the perceived pretensions of Gaius Marius?

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A shudder of alarm ran, no doubt, through the Senate house, when the determination of the people

was known. A successful general could not be disposed of so easily as oratorical tribunes. Fortunately, Marius was not a politician. He had no belief in democracy. He was a soldier, and had a soldier's way of thinking on government and the methods of it. His first step was a reformation in the army.

7. Why was the Senate frightened by Marius' election as tribune?

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Hitherto the Roman legions had been no more than the citizens in arms, called for the moment from their various occupations, to return to them when the occasion for their services was past. Marius had perceived that fewer men, better trained and disciplined, could be made more effective and be more easily handled.

8. Why was Marius displeased with the system of a volunteer citizen army?

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for his own sword, shield, etc., or a man who has been equipped by the state?

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He had studied war as a science. He had perceived that the present weakness need be no more than an accident, and that there was a latent force in the Roman state, which needed only organization to resume its ascendancy. "He enlisted," it was said, "the worst of the citizens," men, that is to say, who had no occupation, and who became soldiers by profession. As persons without property could not have furnished themselves at their own cost, he must have carried out the scheme proposed by Gracchus, and equipped them at the expense of the state.

Marius' discipline was of the sternest. The experiment was new. Men of rank who had a taste for war in earnest, and did not wish that the popular party should have the whole benefit and credit of the improvements, were willing to go with him. Among them was a dissipated young patrician, called Lucius Sulla, whose name also was destined to be memorable.

9. In the old Roman army, citizens had to have enough money to buy their own weaponry. Under Marius, a soldier's wealth did not matter, because the government bought the soldier's weaponry. Do you believe that Marius was right to open up soldiering to the poor? Who, in your opinion, makes a better soldier—a man who has paid

10. Why were the wealthy still willing to enter military service following Marius' reforms?

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By these methods, and out of these materials, an army was formed, such as no Roman general had hitherto led. It performed extraordinary marches, carried its water supplies with it in skins, and followed the enemy across sandy deserts hitherto found impassable. In less than two years the war was over. The Moors, to whom Jugurtha had fled, surrendered him to Sulla. Jugurtha was brought in chains to Rome, where he finished his life in a dungeon.

11. How long, after Marius' reforms, until Jugurtha was defeated?

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Marius had formed an army barely in time to save Italy from being totally overwhelmed. A vast migratory wave of population (largely Germanic barbarians) had been set in motion behind the Rhine and the Danube.

The German forests were uncultivated. The hunting and pasture grounds were too straight for the numbers crowded into them, and two enormous hordes were rolling westward and southward in search of some new abiding place. Each division consisted of hundreds of thousands. They traveled with their wives and children. Their wagons, as with the ancient Scythians and with the early American pioneers, being at once their conveyance and their home. Gray-haired priestesses tramped along among them, barefooted, in white linen dresses, the knife at their girdle—northern Iphigenias, sacrificing prisoners as they were taken, to the gods of Valhalla.

12. Why were Germanic barbarians encroaching upon Roman territory?

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On they swept, eating up the country, and the people flying before them. In 113 B.C.E., the skirts of the Cimbri (a barbarian tribe from

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northern Europe, in what is now Denmark's Jutland Peninsula, probably Germanic but possibly Celtic) had encountered a small Roman force near Trieste, and destroyed it. Four years later another attempt was made to stop the Cimbri, but the Roman army was beaten and its camp taken. The Cimbrian host did not, however, turn at that time upon Italy. Their aim was the south of France. They made their way through the Alps into Switzerland, where the Helvetii joined them and the united mass rolled over the Jura (a mountain range located in modern France near the French borders with Germany and Switzerland) and down the bank of the Rhone.

13. Who were the Cimbri?

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Roused at last into the exertion, the Senate sent into Gaul (what is now France) the largest force which the Romans had ever brought into the field. They met the Cimbri at Orange,

and were simply annihilated. Eighty thousand Romans and forty thousand camp-followers were said to have fallen. The numbers in such cases are generally exaggerated, but the extravagance of the report is a witness to the greatness of the overthrow. The Romans had received a worse blow than at Cannæ. They were brave enough, but they were commanded by persons whose recommendations for command were birth or fortune—"preposterous men," as Marius termed them, who had waited for their appointment to open the military manuals.

14. Why was Marius opposed to "preposterous men" in the military?

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Had the Cimbri chosen at this moment to re-cross the Alps into Italy, they had only to go and take possession, and Alaric (a future barbarian conqueror of Rome) would have been antedated by five centuries. In great danger it was the Senate's business to suspend the constitution.

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The constitution was set aside now, but it was set aside by the people themselves, not by the Senate. One man only could save the country, and that man was Marius. His consulship was over, and custom forbade his reelection. The Senate might have appointed him Dictator, but would not. The people, custom or no custom, chose him consul a second time—a significant acknowledgment that the empire, which had been won by the sword, must be held by the sword, and that the sword itself must be held by the hand that was best fitted to use it.

15. Do you agree with the sentiment that an empire won by the sword must be held by the sword? Why or why not?

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Marius first triumphed (a triumph was a sort of parade held for a military hero) for his African victory, and, as an intimation to the Senate that the power for the moment was his and not theirs, he entered the Curia in his triumphal dress. He then prepared for the barbarians who, to the alarmed imagination of the city, were already knocking at its gates.

Time was the important element in the matter. Had the Cimbri come at once after their victory at Orange, Italy would have been theirs. But they did not come. With the unguided movements of some wild force of nature, the Cimbri swerved away through Aquitaine to the Pyrenees. They swept across the mountains into Spain. Thence, turning north, they passed up the Atlantic coast and round to the Seine, the Gauls flying before them. Thence on to the Rhine, where the vast body of the Teutons joined them, and fresh detachments of the Helvetii. It was as if some vast tide-wave had surged over the country and rolled through it, searching out the easiest passages.

16. Imagine that you are an ancient Cimbrian. Would you have marched on Rome? Why or why not?

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professional service, with regular pay. Trained corps of engineers were attached to each legion. The campaigns of the Romans were thenceforward to be conducted with spade and pickaxe as much as with sword and javelin, and the soldiers learnt the use of tools as well as arms.

17. The Roman army was given time to prepare for an invasion thanks to the wanderings of the Cimbrians.
- a. True
  - b. False

The effect of the change was like enchantment. The delay of the barbarians made it unnecessary to wait for them in Italy. Leaving Catulus, his colleague in the consulship, to check the Cimbri in Venetia, Marius went himself, taking Sulla with him, into the south of France.

As the barbarian host came on, Marius occupied a fortified camp near Aix. He allowed the enormous procession to roll past him in their wagons toward the Alps. Then, following cautiously, he watched his opportunity to fall on them. The barbarians were brave, but they had no longer mere legionaries to fight with, but a powerful machine, and the entire mass of them, men, women, and children, in numbers which, however

At length, in two divisions, the invaders moved definitely toward Italy, the Cimbri following their old tracks by the Eastern Alps toward Aquileia and the Adriatic, the Teutons passing down through Provence, and making for the road along the Mediterranean.

Two years had been consumed in these wanderings, and Marius was by this time ready for them. The Senate had dropped the reins, and no longer governed or misgoverned. The popular party (the Populares), represented by the army, was supreme. Marius was continued in office, and was a fourth time consul. He had completed his military reforms, and the army was now a

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uncertain, were rather those of a nation than an army, were swept out of existence. The barbarians were destroyed on the 20th of July, 102 B.C.E. In the year following, the same fate overtook their comrades.

18. When were the Cimbri destroyed by Marius near the Alps?

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The Cimbri had forced the passes through the mountains. They had beaten the unscientific patrician Catulus, and had driven him back on the Po. But Marius came to his rescue. The Cimbri were cut to pieces near Mantua, in the summer of 101 B.C.E., and Italy was saved.

The victories of Marius mark a new epoch in Roman history. The legions were no longer the levy of the citizens in arms, who were themselves the state for which they fought. The legionaries were citizens still. They had votes, and they used them. But they were professional soldiers with the modes of thought which belong to soldiers. Besides, the power of the hustings (platforms for making political speeches) was now the power of the sword. The constitution remained to appearance intact, and

means were devised sufficient to encounter, it might be supposed, the new danger. Standing armies were prohibited in Italy. Victorious generals returning from campaigns abroad were required to disband their legions on entering the sacred soil. But the materials of these legions remained a distinct order from the rest of the population, capable of instant combination, and in combination, irresistible, save by opposing combinations of the same kind.

19. How did Marius' military reforms change the political landscape of ancient Rome?

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The danger from the Germanic barbarians was no sooner gone than political anarchy broke loose again. Marius, the man of the people, was the savior of his country. He was made consul a fifth time, and a sixth. The party which had given him his command shared, of course, in his pre-eminence. The elections could be no

longer interfered with or the voters intimidated. The public offices were filled with the most violent agitators, who believed that the time had come to avenge the Gracchi, and carry out the democratic revolution, to establish the ideal Republic, and the direct rule of the citizen assembly.

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This, too, was a chimera (a foolish or impossible fantasy). If the Roman Senate could not govern, far less could the Roman mob govern. Marius stood aside, and let the voices rage. He could not be expected to support a system which had brought the country so near to ruin. He had no belief in the visions of the demagogues, but the time was not ripe to make an end of it all. Had he tried, the army would not have gone with him; so he sat still, till faction had done its work. The popular heroes of the hour were the tribune Saturninus and the praetor Glaucia. They carried corn laws and land laws—whatever laws they pleased to propose. The administration remaining with the Senate, they carried a vote that every senator should take an oath to execute their laws under penalty of fine and expulsion. Marius did not like it, and even opposed it, but let it pass at last.

Marius was an indifferent politician. He perceived as well as anyone that violence must not go on, but he hesitated to put it down. He knew that the aristocracy feared and hated him. Between them and the people's consul no alliance was possible. He did not care to alienate his friends, and there may have been other difficulties, which we do not know, in his way. The army itself was perhaps divided. On the popular side there were two factions: a moderate one, represented by Memmius, who, as tribune, had impeached the senators for the Jugurthine infamies; the other, the advanced radicals, led by Glaucia and Saturninus. Memmius and Glaucia were both candidates for the consulship; and as Memmius was likely to succeed, he was murdered.

20. Why was the dream of direct democracy a chimera?

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21. Who led the two factions within the Populares?

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Above the tumults of the factions in the Capitol, a cry rising into shrillness began to be heard from Italy. Gaius Gracchus had wished to extend the Roman franchise (right to vote) to the Italian states, and the suggestion had cost him his popularity and his life. The Italian provinces had furnished their share of the armies which had beaten Jugurtha, and had destroyed the German invaders. They now demanded that they should have the position which Gracchus designed for them: that they should be allowed to legislate for themselves, and no longer lie at the mercy of others, who neither understood their necessities, nor cared for their interests.

The Italian provincials had no friends in the city, save a few far-sighted statesmen. Senate and mob had at least one point of agreement—that the spoils of the empire should be fought for among themselves. At the first mention of the invasion of their monopoly on voting, a law was passed making the very agitation of the subject punishable by death.

22. On what point were the Romans in agreement?

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The contrast of character between two classes of population became at once uncomfortably evident. The provincials had been the right arm of the empire. Rome, a city of rich men with families of slaves, and of a crowd of impoverished freemen without employment to keep them in health and strength, could no longer bring into the field a force which could hold its ground against the gentry and peasants of Samnium.

The Senate enlisted Greeks, Numidians—anyone whose services they could purchase. They had to encounter soldiers who had been trained and disciplined by Marius, and they were taught, by defeat upon defeat, that they had a worse enemy before them than the Germanic barbarians.

Marius himself had almost withdrawn from public life. He had no heart for the quarrel, and did not care greatly to exert himself. At the bottom, perhaps, he thought that the Italians were in the right. The Senate discovered that they were helpless, and must come to terms if they would escape destruction. They abandoned the original point of difference, and they offered to open the franchise to every Italian state south of the Po, which had not taken arms, or which returned immediately to its allegiance. The war had broken out for a definite cause. When the cause was removed

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no reason remained for its continuance.

23. Why did the Romans finally relent, and open up the franchise to other Italians?

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The panting Senate was thus able to breathe again. The war continued, but under better auspices. Sound material could now be collected again for the army. Marius being in the background, the chosen knight of the aristocracy, Lucius Sulla, whose fame in the Cimbrian war had been only second to that of his commander's, came at once to the front. Too late the democratic leaders repented of their folly in encouraging the Senate to refuse the franchise to the Italians. The Italians, they began to perceive, would be their surest political allies. Gaius Gracchus had been right after all. The Roman democracy must make haste to offer

the Italians more than all which the Senate was ready to concede to them. Together they could make an end of misrule, and place Marius once more at their head.

24. Why did the Populares come to see the Italian provincials as their allies?

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Much of this was perhaps the scheming passion of revolution; much of it was legitimate indignation, penitent for its errors and anxious to atone for them. Marius had his personal grievances. The aristocrats were stealing from him even his military reputation, and claiming for Sulla the capture of Jugurtha. He was willing, perhaps anxious, to take the Eastern command. Sulpicius Rufus, once a champion of the Senate and the most brilliant orator in Rome, went over to the people in the excitement. Rufus was chosen tribune, and at once proposed to enfranchise the remainder of Italy.

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25. Who were the aristocrats praising for the capture of Jugurtha?

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But Sulla was not so easily got rid of. It was no time for nice considerations. He had formed an army in Campania out of the legions which had served against the Italians. He had made his soldiers devoted to him. They were ready to go anywhere and do anything which Sulla bade them. After so many murders, and so many commotions, the constitution had lost its sacred character. A popular assembly was, of all conceivable bodies, the least fit to govern an empire. In Sulla's eyes, the Senate, whatever its deficiencies, was the only possible sovereign of Rome. The people were a rabble, and their voices the clamor of fools, who must be taught to know their masters.

Sulla's reply to Sulpicius and to the vote for his recall, was to march on the city of Rome. He led his troops within the circle which no legionary in arms was allowed to enter, and he lighted his watch-fires in the Forum itself. The people resisted. Sulpicius was killed. Marius, the savior of his country, had to fly for his life, pursued

by assassins, with a price set upon his head. Twelve of the prominent popular leaders were immediately executed without trial. In hot haste, swift, decisive measures were taken, which permanently, as Sulla hoped, or if not permanently, at least for the moment, would lame the limbs of the democracy.

26. Describe Sulla's march on Rome.

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Marius was no sooner out of Italy than the democratic party rose, with Cinna at their head, to demand the restoration of the old constitution. Cinna had been sworn to maintain Sulla's reforms, but no oath could be held binding which was extorted at the sword's point. A fresh Sulpicius was found in Carbo, a popular tribune. A more valuable supporter was found

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in Quintus Sertorius, a soldier of fortune, but a man of real gifts, and even of genius. Disregarding the new obligation to obtain the previous consent of the Senate, Cinna called the assembly together to repeal the acts which Sulla had forced on them.

The wounds of the social war were scarcely cicatrized, and the peace had left the allies imperfectly satisfied. Their dispersed armies gathered again about Cinna and Sertorius. Old Marius, who had been hunted through marsh and forest, and had been hiding with difficulty in Africa, came back at the news that Italy had risen again. Six thousand of his veterans flocked to him at the sound of his name. The Senate issued proclamations. The limitations on the Italian franchise left by Sulla were abandoned. Every privilege which had been asked for was conceded. It was too late. Concessions made in fear might be withdrawn on the return of safety. Marius and Cinna joined their forces. The few troops in the pay of the Senate deserted to them. They appeared together at the gates of the city, and Rome capitulated.

27. Where had Marius been hiding?

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There was a bloody score to be wiped out. Marius bears the chief blame for the scenes which followed. Undoubtedly he was in no pleasant humor. A price had been set on his head, his house had been destroyed, his property had been confiscated, he himself had been chased like a wild beast, and he had not deserved such treatment. He had saved Italy when but for him it would have been wasted by the swords of the Germanic barbarians. His power had afterward been absolute, but he had not abused it for party purposes. The Senate had no reason to complain of him. He had touched none of their privileges, incapable and dishonest as he knew them to be. His crime in their eyes had been his eminence. They had now shown themselves as cruel as they were worthless. If public justice was disposed to make an end of them, he saw no cause for interference.

28. Why was Marius prepared to use harsh measures against the Senate?

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Thus the familiar story repeated itself: wrong was punished by wrong, and another item was entered on the bloody account which was being scored up year after year. The noble lords and their friends had killed the people in the Forum. They were killed in turn by the soldiers of Marius. Fifty senators perished, not those who were especially guilty, but those who were most politically marked as patrician leaders. With them fell a thousand equites, commoners of fortune, who had thrown in their lot with the aristocracy. From retaliatory political revenge the transition was easy to pillage and wholesale murder; and for many days the wretched city was made a prey to robbers and cut-throats.

So ended the year 87, the darkest and bloodiest which the guilty city had yet experienced. Marius and Cinna were chosen consuls for the year ensuing, and a witches' prophecy was fulfilled, that Marius should have a seventh consulate. But the glory had departed from him. His sun was already setting, redly, among crimson clouds. He lived but a fortnight after his inauguration, and he died in his bed on the 13th of January, at the age of seventy-one.

"The mother of the Gracchi," said Mirabeau, "cast the dust of her murdered sons into the air, and out of it sprang Gaius Marius."

29. How many senators perished?

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30. How many times was Marius elected consul?

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31. Of Marius' many achievements, what would you most like to emulate? Of the pitfalls Marius encountered, what would you most like to avoid?

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## Word Search Puzzle



## Terms

assassin

Celtic

consulship

gentry

measures

popular party

prophecy

reforms

soldiers

unconditional

barbarians

Cimbri

demands

Germanic

patrician

preposterous

provincial

retaliatory

tribune

Valhalla

capitulate

consul

equites

intimation

peasants

privileges

reformation

Senate

triumph

weaponry

**Gaius Marius**



*Marius in exile.*