

# Octavia Thurina Minor

c. 69–11 BC



## HOW SHE AFFECTED THE REGION

Octavia Thurina Minor is an important woman in Roman history, known for her kindness, loyalty, and dignity. She was one of the first Roman women to have coins made in her image. After her death, her brother, Augustus, declared her a goddess and built the Gate of Octavia in her memory.



© The Granger Collection, New York



*As you read the biography below, think about Octavia's strength and courage during a time of political upheaval.*

Octavia Thurina Minor was born in Nola, a city in southern Italy. Not much is known about her childhood. Octavia came from an important family. Her uncle was Julius Caesar, and her brother was Augustus—the future Roman emperor.

Around 54 BC, her stepfather arranged for Octavia to be married. Her new husband was a **consul** in the Roman Empire. He was also a member of an important Roman family. Octavia's husband died after they had three children together.

At the time, Rome was ruled by three leaders. One was Octavia's brother, Augustus; another was Mark Antony. These two rulers were often in conflict. It was hoped that if Octavia married Mark Antony, these conflicts would end. The Roman Senate arranged for Octavia to marry Mark Antony. The marriage was a kind of political **alliance**. Octavia worked hard to help them resolve their conflicts. She succeeded, but only for a short while. She also continued to raise her three children and Mark Antony's children.

## VOCABULARY

**upheaval** a sudden, violent change

**consul** the highest elected office of the Roman Republic

**alliance** a union for a common objective or goal

**traitor** someone who is disloyal to the government

**portico** porch or walkway with columns that support the roof

Octavia did her best to help Mark Antony rule. Once, while he was away fighting, she went to him with extra troops and money. She also tried to maintain the peace between Mark Antony and her brother.

However, Mark Antony had become involved with Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt. Many Romans now considered Mark Antony a **traitor**. In 32 BC, Mark Antony divorced Octavia. He later committed suicide in 30 BC. Octavia never remarried.

After one of Octavia's sons died, she lost interest in Rome's politics. Octavia died in 11 BC, but her contributions lived on. In honor of his beloved sister, Augustus built temples and monuments in her name, including the **Portico** of Octavia—which still stands today.

### WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

**1. Recall** Why was Octavia considered a kind woman?

---

---

**2. Evaluate** Why do you think marriages were arranged in the Roman Empire?

---

---

### ACTIVITY

Imagine you were hired by one of Mark Antony or Octavia's children to create a new monument to honor Octavia's character. Draw or explain what the monument will look like.