



Study Questions

Chapters 25-26:

Is there any merit to Claudius/Pallas' defence of this adoption?

Do any character in these chapters escape Tacitus' acerbic criticism?

Chapters 41-43:

Trace all the ways that the Agrippina/Nero faction within the palace increase their power.

What impression do you get of Claudius from these chapters?

Chapters 52-53:

How does Tacitus use irony to attack some of his targets?

Chapters 56-59:

What do these chapters show about the strengths and weaknesses of Roman government at this period?

Chapters 64-69:

How does Tacitus show that Agrippina is in control at every step?

How does Tacitus make every character appear unprincipled and absurd?

General questions

"Satire is a kind of poetry in which human vices are reprehended." (John Dryden) Is this a good description of Tacitus' *Annals*?

What attitudes towards religion and the gods can we discern either from Tacitus or those in the *Annals*?

Tacitus claimed to write 'sine ira et studio' (*Annals* 1.1.). To what extent do you think that he lived up to this aim?

Does Tacitus seem to be writing history or historical fiction?



Why do you think that Tacitus gives so much of the narrative space from these years to the power struggle within the imperial family over the succession?

Is it better to see Annals book 12 as the tragedy or the comedy of Claudius?

How significant are rhetoric and poetry to Tacitus' literary style and narrative?

What were the strengths and weaknesses of the system of government known as the principate?

For his portrayal of Agrippina, Tacitus has been called both a feminist and a misogynist. Which seems fairer?