Document C: Plutarch, Life of Antony

Plutarch was a Greek historian who lived approximately between 50 CE – 120 CE. He was a wealthy aristocrat who wrote about famous Greeks and Romans. His biographies focused on people’s moral strengths and weaknesses.

Here is an excerpt from his biography of Mark Antony.

There came a man from the country carrying a basket; and when the guards asked him what he was bringing there, he opened the basket, took away the leaves, and showed them that the dish inside was full of figs. The guards were amazed at the great size and beauty of the figs. The man smiled and asked them to take some; so they felt no mistrust. It is said that a snake was brought with those figs and leaves and lay hidden beneath them. When she took away some of the figs and saw it, she held her arm out for the bite. But the truth of the matter no one knows; for it was also said that she carried about poison in a comb hidden in her hair; and yet neither spot nor other sign of poison broke out upon her body. Some also say that Cleopatra’s arm was seen to have two slight and indistinct punctures; and this Octavian also seems to have believed. An image of Cleopatra herself with the snake clinging to her was carried in his victory parade.