Document D: Cassius Dio

Cassius Dio lived approximately between 164 CE and 230 CE. He was a wealthy Greek who was consul twice and also held important governorships. He wrote eighty books on Roman History, and his position is often sympathetic with emperors, though he is sometimes critical of Octavian.

Here is an excerpt from his book Roman History.

Octavian, however, feared that she might kill herself. He did not remove any of her servants and asked that they take special care of her, that she might add brilliance to his triumph. But as soon as the others neglected to keep a careful watch, she prepared to die as painlessly as possible. She put on her most beautiful clothing, took in her hands all the symbols of royalty, and so died. No one knows clearly in what way she perished, for the only marks on her body were slight pricks on the arm. Some say she hid a poisonous snake in a water-jar, or perhaps it hidden in some flowers. Others declare that she had smeared a pin, with which she fastened her hair, with a poison that if came into contact with even a drop of blood would destroy the body very quietly and painlessly. In this or in some very similar way she perished, and her two handmaidens with her. When Octavian heard of Cleopatra’s death, he was astounded, and not only viewed her body but also tried to revive her. But when he could not in any way resuscitate Cleopatra, felt both admiration and pity for her, and was excessively grieved on his own account, as if he had been deprived of all the glory of his victory.