

# The Twelve Caesars

by Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus

Known throughout academia simply as Suetonius (69-122? AD), dates which are deduced from his remarks describing himself as a “young man” twenty years after Nero's death. His place of birth is disputed, but most scholars place it in Hippo Regius (the modern Annaba), at the time a small north African town in Numidia, in modern-day Algeria. It is certain that Suetonius came from a family of moderate social position, that his father, Suetonius Laetus, was a tribune belonging to the equestrian order (tribunus angusticlavii) in Legio XIII Gemina, and that Suetonius was educated when schools of rhetoric flourished in Rome. He was a close friend of senator and letter-writer Pliny the Younger. Pliny describes him as "quiet and studious, a man dedicated to writing". Pliny helped him buy a small property and interceded with the Emperor Trajan to grant Suetonius immunities usually granted to a father of three, the *ius trium liberorum*, because his marriage was childless. Through Pliny, Suetonius came into favour with emperors Trajan and Hadrian.



## Book 16 Nero

*“During his reign many abuses were severely punished and put down, and no fewer new laws were made: a limit was set to expenditures; the public banquets were confined to a distribution of food; the sale of any kind of cooked viands in the taverns was forbidden, with the exception of pulse and vegetables, whereas before every sort of dainty was exposed for sale. Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition. He put an end to the diversions of the chariot drivers, who from immunity of long standing claimed the right of ranging at large and amusing themselves by cheating and robbing the people. The pantomimic actors and their partisans were banished from the city.”*