

If you only have 30 minutes ...

The leadership of Septimius Severus is well documented in the article “The Emperor from Africa.” Though he came to power through ruthless actions, he ruled over the empire with an enlightened understanding of the people he governed. These qualities made him an effective ruler.

In this activity, you will meet in small groups to discuss the concept of leadership, examine Severus’s leadership style, and analyze how effective it was.

Divide into small groups of 3-4. Discuss the following questions:

- Think of leaders you know. What characteristics made them effective leaders? Were they popular, confident, good looking, honest, funny, enthusiastic? Did they have the trust of the group? Did they take responsibility? Did they have the needed skills to do the job? Did they have good ideas? Did they help others?
- Brainstorm six or seven characteristics of a good leader and write them down.
- Now, examine the leadership actions of Septimius Severus mentioned in the section titled, “Severus Consolidates His Power and Becomes Emperor.” Identify actions that made Septimius an effective leader. These would be actions he took against his enemies as well as for his allies and for those he ruled.
- List the actions he took in the left column. In the right column, list the outcome of the action and why it was effective.

Leadership Actions ¹	Outcome and Its Effectiveness

Discussion Questions

Meet back as a full class and review Severus' actions and effectiveness of his actions. Then discuss the following questions:²

- Do you think Severus' actions were effective? If so, which ones, and why or why not?
- Which actions did you admire, and which ones did you not?
- Which actions would you have taken differently than what Severus took and why?
- How well did your group work together in this activity? Did anyone in your group display leadership skills and what were they?
- Was there a better way your group could have completed this activity, and if so, describe how? If not, describe why not.

Common Core Standard(s) Met:

CCRA.R.1 Read Closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCRA.R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Leadership Actions	Outcome and why it was effective
Seized the capitol.	Gained control of the Roman government
Took away the arms and horses of the military elite and banished them from Rome.	Allowed him to eliminate or reduce the number of his rivals.
Doubled the legionnaires pay.	Helped ensure the loyalty of his soldiers but made him and other emperors increasingly dependent on the military.
Focused on efficient government, rather than greed or opulence.	Gained him the support and made him look honest in the eyes of the people.
Ruled from the provincial cities and military camps, rather than Rome, leading prolonged campaigns through the provinces and frontier regions.	Helped him stay close to the people of the Empire and lead his armies from areas close to frontier where barbarians threatened the Roman Empire.
Expanded Rome's reach into present-day Iraq and strengthened security of trade routes on the Arabian Peninsula.	Helped make Rome safe. Strengthening security routes in Arabia made for greater exchanges of goods and services among Romans.
Relaxed restrictions on local religious expression and advocated for religious tolerance.	Showed he was an enlightened ruler who felt it was better to allow people to practice their religion than to restrict them which could foster discontent. Advocating for religious tolerance across the empire promoted cross-cultural inclusion.
Reduced the role of Rome's ruling class.	Gave the provinces more say in their affairs.
He had potential rivals killed. He purged the senate, and he allowed his army to sack conquered cities	These actions would eliminate his rivals and enemies. Allowing the army to sack conquered cities allowed soldiers to steal for themselves valuable possessions.

² Answers will vary.