**Marcus Aurelius Thinks Aloud**

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| It is currently 172 and I am in CarnuntumNote: Refer to your map.  The Roman army is stationed on the northern border, below the Quadi Germanic tribes.   as we pursue our major campaigns on our Northern borders. a Rome ’s experience in Note: ParthianNote: Far eastern border. Recall the PowerPoint when the Romans defeated the Parthians (which is present day Middle East). in 165 allowed us to capture Media. Their aggression was successfully eliminated and our territory was increased.  a |
| In the midst of success, Rome would pay terrible price: Note: Avidius CassiusNote: Refer to your PowerPoint for details.  Cassius puts down the revolt and burns the capital city to the ground.  Many say Cassius is the true hero and Marcus Aurelius is a &#147;philosopher woman&#148;. would return to Rome a Note: heroNote: a person of distinguished courage or ability admired for their brave deeds and noble qualities, but brought with him the Note: plagueNote: a disease that caused a high death rate. This plague spreads throughout the eastern provinces and then to the west when the legions would return home. My country is now devastated from war and illness…many districts have lost all inhabitants. So many lives have perished, that I have ordained that rich and poor alike will be Note: buried at public expenseNote: Why would it be a good idea to have free, mass burials and the government pay for them in a time like this?. |
| Although Rome has experienced a Parthian victory…it is bittersweet for us as we immediately had to turn our attention to our Northern Borders and Eastern provinces. Since 166, Germanic tribes have become a permanent fixture in our lives and have consumed our military efforts. After numerous losses and battles, we finally had an overwhelming victory with the “Note: Thundering LegionNote: The Romans tell the story that at a crucial moment in the battle, a terrible thunderstorm broke, drenching the battle field and scaring the armies with ferocious lightning and thunder.  The Romans believe the gods assisted their victory against the Germanic tribes.”….with this we have finally defeated the Note: QuadiiNote: Germanic tribe living on the East bank of the Danube river.  An ally of the Marcomannic and other tribes challenging Roman authority.. This ended the first Note: Marcomanic warNote: A conflict between the Romans and a group of Germanic tribes beginning in A.D. 167.  These tribes, led by the Marcomanni, threatened the northeastern border of the Roman empire.. I made peace with the Quadii in order to get 60,000 of our men back. I also convinced many of the barbarians to fight for Rome as Note: mercenariesNote: professional soldiers hired to serve in a foreign army, although, I do worry about their loyalty. Regardless, we need men. |
| I find myself torn by the ever-present Note: conflict between my imperial duties and my stoic beliefsNote: Recall the PowerPoint presentation that explained stoicism.  How might a stoic like Marcus Aurelius be torn between his personal beliefs and his duties as emperor?. There are rumors that my eastern provinces disagree with my stoic philosophical nature. While on the front, it is my practice at the end of each day to retire and write reason regarding our next course of action. Many who observe this cannot fathom stoicism, therefore, make Note: false assumptionsNote: some Roman citizens viewed Marcus Aurelius as a weak military commander because of his stoic habit of writing and reflecting on events.  His rational approach to life was viewed as the sign of someone indecisive and perhaps timid. about my military leadership. It seems few people understand the importance of reason and rationality. Accordingly, there are rumors that Note: Cassius is undermining my authorityNote: Refer to your timeline and recall that Cassius was sent to Egypt in 172 to put down a rebellion.  Cassius was successful in this effort, but he eventually became a powerful leader in this part of the empire.  Marcus Aurelius fears his growing power. in the East. Advisors warn me that his popularity may be a threat to my authority. Upon reflection, I answer back “Note: no prince ever kills his successorNote: Marcus&#146; advisors were warning him that Cassius may try to revolt against him.  However, Marcus&#146; stoic philosophy guided him to accept fate and endure it (if fate wanted Cassius to succed, he would).  He would work to resist Cassius, but not take emotional or drastic measures to strip him of his power.  Marcus always believed that reasonable people could come to an agreement..” It worries me that these Eastern provinces seem to be feeling so isolated and therefore Note: independentNote: the eastern provinces were making fun of the emperor and seeing themselves as separate, not attached to Rome. from the rest of the Empire.  a |
| Additionally, all of these imperial concerns are clouded by my personal struggles. Although my duty is to the state, my heart is with my family. It seems that there are a multitude of burdens that keep me awake at night feeding my Note: exhaustionNote: physically Marcus was quite literally weak and exhausted due to:  migraines; possibly Tuberculosis; ulcers; and lethargy (drowsiness and constant feeling of being tired). At the loss of by dear Note: co-emperorNote: Antonius Pius appointed Aurelius and Lucius as co-emperors so they shared the responsibility and power of ruling Rome. Lucius in Note: 169Note: Lucius dies; wall built in African provinces; Marcus spends the winter on the Northern Frontier; auction of imperial property to finance the war of the plague…I am forced to contemplate Rome ’s best interest alone. His death not only impacted me and the state, but my family as well. Lucius left my daughter, Note: LucillaNote: Father: Marcus Aurelius; Mother: Faustina II ; First husband: Lucius Verus; Daughter: Aurelia Lucilla (married to Claudius Pompeianus Quintianus); Second husband: Tiberius Claudius Pompeianus; Son: Pompeianus, a pregnant widow at age 19. I now feel pressure to marry her to Note: ClaudiusNote: primary military advisor of Marcus Aurelius; served alongside Marcus Aurelius in the campaign against the German barbarians since 169; Marcus Aurelius handpicked him as chief military advisor based on his prior experience; 2nd husband of Lucilla, who is 30 plus years her senior. I fear that I am not respecting Lucilla’s mourning period, however I must put Rome’s interest above all else. |
| My wife is also with child and continues to support me on the Roman front so I am also worried about her well being. Also, because of Faustina’s Note: influenceNote: Faustina is the wife of the emperor, so her actions are watched by all that are around her.  She can have a major influence on the people she is surrounded by, positively or negatively. on the empire, there has been speculation that my one true love is Note: unfaithfulNote: it was rumored that Faustina may had relations with other men beisdes Aurelius.  It was hypothesized that because of Aurelius&#146; stoic beliefs, she was unhappy with her husband&#146;s lack of love for her., but there no Note: evidenceNote: it was never proven one way or the other if Faustina had relatons with men other than Aurelius.  In fact, these rumors may have been spread by men jealous of her influence on the emperor.  Often these claims were common about powerful women. therefore this is merely slander. My heart is also heavy, at the loss of two of my sons who passed away as of late. Nothing in life can match the loss of a child. |
| My passion is to fight, but I feel my Note: body surrenderingNote: Marcus is becoming old and his body is breaking down;  He is having health problems and historians are unclear what these might be.  He was under a physician&#146;s care and took several remedies for constant cough and stomach problems.. I must remind myself that Note: pain is not foreverNote: How would Aurelius&#146; stoic beliefs influence his approach to his failing health? in the midst of my near constant migraines and ulcers.Note:  ExhaustionNote: How would living on a war zone impact his health?  How might this influence his decisions? never ends…were it not for my obligation to Rome -I fear I might not be able to get out of bed. |
| Rest it seems will never come, as it seems Rome ’s struggle is as much domestic as it is abroad. The more we expand, the more I must Note: delegateNote: to send or appoint a person to a job or responsibility. With the Empire as large as it is already, it is critical that my Note: governorsNote: a person charged with direction or control of an institution, society, etc. are those I can trust with justice. With as many governors and advisors as I am forced to employ, it is difficult for us all to communicate and be on the same page. I know some of these governors care more for their people than that of the empire…however, I see the bigger picture.  a |
| The impact of the plague has put an additional strain on our Note: infrastructureNote: roads, bridges, water sytems (aqueducts).. With so many provinces having been decimated by the plague, I worry who will maintain our roads and tend to our aqueducts? Moreover, my hands are tied with the Note: funeral policyNote: The policy instituted by Marcus Aurelius, which made the government responsible for the costs of all funerals, rich and poor alike. now that I have decreed that all funerals will be paid for by the empire. How can I do all these things without the people and resources that are necessary to meet the current, Note: urgent needsNote: As emperor, Marcus Aurelius had to deal with the threats of the Parthian Empire and Germanic tribes. Armies returning from the eastern front brought back an epidemic that may have been the first outbreak of smallpox in the Empire. Population losses ran in the millions. of the empire! The bottom line is that the empire continues to grow as we are forced to expand in the north, at the same time, we have fewer people to do the necessary work and less money to pay for it. |
| If all that were not enough strain on our economy, Note: food shortages Note: There was pestilence and starvation in Rome caused by the plague, and by floods that had destroyed vast quantities of grain.have become a constant threat. Even after selling off my own Note: imperial jewels in 169Note: Aurelius saw it as his duty to control the empire's borders, and his armies successfully contained the invasions. Marcus Aurelius auctioned off the crown jewels to pay for this without more increases in taxes. to prevent increasing Note: taxesNote: a sum of money demanded by a government for its support on my people…this only put a dent in the vast monetary needs of Rome .Note:  Inflation Note: a persistent, substantial rise in the general level of prices related to an increase in the volume of money and resulting in the loss of value of currencyand Note: recessionNote: period of economic loss have simultaneously occurred. The senate and populace of Rome needs sustenance and I feel helpless as their leader to make these provisions due to our economic crisis.  a |
| In the midst of all this, we must address the constant threat of the German front as they will not stop encroaching upon the heart of the Roman Empire . Bit by bit, they gnaw away at what Rome has worked so hard to achieve for so long. We now teeter on the edge of a dark abyss. I must rescue our empire and get us back on solid ground. Rome is the foundation of the world and we cannot continue to grow if our foundation is not firm. Therefore, the decision I must make weighs heavily upon my soul and I must trust in the council of my advisors. “As Marcus I have Rome , and as a human being I have the universe. But I am first and foremost, a dutiful Roman. Please let my decisions and actions aim solely at the common good.”  a |
| a  Marcus Aurelius |