

LUCIUS ANNAEUS SENECA

BC

- 49-45 Civil war between Julius Caesar and the republicans commanded by Pompey
- 48 After the defeat of Pharsalus, republicans regroup in Africa but are again defeated by Caesar at Thapsus; Cato 'of Utica' earns his position as a Stoic hero by his suicide immediately after Utica
- 46 Pompey's sons rally support in South Spain, finally defeated at Munda
- 45 Seneca's father's birth-date is disputed, but he was a child at the time
- 44 Assassination of Julius Caesar
- 31 Victory of Caesar's 'son' Octavian over Antony and Cleopatra; occupation of Egypt
- 27 Octavian restores senatorial control of non-militarized provinces, receives title 'Augustus'
- 27BC– 14AD Principate of Augustus
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AD

- 1 -5(?) Birth of Seneca
- 14-37 Principate of Tiberius
- 37-41 Principate of Gaius (Caligula)
- 41 Claudius becomes emperor; under the influence of his wife Messalina he relegates Seneca to exile in Corsica
- 49 After Messalina's disgrace and suicide, Claudius marries his niece Agrippina, who has Seneca recalled to serve as tutor to her son Domitius Ahenobarbus, adopted the following year as Claudius Nero
- 54 Death of Claudius; Nero becomes emperor; Seneca composes the Apocolyptosis ('Pumpkinification') mocking the deification of Claudius
- 55 Nero has his stepbrother Britannicus poisoned
- 59 Nero has his mother murdered
- 55 & 62 Seneca composes De Clementia (On Mercy) and De Beneficiis (On Benefits)
- 62 Death of Seneca's ally Burrus
Seneca feels endangered and attempts to retire

Seneca's interview with Nero as reported by Tacitus:

‘This is the fourteenth year, Caesar, since I was brought into contact with your prospects, and the eighth that you have been in imperial power; in the intervening time you have heaped so great a quantity of honours and wealth upon me that nothing is lacking to my happiness except its moderation. I shall use great models, not of my fortune but your own. Your great-grandfather Augustus permitted Marcus Agrippa seclusion at Mytilene, and Gaius Maecenas retirement in the city itself as if travelling abroad. One of these as his partner in warfare, the other after being wearied by many toils at Rome, had received rewards generous indeed but in proportion to their great services. What else have I been able to offer your generosity than studies reared in the shadow, which have acquired glory because I seemed to be a supporter in the early training of your youth, a great reward for this action. But you have enveloped me in vast influence and money beyond counting, so much that I usually wonder to myself: Am I, born in equestrian rank in the provinces, being counted among the city’s leading men? Has my new birth shone forth among nobles displaying their long-lived honours? Where is that spirit once content with moderate circumstances? Does it lay out these parklands and stroll through these suburban estates and overflow with such expanses of land and such widespread interest? Only one defence has occurred to me, that I ought not to resist your gifts. But each of us has reached his limit, you of as much generosity as any leader should bestow on a friend, and I as much as a friend should accept from his leader: any more simply increases resentment. This indeed, like all mortal things, lies beneath your greatness, but it is weighing upon me and I need succour. Just as I would ask for a support if I were weary in warfare or on a journey, so in this journey of life as an old man, unequal to the lightest of anxieties, now that I can support my wealth no further, I am asking for help. Have your business administered by your agents, and taken into your private portfolio. I will not thrust myself down to actual poverty, but after handing over the resources whose splendour blinds me, I will recall to spiritual concerns whatever time is set aside for the care of my parks and villas. You have abundant strength and control of the highest level of achievement seen over so many years; we older friends can request our repose. And this too will redound to your glory, to have raised to the heights men who would also be content with a moderate fortune.’

- 62 Scandal of Nero's new love Popaea, and divorce of Octavia (later murdered)
- 63-5 Seneca works on the *Epistulae Morales* (Letters on Morality) and seven books of *Quaestiones Naturales* (Natural Questions)
- 65 Seneca is accused of involvement in the Pisonian Conspiracy, a plot to assassinate Nero and is forced to commit suicide
- 68 Army turns against Nero; he flees Rome, commits suicide