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Caesars and Corleones: Augustan Rome and The Godfather

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Abstract

What do The Godfather and the Roman Empire have in common? This thesis will compare the Augustan period of the Roman Empire and Francis Ford Coppola's The Godfather. Themes such as power, religion, family, and morality play a large role in The Godfather as well as in the life of Augustus. Even the personal character of Augustus seems to parallel the character of Don Vito Corleone. First, a historical background is provided about Augustus, the empire he ran, and how he ran it. I examine excerpts from famous authors of antiquity such as Suetonius, Cassius Dio, and Horace. I also examine the Res Gestae, the accomplishments of Augustus, as well as the Ara Pacis. These texts and monuments depict Augustus as a patriotic, paternal, and paradoxical figure. These characteristics seem to apply to the character of Vito as well. The historical arc of the life of Augustus, with the results of the transfer from the pater patriae to later emperors, will also be described as paralleling the history of the Corleone family's many transitions.

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