Octavian (63 B.C.-A.D. 14), who later became known as Augustus, was born to a wealthy family in a small Italian town southeast of Rome. During his youth, Octavian suffered a number of illnesses. He refused to let his illnesses interfere with his life, however, showing the determination that would later make him Rome's first emperor.

Octavian’s father was a Roman senator, but it was Octavian’s great-uncle, Julius Caesar, who first introduced Octavian to public life in Rome. In his late teens, Octavian joined Caesar in Africa and then the following year in Spain. At the age of 18, while Octavian was studying at school, he learned that his great-uncle had been murdered.

**Rising to Power**

In his will, Caesar had adopted Octavian as his son. Caesar also made Octavian his heir—a position that Antony had assumed would be his. Against his family’s advice, Octavian went to Rome to claim his inheritance. By the time he reached Rome, however, Antony had seized Caesar’s papers and money and refused to give them to Octavian. With remarkable political savvy for someone so young, Octavian turned the situation to his favor. He won the hearts of Caesar’s soldiers and the people of Rome by celebrating the public games that Caesar had started.

In his rise to power and during his reign as Emperor Augustus, Octavian pushed himself and his loyal followers with relentless energy. In his private life, however, he lived simply and quietly and shunned personal luxury. He was devoted to his wife, Livia Drusilla, and spent his spare time with her at their home on the outskirts of Rome.

**Directions:** On another sheet of paper, answer the questions below.

1. Who introduced Octavian to public life in Rome?
2. How did Octavian win the hearts of Caesar's soldiers and the people of Rome?
3. In his private life, how did Octavian live?
4. **Writing** Augustus overcame the obstacles of illness and political enemies to become a great emperor. What present-day individuals have overcome obstacles to excel at something?