

Battle of the Teutoburg Forest

LATN 6030 - Tacitus

Summer 2011

By Ryan Sellers

Nihil illa caede cruentius.

“Nothing was bloodier than that massacre.”

Florus, Roman Historian



Battle of the Teutoburg Forest

- ▶ Publius Quinctilius Varus and his men fall under attack in the Teutoburg Forest in 9 AD
- ▶ Ambushed by Arminius, leader of the tribe of the Cherusci
- ▶ *Legiones XVII, XVIII, and XIX* are annihilated



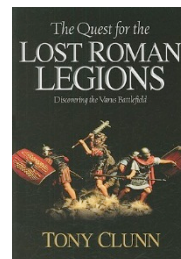
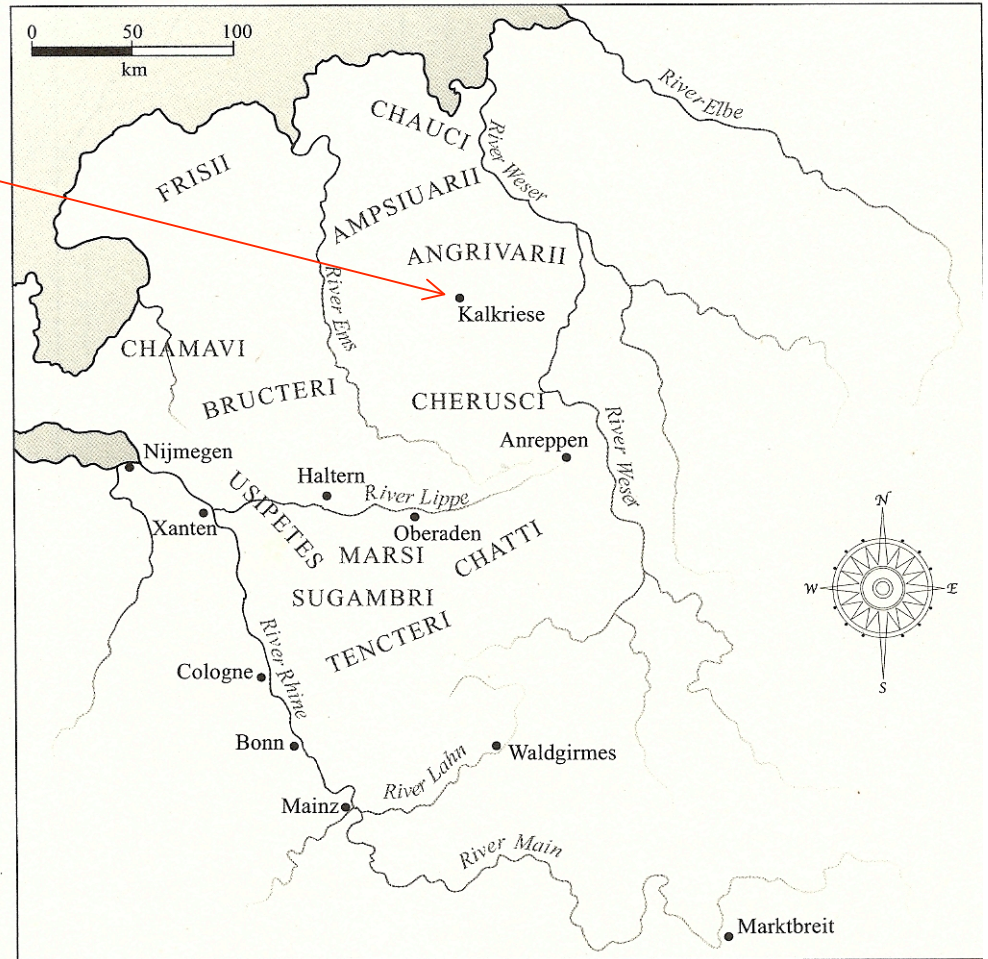
Battle Location:



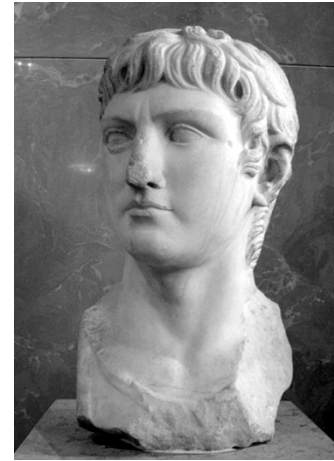
Battle Location:



Tony Clunn (pictured above on the right) discovered the site of the battle.



Tacitus



- ▶ *Annales* 1.60-62
- ▶ Germanicus discovers the battlefield in 15 AD
- ▶ *Medio campi, albentia ossa, ut fugerant, ut restiterant, disiecta vel aggerata. Adiacebant fragmina telorum equorumque artus, simul truncis arborum antefixa ora. (1.61)*



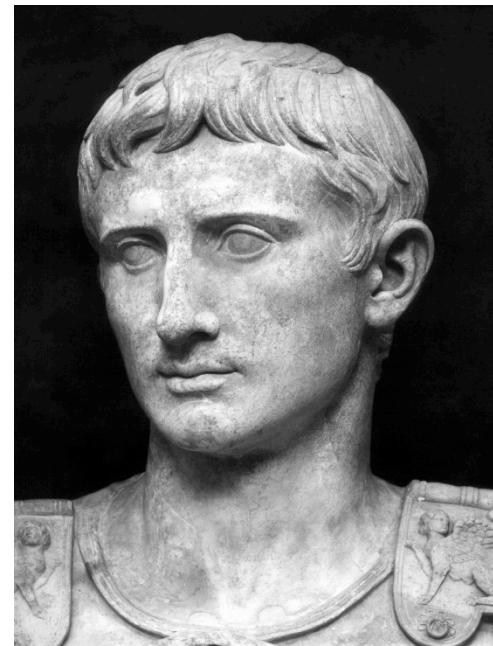


Germanicus visits the battlefield in 15 AD

Suetonius

- ▶ *Adeo denique consternatum ferunt, ut per continuos menses barba capilloque summisso caput interdum foribus illideret, vociferans: Quintili Vare, legiones redde!*

(Suetonius, *Augustus* 23)



Who is to blame for the disaster?



Varus



- ▶ Not a True Military Man
 - “Varus was a man of mild character and of a quiet disposition, somewhat slow in mind as he was in body, and more accustomed to the leisure of the camp than to actual service in war.”
- ▶ Greedy and Irresponsible
 - “That he was no despiser of money is demonstrated by his governorship of Syria: he entered the rich province a poor man, but left it a rich man and the province poor.”
- ▶ Naïve About the Character of the Germans
 - “With this purpose in mind he entered the heart of Germany as though he were going among a people enjoying the blessings of peace.”

Velleius Paterculus, *Roman History* 2.117

Varus



- ▶ Refuses to Listen To the Warning of Segestes
- ▶ Lack of Professionalism
 - “They had with them many wagons and many beasts of burden as in time of peace; moreover, not a few women and children and a large retinue of servants were following them.”
- ▶ Lack of Organization
 - “For the Romans were not proceeding in any regular order, but were mixed in helter-skelter with the wagons and the unarmed, and so, being unable to form readily anywhere in a body, and being fewer at every point than their assailants, they suffered greatly and could offer no resistance at all.”

Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 56.20

Cenotaph of Marcus Caelius

M(arco) Caelio T(iti) F(ilio) LEM(onia
tribu) BON(onia)

[I] O(rdini) LEG(ionis) XIIIX ann(or)um

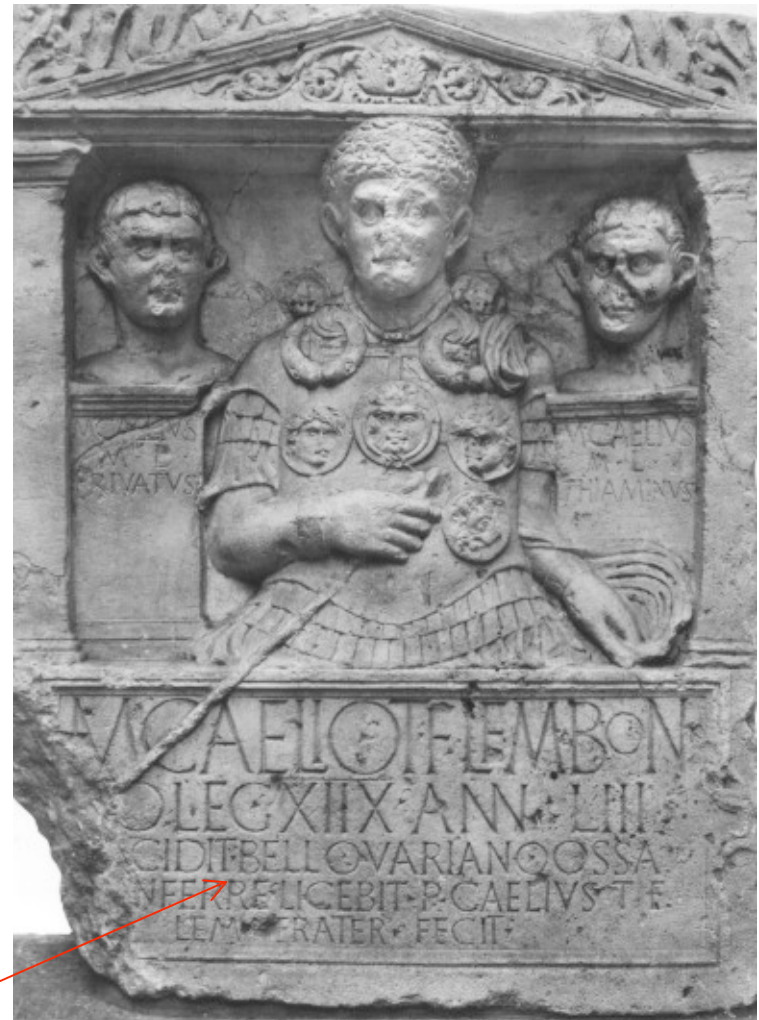
LIII S(emissis)

[ce]CIDIT BELLO VARIANO OSSA

[lib(ertorum) i]NFERRE LICEBIT

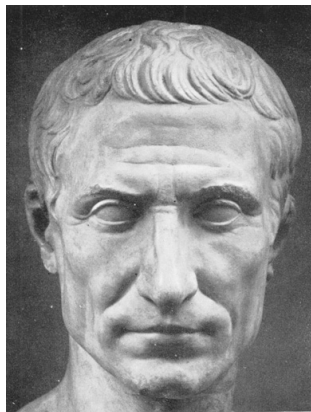
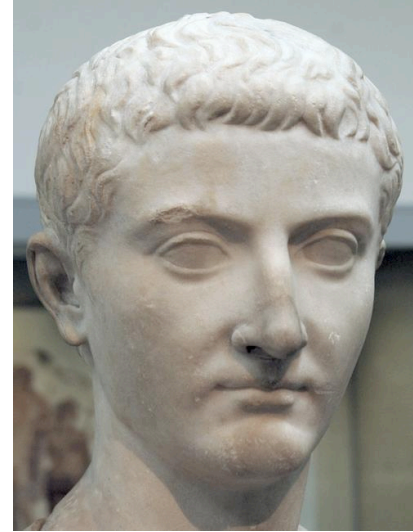
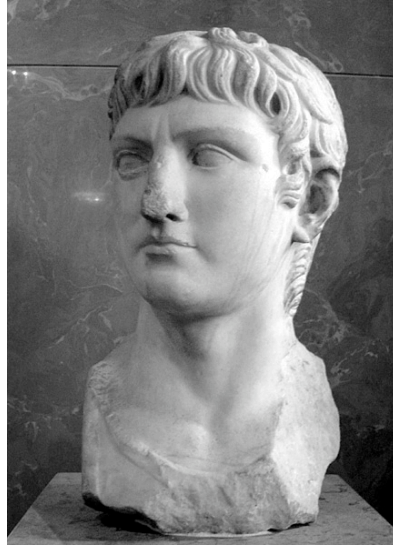
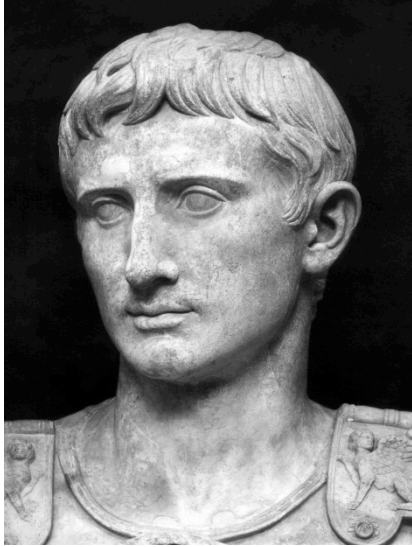
P(ublius) CAELIUS T(iti) F(ilius)

LEM(onia tribu) FRATER FECIT



BELLO VARIANO

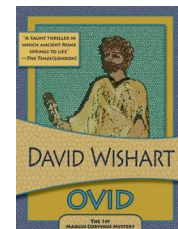
Could anyone else be to blame?



Could anyone else be to blame?

- ▶ Augustus
- ▶ The gods
 - “For a catastrophe so great and sudden as this, it seemed to him, could have been due to nothing else than the wrath of some divinity; moreover, by reason of the portents which occurred both before the defeat and afterwards, he was strongly inclined to suspect some superhuman agency.” – Dio, 56.24

- ▶ Livia



A conspiracy theory in the novel *Ovid* blames Livia

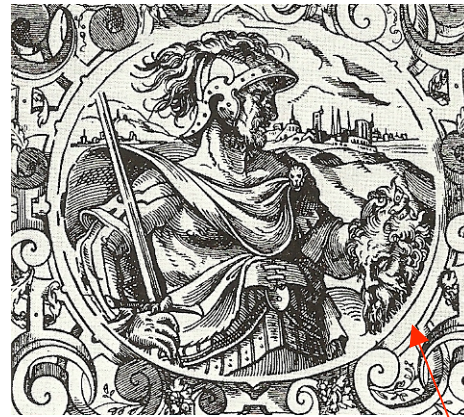
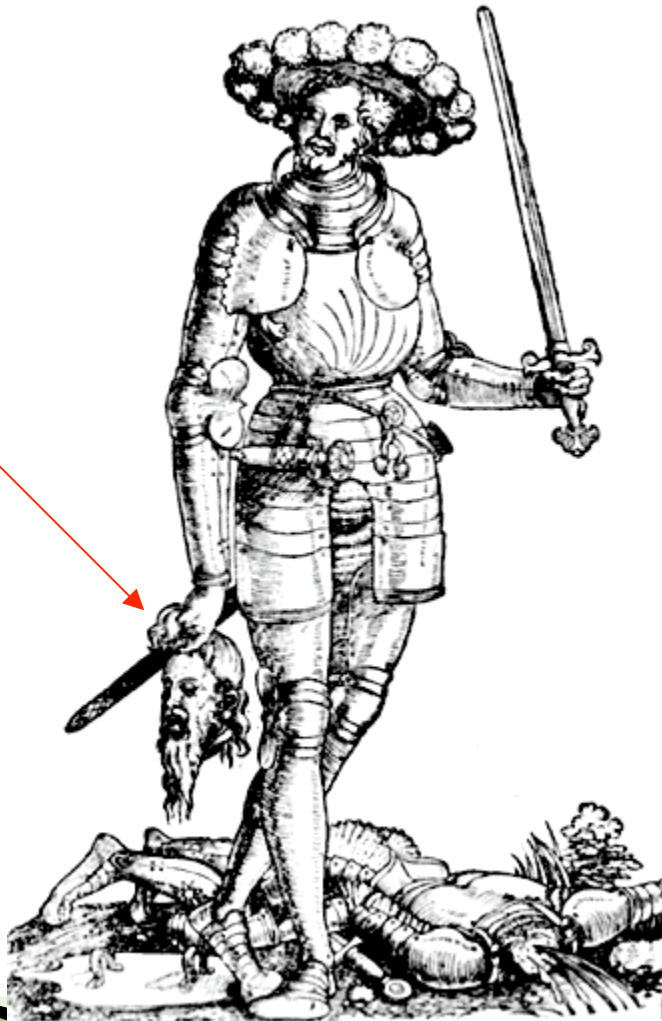
Aftermath of the Battle

- ▶ Varus is decapitated; Arminius sends his head to Maroboduus, leader of the Marcomanni
- ▶ The Romans win some minor battles in Germania, but by 16 AD, Tiberius withdraws his forces back to the west of the Rhine
- ▶ Germanicus dies in Syria in 19 AD
- ▶ Arminius is unable to unite the German tribes; he dies in a civil war in 21 AD



The Victorious Arminius

Severed
head of
Varus



Severed head of Varus

Hans Brosamer - 1543

The Victorious Arminius



Knabe! Bruder meines Sohns! wenn mein Sohn deiner würdig wird, wie lieb ich dich!

Daniel Nikolaus Chodowiecki

1782

The Victorious Arminius

*Hermann
Zersprengt Die
Ketten Von
Germania*

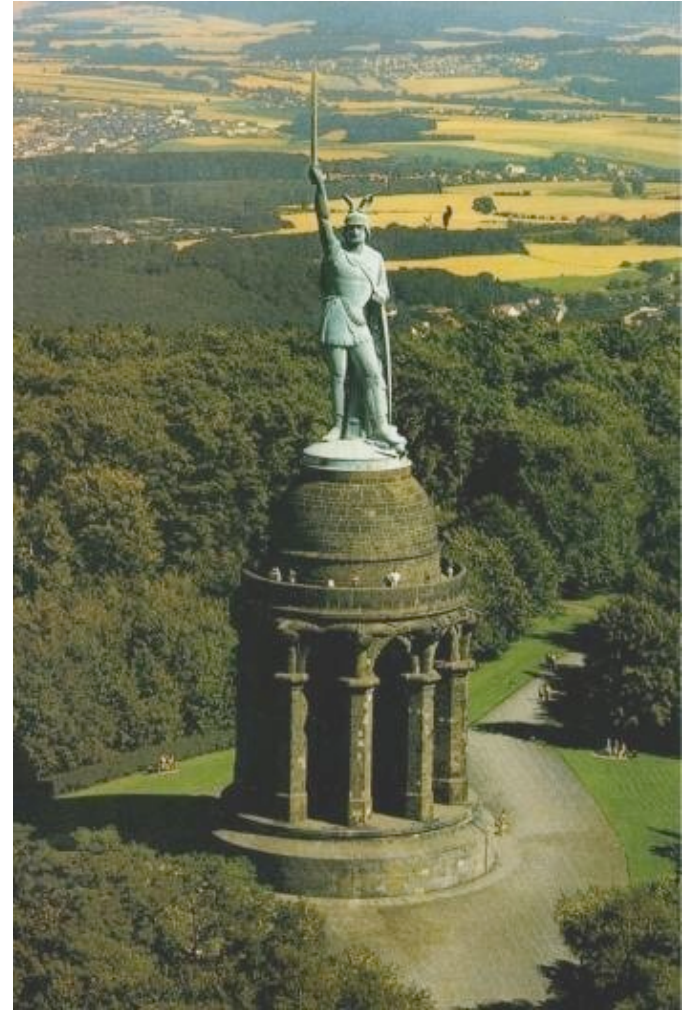


Karl Russ, ca. 1818

Hermannsdenkmal

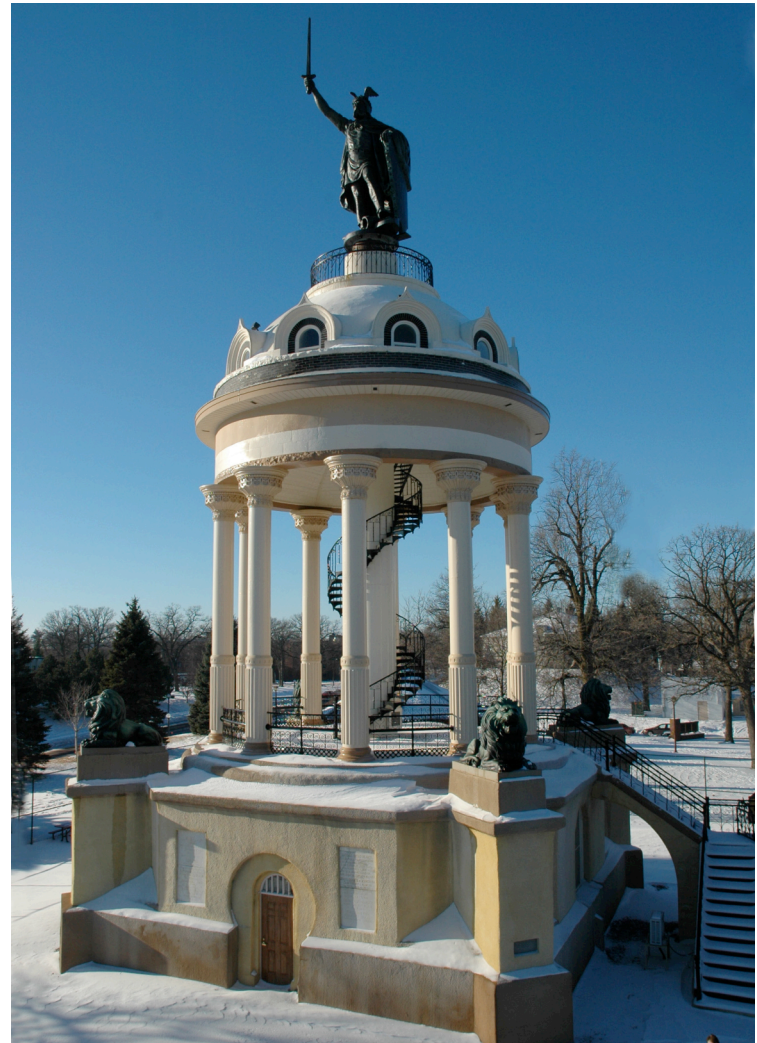


German monument to Arminius



Hermann Heights Monument

New Ulm, Minnesota



Hermann, MO



The Vanquished Varus



Der Gescheiterte Varus

By Wilfried Koch (2003)

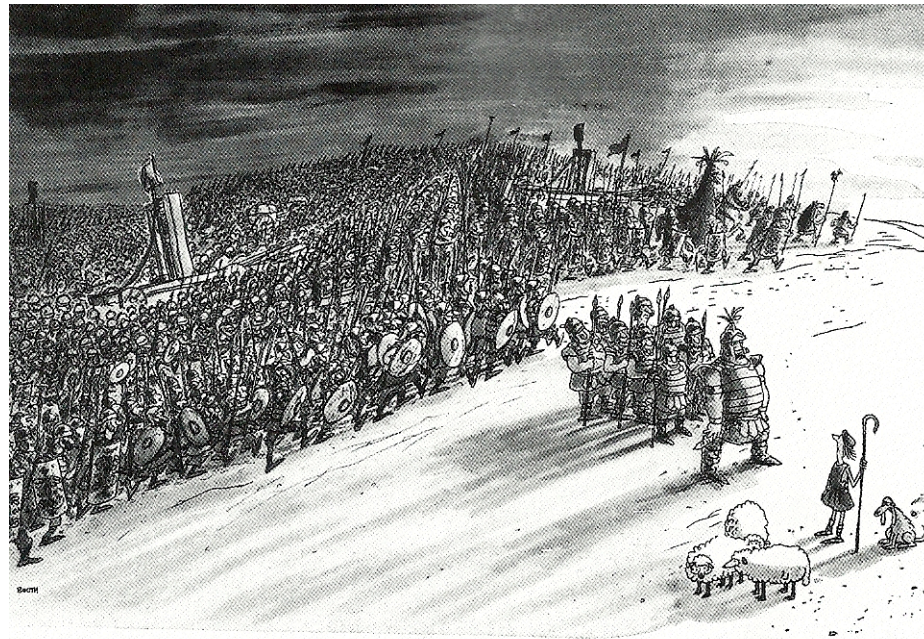


Varusschlacht Museum



German Chancellor Angela Merkel

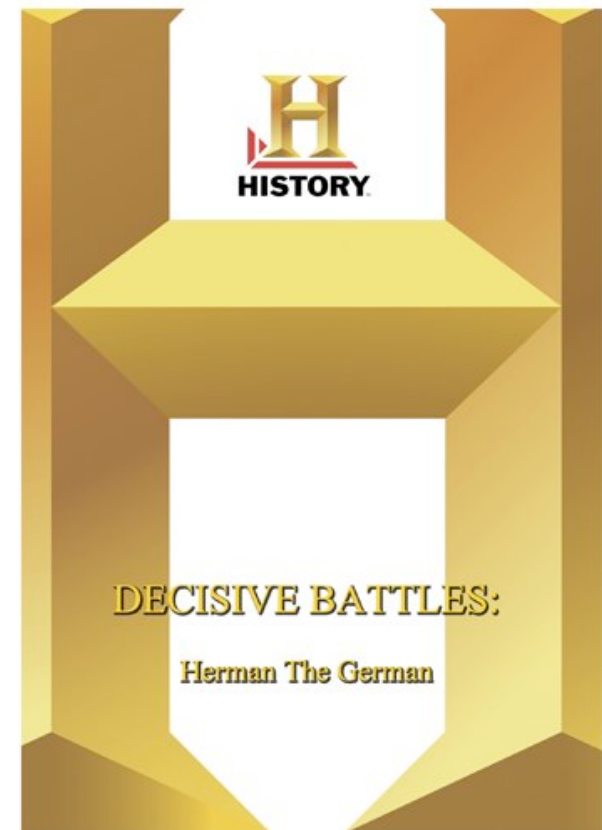
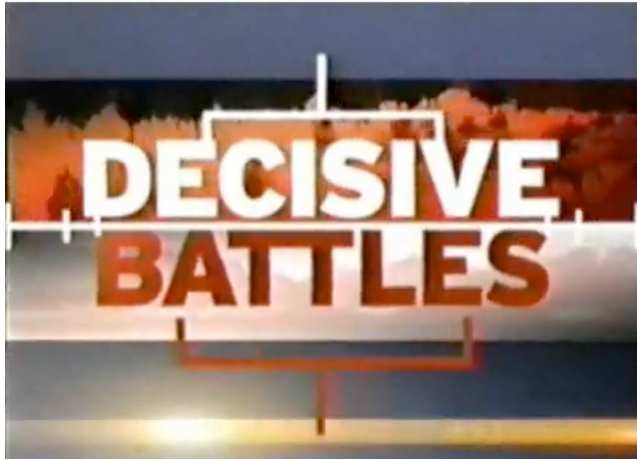
New Yorker



"General Varus's compliments. Which way to Teutoburger Wald?"

George Booth – *New Yorker* – 1975

History Channel Video



Teutoburg Forest Project

- ▶ Tacitus *Annales* 1.60-62
(with commentary)
- ▶ PowerPoint (PDF format)
- ▶ Links to Ancient Texts
(Latin and English)
- ▶ Annotated Bibliography

