Julius Cæsar.

A

TRAGEDY.

As it is Now ACTED

AT THE

Theatre Royal.

WRITTEN

By William Shakespeare.

LONDON,

William Shakespeare's
Julius Caesar Study Guide

Setting: Ancient Rome 44 B.C.
The play takes place before Rome developed into an empire. Julius Caesar has just defeated Pompeii after a long civil war. He returns to Rome triumphantly and is in a position to take power. Some people are concerned because dictators have taken power before.

Characters:

Julius Caesar
Although Caesar was one of the strongest individuals in history, Shakespeare presents him with a number of weaknesses. In spite of all of these weaknesses, it is the spirit of Caesar that pervades the whole play. At the end of the play, Brutus says, "Caesar, thou art mighty yet."

Brutus
Brutus is the epitome of all that is gentle and good in man. His sterner qualities make him admirable; his gentler qualities make him lovable. He is one of the finest characters in all of Shakespeare's writing. Had Brutus been less idealistic and less merciful, he no doubt would have been successful in crushing the powerful forces of Caesar. His three mistakes cost him his life, but Brutus feels no enmity, even in death.

Cassius
If ever Shakespeare presented characters in contrast, he does it in molding the conspiracy around Cassius and Brutus. Cassius is the realist, the shrewd contriver, the ambitious one. He is the clever psychologist who knows just how to manipulate Brutus' thoughts and how to bring him into the conspiracy. Cassius is a strong leader, but he has one weakness—his admiration for Brutus. That admiration overrules his better judgment and culminates in his downfall. Without Brutus in the play, Cassius would have emerged as a much stronger leader.

Marc Antony
At the time of Caesar's assassination, Antony was thirty-seven years old. Never taking life very seriously, he led a pleasure-loving existence. Because he was reckless, careless, and handsome, the people loved him. Antony proves himself to be clever when he addresses the crowd after Caesar's murder and convinces them that Caesar was not ambitious.

Octavius
Octavius was nineteen when Caesar was assassinated and only twenty-one when he and Antony defeated the conspirators at Philippi. Eleven years later, he sent Antony and Cleopatra to defeat and death. Shakespeare wrote about that subject in his play Antony and Cleopatra. Octavius ruled Rome for forty-one years (until 17 A.D.). He was called the august, the grand, the magnificent (Augustus).
Before You Read

Julius Caesar Act 1

FOCUS ACTIVITY
Think of effective leaders—either public figures or people whom you know. What qualities do they have in common?

Share Ideas
Brainstorm a list of qualities that are often found in successful leaders. Why these qualities might help one become a successful leader.

Setting a Purpose
Read to discover different characters' reactions to Julius Caesar's leadership.

BACKGROUND
Did You Know?
In Act 1, Julius Caesar attends the feast of Lupercal, held yearly to honor a fertility god. It began with the sacrifice of goats and a dog at the Lupercal, a cave where Rome's legendary founders, Romulus and Remus, allegedly were nursed by a she-wolf. Young men called "Luperci" would dress themselves in the goatskins and run around the Palatine Hill, one of the seven hills on which ancient Rome was built. They carried goat thongs that they used to strike people, especially women who could not have children. The ritual was said to help women become fertile. The Romans celebrated dozens of religious festivals, many involving games or spectacles. These events provided amusement for the poor and gave leaders an opportunity to interact with common people.

Shakespeare's Soliloquies
In Shakespeare's plays, characters sometimes make speeches when they are alone on stage. These soliloquies reveal a character's private thoughts and are a means of providing important information to the audience. In Act 1, Scene 2, Cassius delivers a soliloquy that reveals a plot to influence Brutus to participate in the conspiracy to overthrow Caesar. It involves sending letters to Brutus that express the Romans' high regard for him. Related to soliloquies are asides—comments made to the audience that cannot be heard by other characters present on stage. These asides appear in brackets. As you continue to read, look for other soliloquies and asides that impart important information to the audience.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW
amiss [ə miˈs] adj. wrong, improper (p. 19)
battlement [ˈbatlə mənt] n. a parapet having a series of indentations along its upper edge, used for defense (p. 3)
countenance [ˈkoun tə nɑns] n. face, features (p. 7)
embrace [ɪn kəms pɑs] v. to form a circle around (p. 13)
ere [ər] prep. before (p. 11)
fawn [fɔn] v. to seek notice or favor by acting in a servile manner (p. 9)
infirmary [ɪn fɜrˈma tɛr] n. physical weakness; feebleness (p. 19)
mettle [ˈmetlə] n. spirit and courage (p. 3)
Act I, Scene 1
1. What is the situation at the beginning of the play?

2. Identify Flavius and Marullus. What are they doing?

3. What is Lupercal?

Act I, Scene 2
4. What warning is given to Caesar? By whom? How does he react?

5. What are the two incidents Cassius tells to Brutus? What's his purpose in telling?

6. What kind of person does Brutus seem to be?
   Cassius?

7. What is Caesar's opinion of Antony?
   …of Cassius?

8. What is the report given by Casca?

9. How does Cassius feel about his talk with Brutus?

Act I, Scene 3
10. What is the effect of the storm? What is its purpose?

11. How does Cassius say he can escape tyranny?

12. What is the next step in convincing Brutus?
Before You Read

Julius Caesar Act 2

FOCUS ACTIVITY
What was the most difficult decision you have ever had to make in your life? Why was it difficult?

Journal
Did you discuss it with friends or relatives? Do you feel that you made the right decision, or would you change it if you could?

Setting a Purpose
Read to find out how Brutus decides to join the conspiracy against Caesar.

BACKGROUND
Did You Know?
Marcus Brutus claimed to have descended from the founder of the Roman Republic. In 509 B.C., Lucius Junius Brutus led a revolt against Tarquinius Superbus, Rome's seventh king. Ancient historians describe Tarquinius as a tyrant who killed many senators. Brutus supposedly expelled him and his family after Tarquinius’s son took advantage of a noblewoman. Brutus, one of the first consuls elected, made the Roman people swear never to accept another king. Much of the story may be legend, but it does reflect the Romans' long-standing dislike of kings. Even the emperors avoided using the title.

Anticipation and Anxiety
Suspense is the anticipation of the outcome of events, especially as they affect a character for whom one has sympathy. Suspense produces an uncertainty that causes anxiety. For instance, Act 1 of Julius Caesar raises the question of whether Brutus will join Cassius's conspiracy. As you read Act 2 of Julius Caesar, take note of the incidents that increase the level of suspense.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

affability [af′ə bil′i tē] n. easiness to approach and speak to (p. 37)
appertain [ap′ər tān′] v. to relate to (p. 49)

augment [əg ment′] adj. to make greater as in size or amount (p. 35)
faction [fæk′shən] n. a group of people within a larger group, esp. a dissenting one acting to promote its own ends (p. 37)
hew [hū] v. to make or shape with cutting blows, as from an ax (p. 43)
interpose [in′tər pōz′] v. to place between; insert (p. 39)
portent [pər′tənt] n. warning or indication of what is to come; esp. of something momentous or calamitous (p. 57)
visage [viz′ij] n. face or facial expression of a person (p. 37)
Act II, Scene 1

1. Explain Brutus' speech that begins: “It must be by his death...”

2. Why do the conspirators want Cicero and then leave him out?

3. Why won't Brutus take an oath?

4. Why does he oppose the assassination of Antony?

5. How has Caesar changed?

6. What are some of Portia's characteristics?

Act II, Scene 2

7. Describe the night

8. What has Caesar decided to do when Decius comes? What reason does he give?

9. Why does he change his mind?

10. What are the two (2) interpretations (meanings) of the dream?

    Interpretation 1:

    Interpretation 2:
Before You Read

Julius Caesar Act 3

FOCUS ACTIVITY

What is the most moving formal speech you have ever heard or read? Why did it make a lasting impression?

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how important a speech is in influencing the outcome of Julius Caesar.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

Shakespeare based Julius Caesar on an English translation of Parallel Lives by the Greek writer Plutarch. This work contains paired biographies of Greek and Roman historical figures, including Caesar, Brutus, Antony, and Cicero. Plutarch was especially interested in his subjects' character and motives. In the play, Shakespeare generally followed Plutarch's portrayal of the historical figures, but he did make subtle changes. For example, Plutarch reveals that Cassius enjoyed making jokes and that Brutus hesitated to join the conspiracy because it would put so many lives in danger. In Shakespeare's play, Cassius is always serious; Brutus cares only about whether Caesar deserves to die. Antony's magnificent public speech in Act 3 is mainly Shakespeare's creation. In Plutarch's work, he describes it in a few sentences.

Irony in Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar contains examples of the three types of irony. Dramatic irony occurs when the audience or reader knows something that a character does not know. For example, the reader knows that Cassius sent the letters to Brutus anonymously, but Brutus believes that they are from Roman citizens. Situational irony occurs when what actually happens is the opposite of what is expected or appropriate. For example, Caesar expects to be crowned king at the Senate, but instead he is assassinated. Verbal irony occurs when a writer or speaker says one thing but really means its opposite. For example, Antony says that, compared to Brutus, he is not an orator, but Antony's speech clearly shows that he is. Verbal irony is especially prominent in Antony's public speech in Act 3. Look for examples as you read the speech.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

bequeath [bi kwēth'] v. to give or leave (property) by a will (p. 89)
decree [di krē'] n. decision or order issued by a court (p. 67)
legacy [leg'ə sē] n. property bequeathed by will (p. 89)
meet [mēt] adj. proper (p. 91)
prostrate [pros'trāt] adj. face downward on the ground in humility, adoration, or submission (p. 73)
redress [ri dres'] v. to correct and compensate for (p. 67)
unassailable [un'ə sā'lə bal] adj. that cannot be denied, disputed, or questioned (p. 69)
Act III, Scene 1

1. What was each of the following characters to do at the capitol?
   - Trebonious—
   - Cimber—
   - Casca—
   - Brutus—

2. How do the conspirators react to the assassination?

3. How can you prove the dream was fulfilled?

4. What prophecy is made?

5. What message does Antony's servant bring?

6. What does Antony ask of the conspirators if they plan to kill him?

7. Of what do they assure him?

8. Who doubts the wisdom of answering Antony's request?

Act III, Scene 2

10. How does Brutus justify Caesar’s murder when he speaks to the people?

11. How is the point proven to the people?

12. How does Antony arouse the people to mutiny?

13. How does Antony show he understands the people better than Brutus?

14. What three examples does Antony give to prove that Caesar was not ambitious?
   Example 1:
   Example 2:
   Example 3:

15. What are the provisions of Caesar’s will?

16. Who is prepared to take control of the government of Rome now?
Before You Read

Julius Caesar Acts 4 and 5

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Can serious conflict ever be resolved without bloodshed? What are some of the ways in which warring factions can end their conflict?

Discuss ways in which the conflict between Antony and Brutus might be resolved. Then, make a prediction as to how you think the play might end.

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how the civil conflict in Julius Caesar ends.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

Antony used Caesar's will as a tool to manipulate the public. Yet the will was a mixed blessing for him. Instead of naming Antony heir, Caesar chose Octavius, his great-nephew. The two men could hardly have been more different: Antony, a gregarious and imposing general, and Octavius, a delicate nineteen-year-old. The senators, led by Cicero, supported Octavius. Cicero did not join in the conspiracy, but he approved of Caesar's assassination and called for Antony's death also. Octavius turned out to be a shrewd politician. When the senators later turned against Octavius, he joined Antony and Lepidus. The alliance split control of Rome's territory in three ways. To pay off troops, they confiscated the estates of many senators and knights, beginning a reign of terror in which thousands perished. Octavius later became Rome's first emperor and assumed the name Augustus.

Tragedy and the Tragic Hero

A tragedy is a drama in which the main character, or tragic hero, suffers a downfall. Traditionally, the hero is a person of high rank. His or her downfall usually results from an error in judgment or a fatal weakness or flaw, such as excessive ambition. Critics have long debated whether Julius Caesar or Brutus is the tragic hero of Shakespeare's play. Although Caesar is the title character, he appears only in a few scenes and is killed in Act 3, the middle of the play.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- apparition [ap′ə rish′ən] n. ghost; specter; phantom (p. 127)
- chastisement [chæst ə zə mənt] n. punishment or reprimand (p. 111)
- disconsolate [dɪs ən kəsə lət] adj. without cheer, hope, or comfort (p. 143)
- misconstrue [mɪs kə str̩ʊə] v. to mistake the meaning or intention of; misinterpret (p. 145)
- repose [rə póz] n. relaxation, as after exertion or activity; rest (p. 125)
- tarry [tər′eɪ] v. to remain in a place; stay, especially longer than one expected (p. 151)
- tidings [tɪd ɪŋz] n. news; information (p. 119)
Act IV, Scene 1

1. What is the Second Triumvirate? Who composes it?

2. What is the new triumvirate planning to do?

Act IV, Scene 2

3. Where are Brutus and Cassius?

Act IV, Scene 3

4. Who quarrels? Why?

5. What does Brutus think of himself?

6. Why does Cassius say he is aweary of the world?

7. What alibi (excuse) does Cassius use?

8. What news do we hear of Portia?

9. What is Brutus' reaction?

10. Give the arguments pro and con for marching to Philippi.

   Pro (yes):

   Con (no):
11. Why does Cassius think the army should be held at Sardis?

12. Why does Brutus think they should march?

13. Why does Caesar's ghost appear to Brutus? What does it say?

**Act V, Scene 1**

1. Where does the scene take place?

2. What do Brutus and Cassius do?

**Act V, Scene 3**

3. How does Cassius die?

4. How does Pindarus earn his freedom?

5. What happens to Titinius?

**Act V, Scene 4**

6. How does Brutus die?

7. What do Antony and Octavius say about Brutus?

8. Who wins and becomes ruler of Rome?