



 Prestwick House

# Activity Pack

## JULIUS CAESAR

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pre-Reading****Research I**

Objective:    Researching the author

**Activity**

Research and write a short biography of William Shakespeare. See if you can explain why most scholars consider him the greatest playwright who ever wrote in English. Write at least four paragraphs.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act I****Motivation**

**Objective:** Exposing and understanding characters' emotions

**Activity**

In Act I of the play, we see the plot formulated by several members of the Roman nobility who oppose Julius Caesar. We can see that Brutus is especially moved by one of his friends, Cassius. The plot being fashioned by Cassius might not have been on Brutus' agenda, though, if Cassius had not planted the seed in his mind.

There are many ways to talk people out of things they plan. For example, if you had wanted to go to a prom alone instead of with another in a group of people, your parents might have tried to talk you out of it by giving you sound reasons such as: no one to dance with, no one to talk to during the dance, looking like a person who couldn't get a date, etc. They may even have threatened to take away allowance money or bribe you with more allowance.

Now put yourself in someone else's shoes in the play. If you were Cassius' mother, how would you advise your son? Using Act I for reference, how would you persuade Cassius not to pursue his intentions before he speaks to Brutus? Write three examples on the following chart, explaining how each might have had some importance to Cassius. Then, write three answers Cassius might have given his mother in response to her attempts at persuasion.

Explain what you think the outcome might have been on the basis of these arguments and answers and how the play might have changed. We have completed one example of the discussion with Cassius' mother.

You do not have to write in Elizabethan language. One reason is offered for you to look over.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act I****Puns**

Objective: Understanding puns

**Activity**

At the beginning of the play, some tribunes stop a tradesman in the street. They ask him who he is and what he does for a living. In Shakespeare's clever poetry, he lends a great deal of character to the profession of a cobbler. When the cobbler says he is "a mender of bad soles," the implied meaning is that his profession is much more than just fixing shoes. He also calls himself a "surgeon to old shoes, and when they are in great danger...re-cover[s] them."

Take the six professions we have supplied for you, and describe each one, in Shakespeare's terms. See if you can come up with some puns similar to the ones he uses in Act I. For example, if you were describing your profession as an automobile mechanic, you might say that you are a trainer of horses, implying your craft deals with horsepower and that you help people win their races.

Write at least one line with a pun for each of the following:

Electrician – \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_Plumber – \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_Cable installer – \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_Doctor – \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_Teacher – \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_Baker – \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act II****Interpreting Shakespeare****Objective:** Interpreting the meaning of language**Activity**

In Act II, Portia and Lucius, a servant to Brutus, have a discussion. Portia is very worried about Brutus because he was feeling poorly when he left her that day. She wants nothing to happen to Brutus, but she feels weak herself, and needs the assistance of Lucius.

**Portia:** I Prithee, boy, run to the senate-house;  
Stay not to answer me, but get thee gone.  
Why dost thou stay?

**Lucius:** To know my errand, madam.

**Portia:** I would have had thee there, and here again,  
Ere I can tell thee what thou shouldst do there.  
O constancy, be strong upon my side!  
Set a huge mountain 'tween me heart and tongue!  
I have a man's mind, but a woman's might.  
How hard it is for women to keep counsel!  
Art thou here yet?

**Lucius:** Madam, what should I do?  
Run to the Capitol and nothing else?  
And so return to you, and nothing else?

**Portia:** Yes, bring me word, boy, if thy lord look well,  
For he went sickly forth: and take good note  
What Caesar doth, what suitors press to him.  
Hark, boy! What noise is this?

**Lucius:** I hear none, madam.

**Portia:** Prithee, listen well:  
I heard a bustling rumour like a fray,  
And the wind brings it from the Capitol.

**Lucius:** Sooth, madam, I hear nothing.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act III****Diagram****Objective:** Making a Venn Diagram**Activity**

A Venn Diagram is used to illustrate the interaction of thoughts, actions, people, places, or things and how they can influence other events. In the example of the Venn Diagram that follows, notice how the intersecting circles create four overlapped areas where there is a relationship between the three original people in an imaginary novel.

For example, if section 1 is a hypothetical Father, section 2 is a Mother, and section 3 is a Child, the intersecting area A would concern the interaction between Father and Mother. Section B would concern interaction between Father, Mother, and Child. Section C would concern interaction between Father and Child. Section D would concern interaction between Mother and Child.

1A and 2A represent what might be a discussion, an argument or some type of contact between the Father and Mother. The other interaction points illustrate the same among other family members.

The actions could be described as follows:

Section A – Father and Mother influence each other.

Section B – Father and Mother are influenced by Child. Child is influenced by Father and Mother.

Section C – Father is influenced by Child, and Child is influenced by Father.

Section D – Mother is influenced by Child, and Child is influenced by Mother.

Draw a Venn diagram using any three characters in Act III, and explain how their areas of concern influence each other, directly or indirectly.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Act III

### Current Events

**Objective:** Finding examples of current events in the play

#### Activity

Newspapers and television news broadcasts constantly remind us of errors we have made in our judicial system. We read or hear about convictions of criminals, but there are also stories about people who serve time in prison for crimes they didn't commit. Some convictions made years ago were made because there were not the methods of detection we have today, such as DNA evidence. Some charges were made and sentences carried out because a lack of evidence forced officers to make their own decisions to uphold what they judged to be right.

In *Julius Caesar*, there is an obvious case of "mistaken identity," and it is very well described. Find and make note of the Act and the Scene in which this case appears. Write exactly what happened, giving reasons for the action taken by those who judged the mistaken person to be someone else.

Explain why they jumped to their conclusion and how they handled the situation. Write what you would have done if you had been the mistaken person, and what position you would have taken as one of the "identifiers." Do you think what they did was justified? Why? Why not?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act IV****Writing****Objective:** Writing a descriptive paragraph**Activity**

One of the tragic episodes in the play is the concern and fate of Brutus' wife, Portia. Reread everything you about her in the play, and write a descriptive paragraph about her death; how it occurred, what led up to it, her actions, and the effect those actions had on others.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act IV****Rhyming****Objective:** Finding actual rhyming schemes**Activity**

Shakespeare did not use obvious rhyming schemes such as that found in limericks or song lyrics. His rhyming was more difficult to find and recognize. In Scene i, for example, Antony says,

“This is a slight unmeritable man,  
Meet to be sent on errands; is it fit,  
The three-fold world divided, he should stand  
One of the three to share it?”

Find at least three more instances of Shakespeare's rhyming schemes. Some are obvious, some are not obvious, and some can be found in single lines.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Act V

### Newspaper Reporting

**Objective:** Writing a news story about the play

#### Activity

News reporters must make notes on events they witness, especially when they might influence the general public, for example. In the instance of a war, people who read a particular newspaper await factual news from the front lines and depend on their news commentary to make proper evaluations. A reading public does not expect exaggeration or creativity in news reporting, nor can people base their assessment of a war on anything but objective facts.

You, as reporter for the *New York Times*, have been asked to cover the battle of Philippi in Act V of *Julius Caesar*, and have been sent to the front lines. With your notebook in hand, you must not forget to answer the basic questions, as they will help you to report the action at the front.

You will want to answer the questions of “Who, Where, Why, What, When, and How” without inserting your opinion, so that no one is influenced by your slant on the event, but only by the outcome of the war. List your answers to each of those basic questions before you proceed with your coverage.

Your first paragraph should be a short, condensed version of what happened and should be interesting enough to induce the reader to finish your entire article. It might start something like this:

Antony's war came to a satisfactory conclusion for today as Caesar's murderers were forced to abandon their fight. Brutus committed suicide without implicating his accomplice in that bloody deed.

When your story is complete, write a front-page, banner headline for it. It might read:

**BRUTUS DIES BY OWN SWORD; ANTONY'S REVENGE COMPLETE!**