

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

Julius Caesar

by William Shakespeare

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Julius Caesar

NOTES

With the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the Elizabethans were used to a strong, benevolent monarch. Such a ruler pleased them because only a strong monarch could keep the peace and prevent civil war. In fact, the killing of a legitimate king not only plunged the country into civil war and chaos but also violated God's law. The people of the time believed that Kings had a Divine Right to Rule; that is, that the Kings received their right to rule from God. Killing a King violated not only civil law but also God's law, i.e., natural law.

While not all segments of the population had the vote, the Roman Republic was a representative form of government. Voting was the right of the aristocratic senators, and their favorite was Pompey. Caesar, who seemed to have the support of the common people, fought with and defeated Pompey and then Pompey's son. As such, a victorious and popular Caesar returned to Rome and appeared to be on the verge of being declared King. Many of the aristocratic senators did not like this development and this is where the play begins.

Omens and portents play a large role in *Julius Caesar*. The Romans were a superstitious people who believed that future events could be seen in dreams, the stars, the entrails of animals, and unnatural occurrences. While Epicurus is a notable exception, many Romans also believed that Fate, sometimes in the person of supernatural beings, controlled one's life.

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OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, the student will be able to:

1. define the terms “tragedy” and “tragic hero.”
2. appreciate the multiple dimensions in a Shakespearean work by writing two paragraphs. One paragraph will argue that Julius Caesar is the tragic hero of this work, while the second paragraph will argue that Brutus is the tragic hero.
3. identify the major themes in this play
4. discuss the ways in which language is used by the characters in this play to persuade, distort the truth, humiliate, and flatter.
5. identify the qualities, both strengths and weaknesses, for each of these characters: Julius Caesar, Brutus, Antony, Cassius, and Octavius Caesar.
6. compare and contrast the two female characters: Portia and Calpurnia.
7. appreciate and understand the Shakespearean language.
8. define monarchy and republicanism.
9. define the following literary terms:

allusion
anachronism
anagnorisis
anaphora
anthropomorphism
apostrophe
aside
climax
conflict
dialogue
exposition
falling action

foreshadowing
idealism
imagery
irony
monologue
motif
motivation
omen
oratory
pun
prose
resolution

rising action
sarcasm
setting
simile
soliloquy
stage directions
superstition
theme
tragic hero
tragic flaw
verse

Julius Caesar

Study Guide Student Copy

Act I, Scene I – *Rome. A Street.*

Vocabulary

cobbler – a clumsy worker

knave – one who is of low-status, unskilled

beseech – to advise

neats-leather – cowhide

cull – to choose

exalted – elevated

servile – subservient, menial

1. At the very start of the scene, Flavius is yelling to the commoners. Put Flavius' first five lines into modern speech.
2. Puns and word play are a popular part of Shakespeare's plays. Identify and explain the puns the cobbler uses.
3. Flavius asks why the cobbler is out of his shop. What is the cobbler's response?
4. How do the Tribunes, Marullus and Flavius, react to this word play?

Act II, Scene I – *Rome. Brutus's Orchard.*

Vocabulary

taper – candle

general – common good

adder – poisonous snake

proof – fact

augmented – multiplied, expanded

exhalations – meteors

whet – urge, provoke

interim – gaps, lulls

phantasma – a dream

Genius – soul

insurrection – revolt, revolution, civil disobedience

moe – more

favour – feature

visage – face

affability – generosity, compassion

semblance – appearance, manner

prick – prompt, encourage

palter – hesitate, quibble

cautelous – dishonest, insincere

carrions – corpses; mild curse

insuppressive – prompting, instigating, encouraging

bastardy – bastards, born illegitimately

contriver – schemer

envy – malevolence

hew – hack; chop

ingrafted – faithful

augurers – soothsayers, prophets

uttermost – latest

wafture – wave

contagion – plague, affliction, ailment

rheumy – causing rheumatism

unpurged – foul, contaminated

charactery – writing

1. Why does Brutus believe that Caesar must be stopped from becoming king? Do you think Brutus' fear of what Caesar may become is justified?

Act III, Scene I – *Rome. Before the Capitol – The Senate sitting above.*

Vocabulary

sirrah – sir

puissant – powerful

couchings – bows

children – childlike ways

fond – unwise, witless

cur – dog

apprehensive – ruled by imagination

bootless – in vain

knot – group

rank – infected, ailing

modesty – control, self-restraint

oration – speech

1. Why does Caesar say he will not read Artemidorus' letter first?
2. What does Popilius Lena say to Cassius?
3. What does Trebonius do while Popilius Lena speaks with Caesar?
4. In response to Cimber's request to lift his brother's banishment, what posture does Caesar resume?
5. All the conspirators gather to perform their plan. Using your imagination, create the setting as well as the stage directions for this scene.

Act III, Scene III – *A street.*

Vocabulary

no vocabulary

1. Why is Cinna, the poet, killed by the mob?

Act IV, Scene I – *A house in Rome.*

Vocabulary

proscription – doom

perils – dangers, risks

1. How does Antony show himself to be ruthless in this scene?
2. Why do you suppose Octavius assents to Antony's suggestion regarding Lepidus?
3. In what unfavorable terms does Antony describe Lepidus, and what do these lines reveal about Antony and Octavius' plan?
4. What are Brutus and Cassius up to?
5. What does Antony suggest in response to Brutus and Cassius' actions?

Act V, Scene I – *The Plains of Philippi*

Vocabulary

cross – challenge, oppose

exigent – crisis

parley – a meeting

reveller – one who parties

consorted – ushered, escorted

1. What does Antony think is the reason for Brutus and Cassius' armies having confronted them face-to-face?
2. What is Octavius' response when Antony orders him to take the left side of the field? Why do you suppose he does this?
3. What does Cassius remark about Antony?
4. What do the ravens and crows flying overhead mean to Cassius?
5. What does Brutus say he finds "cowardly and vile"?
6. Brutus says he "bears too great a mind" to allow something to happen. What does he mean by this?
7. Why do Brutus and Cassius give each other an everlasting farewell?