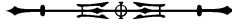


# *The Complete Guide to Shakespeare's Best Plays*

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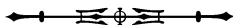
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# Foreword



This study guide covers six of Shakespeare's best-known plays—among them, the tragedies *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. Most high school students encounter both of these plays and become interested in them, for although the characters are complex, the story lines are easy enough for the students to follow.

The Roman history play *Julius Caesar* is one that young readers usually find relatively easy to understand because in many cases they already know the circumstances of Caesar's death. Thus, like Shakespeare's original audience, they can concentrate on how he tells the story.

Of the three comedies, *Romeo and Juliet* always appeals to students because it is a tale of teenage rebellion and romance, subjects to which they can easily relate. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is set in a beautiful fantasy world. Again, it has "love interest" plus broad comedy—a winning combination.

*The Tempest*, probably Shakespeare's last play, is more difficult. Thus students may need more in-class help with it than with the other comedies. (See "Suggestions for Presenting *The Tempest*," p. 102.) Its examination of good and evil should give rise to some fruitful classroom discussions, while its emphasis on the supernatural and its depiction of "love at first sight" will attract and hold the students' interest.

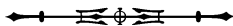
Since the language of Shakespeare may seem difficult at first, and since neither the poetic nor the dramatic form is as reassuringly familiar as prose, students need some practical advice

about how to read a Shakespearean play. That advice can be found in "To the Student." Once the beginning difficulties are behind, young readers generally are caught up in the exciting plot and are eager to read on.

To help explain the intricacies of each plot, a comprehensive act-by-act summary is provided. To prevent students from relying too heavily on those summaries, the reading quizzes contain questions that can only be answered by careful study of the play itself. The lessons for each play emphasize plot, character, setting, and theme; they demand that students reflect and draw conclusions. If students have completed the lessons successfully, the final tests should present no particular difficulties. The supplementary activities suggested for each play are designed to appeal to a variety of students. Some students may want to do a brief oral report. Others, with creative talents, might want to get involved in a longer project.

Both the supplementary activities and the lessons themselves touch upon political and social history. Thus, the study of a Shakespearean play becomes a link to history. References are also made to the Elizabethan fondness for music; the play could be a bridge to that subject, if you choose. Whatever your emphasis, these lessons should help you gain the reward of seeing your students respond to the wisdom and art of William Shakespeare. It is hoped that some of them will be inspired to continue to read and enjoy his work for years to come.

# To the Teacher



## Lesson Preparation

The six Shakespearean plays most often taught in high school—and treated in this volume—represent varying degrees of reading difficulty. Nevertheless, plot, character, setting, and theme are emphasized in the activities at all levels. Some attention is given to the poetry in each of the plays as well.

You may wish to follow some or all of these suggestions to ensure that your students derive the greatest benefit from their study of the plays:

1. Insist that students keep all act summaries, lessons, quizzes, and tests in a folder or a loose-leaf notebook for easy reference and review. Point out that these materials may also benefit them in their postsecondary work.
2. Make certain that every student reads “To the Student” before reading a play.
3. Use the opening lessons, “Getting Acquainted with Shakespeare” and “A Look at Shakespeare’s London,” to introduce any of the plays.
4. Point out to the students that although the act summaries are comprehensive, careful reading of the play will be necessary to answer questions on the reading quizzes.
5. Since famous lines from the plays make up part of each final test, you might call students’ attention to the most often-quoted lines, either while they are studying the play or before the final test.
6. The lessons for each play demand that students reflect on what they have read and draw conclusions. In a few cases, a general class discussion might be beneficial before students attempt to complete a lesson. The following lessons would be best presented in that manner:

*Romeo and Juliet*—Lessons III, IV, VIII;  
*Julius Caesar*—Lesson XIV; *Macbeth*—  
Lessons XVI, XVII; *Hamlet*—Lesson  
XXVIII; *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*—

Lessons XXXII, XXXV; *The Tempest*—  
Lessons XXXVIII, XXXIX, XXXX.

7. Answers for each lesson are included in the Answer Key.
8. When you introduce a play, you might ask students to look at the list of supplementary activities and volunteer for ones that interest them. The vocabulary study would benefit everyone.

## Using the Internet

Encourage students to do some independent research based on the suggestions offered for each play. These activities were designed to promote the students’ use of their own initiative, creativity, and imagination. Use the Internet as a culminating activity, as an additional way to enrich your students’ experience of reading a Shakespearean play.

The following web site is especially useful since it has something to offer students and teachers at various levels.

Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet  
<http://daphne.palomar.edu/shakespeare>

The site covers such topics as Shakespeare’s life and times, his works, the theater, and the Renaissance period. It includes a Shakespeare timeline and even a Shakespeare biography quiz! The site’s Shakespeare in Education section is organized around lesson plans and other aides for teaching Shakespeare to high school students, all of which can be tailored to fit your particular class. Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet offers links to many other Shakespeare-specific web sites designed for both students and teachers.

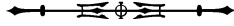
Additional web sites that may be of use to you or your students are:

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust  
<http://www.shakespeare.org.uk>

Shakespeare’s Globe  
<http://www.rdg.ac.uk/globe>

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare  
<http://tech-two.mit.edu/Shakespeare/>

# To the Teacher:



## Suggestions for Presenting *Julius Caesar*

### Sources for the Play

In Shakespeare's time, Roman history had great appeal for people of all ranks. The story of the rise and fall of Julius Caesar would have been generally known. Some might even have read the English translation of the Greek writer Plutarch's *Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans*, from which Shakespeare borrowed heavily to write *Julius Caesar*. Plutarch, who died in the second century A.D., produced a kind of biography of the lives of forty-six notable Greeks and Romans. They were arranged in groups of two—one Greek with one Roman—for purposes of comparison. His description of Caesar and the supernatural phenomena which occurred just before his death were used with very few changes in Shakespeare's play. Although Plutarch was writing about public figures, he showed these men in private moments as well, on the theory that when a public figure is "off stage," he is most apt to reveal his true character. It has been said that Shakespeare learned the art of depicting character and gained understanding of human beings in all their complexity from reading Plutarch.

During the sixteenth century, several Julius Caesar tragedies were performed on the continent and in England as well, but it remained for Shakespeare to produce the most memorable version of that great Roman's fall.

### Topics for Class Discussion

Several volunteers could interview teachers (history or English) for their opinions of Caesar, who remains a controversial figure. The volunteers could then report their findings to the class. In a follow-up exercise, students could make a chalkboard list of Caesar's characteristics as revealed in the play. For example: Was he vain? cowardly? superstitious? Did he really want to become emperor, even though he refused the crown? As far as possible, students should support their opinions by citing incidents or speeches in the play.

### Topics for Oral Reports

Ask some students to read a historical account of Caesar's life, including his relationship with Pompey. Have them recreate the facts as a story to tell in class.

Ask a few students to find the appropriate section in a translation of Plutarch's *Lives*. They may need a librarian's help on this. Ask them to see how closely Shakespeare followed Plutarch's account of the eve of Caesar's death, Caesar's assassination, and Portia's death. They can then report to the class.

Ask some students to find definitions of *mesomorph*, *endomorph*, and *ectomorph*. Ask them to look for additional information about the supposed relationship between body type and behavior. Caesar said of Cassius, "Yon Cassius has a lean and hungry look." What body type was he describing? Have the students report to the class, then ask their classmates to suggest prominent contemporary figures—sports heroes, movie stars, recent presidents, etc. In which of the three classifications does each fit?

### Hands-On Activities

Cut out references to Shakespeare or his plays from newspapers and magazines for a bulletin-board display.

Students could make collages or sketches of their impressions of the characters for classroom display.

Ask the students to make a list of expressions in the play that they have heard before—for example, "Cowards die many times before their deaths." Students could then compare lists in class.

### Vocabulary Building

In their notebooks, students should collect at least two unfamiliar words from each scene of the play, avoiding words that are footnoted. They should look up each word in a dictionary, define it, and write a sentence using it. In class, students can compare notes and learn from one another's work.

## What Happens in Act I, *Julius Caesar*

**Act I, Scene I** On a street in Rome, two officials, Flavius and Marullus, meet a cobbler and a carpenter who have taken the day off to welcome home Caesar after his military triumph. Flavius and Marullus succeed in driving them from the street by calling them fickle. They remind them that not long before, they had turned out to welcome Pompey, who is now dead. (It is Pompey's sons whom Caesar has just defeated.)

**Act I, Scene II** Everyone has gathered to celebrate the Feast of Lupercal (February 15). Caesar stands with his wife, Calpurnia, and his friend Mark Antony. Suddenly, a fortune-teller calls out to Caesar from the crowd, warning him to "Beware the ides of March" (March 15). Meanwhile, two noble Romans, Cassius and Brutus, at a little distance apart from everyone else, are talking. When Brutus says that he won't stay for the festivities, Cassius seems hurt and says that Brutus is not as friendly to him as he used to be. Brutus apologizes, saying that if he neglects his friends, it is because his mind is troubled. Cassius uses that opportunity to find out how Brutus feels about Caesar and says that he fears the people will make Caesar king. Brutus says that he too has been concerned about that possibility. Then another friend, Casca, comes along. Casca says

that the people have offered Caesar the crown three times, but he has refused, each time more reluctantly, or so Casca thinks. Casca then leaves, and Brutus follows after promising to meet Cassius the next day. Alone on the stage, Cassius congratulates himself that he has already influenced Brutus. By trickery, he plans to win Brutus over to his way of thinking.

**Act I, Scene III** During a nighttime storm, Cicero, a senator, meets Casca, who talks wildly and fearfully about the storm and about strange things that have taken place that night. He believes that they are omens of things to come. Having said goodnight to Cicero, Casca goes on to meet Cassius. Cassius scolds Casca for his fears and compares the night to Caesar himself, who now strikes fear into the hearts of many Romans. Casca then suggests that the senators will make Caesar king. Cassius vows to kill himself rather than live in "bondage" (slavery) under Caesar. Having determined that Casca feels the same way, Cassius tells him that those who fear that Caesar is gaining too much power are meeting that very night. Cassius intends to make certain that Brutus joins them. He has thought of a trick to make Brutus believe that many citizens of Rome fear Caesar and admire Brutus.



**The Ides of March**





## Lesson 9: Understanding What You Have Read

You know, of course, that the **plot** is the story—what happens and why. If you can answer the following questions on Act I, you have followed the plot so far.

1. In Scene I, Flavius and Marullus represent a higher class than that of the cobbler and the carpenter. How does their attitude toward Caesar contrast with the attitude of the two workingmen?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. In Scene I, you have an indication that Caesar is not popular with everyone in Rome. Scene II makes this point even clearer. The ordinary people love Caesar, but he has enemies among the more influential people. What is their objection to Caesar and to his being made king?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. In Scene III, what has only been hinted at becomes clear. A group of conspirators are determined to prevent Caesar from gaining more power.

A. Who seems to be their leader? \_\_\_\_\_

B. What one man are they eager to win over to their side? \_\_\_\_\_

C. How does their leader propose to do this? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

D. Do you think it significant that they meet at night? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The second important element in a play is the **setting**—the time and place of the action. It influences how you, the reader or viewer, interpret the events. It also strengthens the plot. For example, in Scene III, the conspirators meet “under cover of darkness,” making them seem evil and menacing to the reader. Now let’s look more closely at the setting of Act I.

4. Scene I opens on a seemingly happy occasion, a holiday celebrating the triumphant return of Caesar to Rome. What mars the happiness of this scene?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Scene II is also a seemingly festive occasion; everyone is in the streets for the Lupercal.

A. How does the warning called to Caesar by a man in the crowd change the festive mood?

\_\_\_\_\_

B. How does Brutus’s, Cassius’s, and Casca’s conversation detract from the festivities?

\_\_\_\_\_

C. Does Caesar’s attack of the “falling sickness” also alter the mood of the scene?

- \_\_\_\_\_
6. In Scene III, the gods are angry at humankind, or so the Romans would have believed. There is a terrible storm; a lion roams the streets of the city; people report having seen fire falling from the heavens and men all aflame walking the streets. The festive setting of Scenes I and II has changed to an ominous one that seems to indicate more evil to come. What do you expect may happen next?

\_\_\_\_\_



## Lesson 10: More Questions to Test Your Understanding of the Play So Far

To understand a play, you must be able to follow the action (the plot). The brief summaries of each act should help you. You must also be aware of the setting and understand how the playwright uses it to emphasize certain parts of the plot. Above all, you must get acquainted with the **characters**—

with their physical appearance, of course, but also with their thoughts, their motivations or reasons for doing things, their weaknesses, and their strengths. As you read about what the characters do and say, as well as what others say about them, they should “come alive” for you.

1. While none of the characters in Scene I appears in the play again, Shakespeare makes them believable individuals.
  - A. Is the cobbler truly respectful to his superior, Marullus? Explain.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - B. What evidence do you have that the cobbler has a good sense of humor and a way with words? (You may need to review his speeches to answer this question.)  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. In Scene II, you meet Caesar. Reread his comments to Antony about Cassius in the speech that begins, “Let me have men about me that are fat.” (line 192)
  - A. Does Caesar understand what kind of man Cassius is? Explain.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - B. Caesar says that men like Cassius are to be feared. Do you think Caesar himself fears Cassius? Explain.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - C. What do you learn about Caesar’s health in this scene? (Part of your information comes from Cassius’s comments, part from Caesar’s own remarks, and part from what happens while Caesar is being offered the crown.)  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. In Scene II, you are introduced to Caesar’s close friend, Mark Antony.
  - A. What indications do you have that Mark Antony is quite young? (Remember Caesar’s request to him as the scene opens.)  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - B. How does Brutus contrast himself with Antony?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - C. How does Caesar contrast Antony and Cassius in his speech, revealing his distrust of Cassius?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. In Scene III you learn more about both Cassius and Casca.
  - A. Contrast Cassius’s and Casca’s reaction to the violent storm. Which man shows more courage?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - B. Cassius actually uses the storm to his own advantage. How does he use it to make Casca even more distrustful of Caesar? (See the speech that begins in line 57.)  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - C. How does Cassius make absolutely certain that Casca will be his loyal follower?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - D. You have already seen that Caesar is a good judge of men, for his evaluation of Cassius was accurate. Do you think Cassius is also a good judge of character? Explain.  
\_\_\_\_\_



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Reading Quiz: *Julius Caesar*, Act I

1. Having succeeded in driving away the cobbler and the carpenter, what further efforts do Flavius and Marcellus make to lessen the importance of Caesar's return?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why does Caesar ask Mark Antony to touch Calpurnia with the leather thong he will carry in the race that is part of the celebration of the Lupercal?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What does Cassius say was the outcome when he and Caesar plunged into the River Tiber to swim to a certain point?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What does Cassius say happened to Caesar during a campaign in Spain?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What two physical infirmities of Caesar do we now know about?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What trick will Cassius use to make Brutus believe that many citizens of Rome respect Brutus and are fearful of Caesar's ambition?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. If Caesar should be made king, how does Cassius intend to deliver himself from bondage?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Why are the conspirators so eager to make Brutus part of their group?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## What Happens in Act II, *Julius Caesar*

**Act II, Scene I** Brutus, still troubled after his conversation about Julius Caesar with Cassius, has spent the night pacing up and down in his garden (orchard). Just before dawn, he rouses his young servant, Lucius, to bring a candle in his study. After the boy leaves, Brutus talks aloud to himself (soliloquy), allowing us to know what he is thinking. He is convinced that Caesar must die. Although he has no personal grudge against Caesar, Brutus fears that Caesar, once crowned king, will abuse his power. Lucius returns with a letter. (It is one that Cassius has directed a conspirator, or fellow plotter, to throw in through Brutus's window.) Brutus reads it and assumes that it is from the citizens of Rome who want him to act against Caesar.

While it is still dark, the conspirators arrive, led by Cassius. Brutus shakes hands with each one, pledging his support for their undertaking (the murder of Caesar), but he declines to swear an oath. Since they are men of honor, he believes that they don't need to make any promises. Cassius suggests that Mark Antony should be assassinated, too. Brutus disagrees because he believes that Antony, without Caesar, will be powerless. More important, he sees Caesar's killing as a sacrifice for the good of Rome, but he wants no further bloodshed.

Cassius fears that Caesar, being superstitious, may choose not to go to the Senate in the morning, since it is the ides of March. Decius claims that he can flatter Caesar into going. Before leaving, the conspirators agree to meet at 8:00 A.M. at Caesar's house. Brutus sends word to Caius Ligarius, who, he knows, will want to join them.

Portia, Brutus's wife, sees the conspirators leave. She comes in, knowing her husband is troubled, and begs him to tell her his secret. They are interrupted by a knock. Brutus asks her to leave, promising that later he will tell her the secrets of his heart. The new visitor is Caius Ligarius, who has been ill but is eager to follow Brutus's lead and become part of the conspiracy.

**Act II, Scene II** Early on the morning of the ides of March, Caesar is wakeful because of the previous night's terrible storm and his wife Calpurnia's

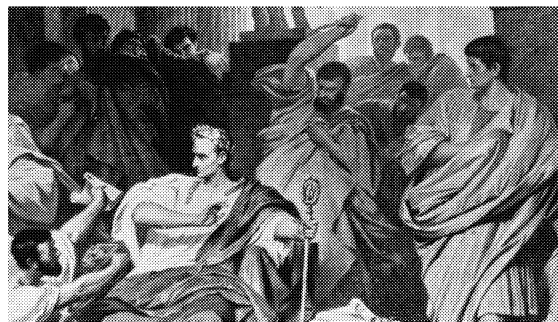
troubled sleep. He tells a servant to have the priests prepare a sacrifice to see whether or not the omens for the day are favorable. Calpurnia comes in. Deeply disturbed by the strange storm and by her dreams, she begs Caesar not to go out that day because she fears for his life. Caesar's attitude is fatalistic. He says that whatever will be, will be. He tells her that cowards fear death but that he is not afraid. The servant comes back to report unfavorable omens. Calpurnia then pleads so urgently that Caesar agrees to stay home.

Decius arrives. Hearing that Caesar is not planning to go to the Senate, Decius cleverly manipulates him by reinterpreting Calpurnia's dream to make it sound favorable to Caesar. He says that the senators intend to offer him a crown that day, but if they learn that Caesar will not go out because of his wife's worrisome dream, they may change their minds.

Won over by these arguments, Caesar agrees to go to the Senate. The other conspirators arrive to accompany him. Caesar offers them wine before they leave his house, a kind gesture that makes Brutus feel guilty.

**Act II, Scene III** Artemidorus, who admires Caesar, waits along the way to the Senate, intending to pass Caesar a letter warning of the conspiracy.

**Act II, Scene IV** Portia, fearful of what she suspects is to take place that day, sends Lucius to the Senate House. Because she cannot let the boy know her fears, she tells him only to see whether or not his master looks well and to tell Brutus that she is cheerful. She then speaks to a soothsayer, or fortune-teller, who intends to warn Caesar.



## Lesson 11: Getting Acquainted with the Characters in *Julius Caesar*

The first lesson dealing with *Julius Caesar* was aimed at helping you understand the plot and setting of the play. The second lesson emphasized certain qualities of three important characters—Caesar, Cassius, and Mark Antony. Act II focuses on the fourth major character, Brutus, but it also

acquaints you with the two wives, Calpurnia and Portia, and reveals new details of Caesar's character.

After reading the summary of Act II and then reading Act II itself, you should be able to answer the following questions.

1. In Act II, Scene I, Brutus envies his soundly sleeping young servant. Portia, Brutus's wife, comments later in this scene that Brutus got up in the night, left the bedroom, and did not return. What is the apparent cause of Brutus's restlessness and inability to sleep?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Since Brutus has no personal grudge against Caesar, of what must he convince himself before he can take part in Caesar's assassination?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. At this point, what adjectives would you use to describe Brutus's character?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Cassius, unlike Brutus, is partly motivated by personal dislike of Caesar. What do you think is the underlying cause of this dislike?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. From the comments of Cassius and Brutus (lines 154–191), what conflicting views of the character of Mark Antony do you get?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. A. By what means does Decius promise to bring Caesar to the Senate House?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
B. What does his promised course of action show you about his character?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What qualities of Portia do you find especially admirable?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What qualities, if any, do Portia and Calpurnia have in common?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. How does Calpurnia's relationship with Caesar seem to differ from Portia's relationship with Brutus?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. What indications do you have in Act II that Caesar is:
  - A. superstitious \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. proud \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. a courageous soldier \_\_\_\_\_
  - D. influenced by flattery \_\_\_\_\_
  - E. considerate, trusting, and generous to his friends \_\_\_\_\_



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Reading Quiz: *Julius Caesar*, Act II

1. Brutus states in his soliloquy that up to now, Caesar has not let his emotions sway his judgment as a ruler. Why, then, does Brutus fear for the future if Caesar is crowned king?

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2. Since Cassius first mentioned to Brutus his fears about Caesar's ambition, what does Brutus say his frame of mind has been?

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3. Why does Brutus object to having Cicero as one of the conspirators?

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4. What is Brutus's opinion of Mark Antony?

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5. Before asking her husband to tell her his secrets, what physical act does Portia perform to prove her strength of character?

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6. What has made Portia suspicious of the men who visited Brutus in his garden?

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7. Who arrives at Caesar's house just after the conspirators but is not one of them?

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## What Happens in Act III, *Julius Caesar*

**Act III, Scene I** At the Capitol, the soothsayer again tries to warn Caesar, who does not listen. Nor is Artemidorus successful. Caesar refuses to read his letter, but the conspirators realize that their plot is known. They find an excuse to get Mark Antony out of the Capitol. Then Metellus Cimber approaches Caesar with a request that he knows Caesar will not grant. (He's asking pardon for a brother who has been banished.) Brutus and Cassius now add their pleas to Metellus's as the other conspirators move close to Caesar. Caesar tells them all that "like the northern star," he cannot be swayed from his true course. Publius Cimber deserved his banishment; Caesar will not recall him.

All at once, the conspirators stab Caesar. Brutus strikes the last blow; when Caesar realizes that his friend Brutus is part of the conspiracy, he collapses and dies. The assassins now realize that they must explain their deed to the people and convince them that they acted to destroy tyranny. Brutus insists that each conspirator bathe his hands in Caesar's blood to show the Romans that this was a sacrificial killing.

Mark Antony's servant comes to ask Brutus if it is safe for his master to come to the Capitol. He wants to learn from Brutus why Caesar had to die. Brutus says that he may come, and Caesar's killing will be explained to him. Antony arrives and first addresses Caesar's corpse, "O mighty Caesar! Dost thou lie so low?" Then he turns to the conspirators, saying that if he is among those yet to be killed, let them kill him now. Brutus assures him that they have done what they had to do for the citizens of Rome. He tells Antony that they want to make him one of them, and Cassius promises him a post in the new government. Antony shakes hands with the conspirators, but turns to speak again to Caesar's corpse, asking pardon for making peace with his assassins. Cassius, ever suspicious, asks Antony if they can count him a friend. He says yes, but he must know why Caesar was slain. Brutus assures him that his question will be answered.

Antony asks permission to take Caesar's body to the marketplace and deliver the funeral speech.

Brutus agrees, despite Cassius's objections. Brutus says that he himself will speak first, then Antony. Antony must state that he is speaking with Brutus's permission. He may praise Caesar but may not blame the conspirators. Antony agrees.

After the conspirators' departure, Antony's soliloquy shows his anger and his determination that Caesar's death be avenged. He predicts civil war, death, and destruction. Octavius, Caesar's servant, arrives to tell him that Octavius (Julius's grandnephew) is close to Rome. Antony tells him that Rome is not safe for his master as yet, but that Antony will know the mood of the people better after the funeral speech.

**Act III, Scene II** In the marketplace, Brutus addresses the citizens of Rome, explaining that though he loved and honored Caesar, he loved Rome more. He killed Caesar because Caesar was too ambitious and would have enslaved his countrymen. He concludes that as he used his dagger on Caesar for Rome's sake, he would use it on himself for Rome's sake if necessary. The citizens greet his speech with shouts of approval. Brutus leaves after telling the people to stay to listen to Mark Antony. Antony begins by saying that Brutus and his friends, all honorable men, have said that because Caesar was too ambitious, he had to die. He then reminds them that Caesar, the general, brought many captives to Rome and that their ransoms went into the general treasury, not into Caesar's pocket. He reminds them that Caesar refused the crown three times and tells them that Caesar loved and wept for the poor. He asks them if these were the deeds of an ambitious man. He reminds them how much they once loved Caesar, yet are not mourning him now. He shows them Caesar's body, mutilated by stab wounds, and tells them that they, the ordinary people, are the beneficiaries of Caesar's will. Now wildly angry against the conspirators, the citizens rush off, bent on destruction.

**Act III, Scene III** In this brief scene, the angry mob kills an innocent man (Cinna the poet), a friend of Caesar, simply because he has the same name as one of the conspirators.



## Lesson 12: Understanding the Characters' Behavior

At the beginning of Act III, Shakespeare gives us two more glimpses of Caesar's character. Questions 1 and 2 test your understanding of Caesar's **motivations** (reasons for doing things). Answering these questions may help you decide whether or not Caesar was the kind of person the conspirators believed him to be.

1. A. When Artemidorus first urges Caesar to read his letter, why does Caesar refuse?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- B. Artemidorus insists that Caesar read the letter. What is Caesar's reaction?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- C. What two characteristics of Caesar's do your answers to A and B reveal?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Review Caesar's two speeches, the first, beginning "I must prevent thee, Cimber," lines 35–48, and the second, beginning "I could be well moved, if I were as you," lines 58–73.
  - A. Based on the first speech, what seems to be Caesar's reaction to flattery?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - B. In the second speech, what does Caesar say his course of action is, once he has made a decision?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - C. Are the qualities Caesar reveals in the two speeches desirable in a ruler? Explain.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Why is it so important to Brutus that the conspirators bathe their hands in Caesar's blood?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Why do you think Mark Antony sends a message to Brutus, not Cassius, asking safe conduct if he returns to the Capitol?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. After shaking hands with the conspirators, Antony turns again to Caesar's corpse and asks forgiveness.
  - A. At this point, do you think Antony is moved solely by grief, or do you think he is doing what he believes the conspirators would expect him to do? Give a reason for your choice.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - B. Whatever his motives, would Antony's behavior make the conspirators more or less trustful of him? Explain.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Basing your answer on what happens later in this act, state who was the better judge of Antony and his power over the people: Brutus or Cassius. Explain your choice.  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Look now at Brutus's and Antony's speeches to the citizens of Rome. Brutus's speech is brief. He tells the citizens what we, the readers, already know—that though Caesar was his friend, he killed him for the good of Rome. He says he would be willing to kill himself for Rome's sake if the sacrifice were required. Is Brutus sincere? Refer specifically to his actions up to this point. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Antony's speech has a much greater emotional appeal than Brutus's, and it is very clever argumentation.
  - A. How does he disprove Brutus's claim that Caesar was too ambitious?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - B. What dramatic act of Antony's stirs the people to frenzy? \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. Why does he withhold Caesar's will until late in his speech?  
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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Reading Quiz: *Julius Caesar*, Act III

1. After Cassius offers Antony a place in the new government and they shake hands, what does Antony do that causes Cassius to doubt that he is truly a friend to the conspirators?

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2. What is Antony's true opinion of the conspirators? (He tells us in his soliloquy.)

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3. Why has Octavius Caesar come to Rome?

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4. What are the terms of Caesar's will?

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5. Whom does Antony join after his speech in the marketplace?

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6. By the end of the scene in the marketplace, what has become of Brutus and Cassius?

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7. In Scene III, in which Cinna the poet meets some citizens of Rome, what lesson is Shakespeare teaching us about the character of a mob?

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