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Advanced Placement in  
English Literature and Composition

Teaching Unit  
Individual Learning Packet

*Julius Caesar*

by William Shakespeare

Written by Elizabeth Scott

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# *Julius Caesar*

## Student Objectives

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

1. discuss the techniques Shakespeare uses to convey character and character relationships to his audience.
2. discuss the dramatic development of the play in terms of exposition, conflict, climax, resolution.
3. analyze the importance of literary elements like dramatic irony and foreshadowing on the development of the play.
4. analyze Shakespeare's use of language (verse, prose, rhythm, rhyme) and its importance in setting mood and establishing character.
5. define by example the terms *tragedy* and *tragic hero*.
6. describe how the play parallels the political situation of Shakespeare's time and the repercussions of this parallel.
7. respond to multiple choice questions similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
8. respond to writing prompts similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
9. offer a close reading of *Julius Caesar* and support all assertions and interpretations with direct evidence from the text, from authoritative critical knowledge of the genre, or from authoritative criticism of the play.

## Lecture

### I. Shakespeare and His Times

When William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was born in Stratford-on-Avon, England was in the midst of its Renaissance. Queen Elizabeth I was the ruling monarch. It was a time of national strength and wealth, and the prevailing attitude was that life was exciting. It was an age of exploration, not only of the world but also of human nature and the English language.

Some ideas that characterized the English Renaissance that are important to this play are:

1. Humans had potential for development.
2. The Protestant Reformation that began in Germany, and Elizabeth's father's (Henry VIII) break with the Roman Catholic Church paved the way for rapid advances in art, science, and philosophy. The medieval premise that this world is a preparation for eternal life was questioned. Instead, people began to see everyday life as meaningful and an opportunity for noble activity.
3. This was a time for heroes. The ideal Elizabethan man was a talented courtier, adventurer, fencer, poet, and conversationalist. He was a witty and eloquent gentleman who examined his own nature and the causes of his actions.
4. Despite the fact that the nation was ruled by a queen, women had a lower social status than men.
5. While some medieval notions were being reevaluated and discarded, others remained. Elizabethans still maintained a firm belief in the "Natural Order," the hierarchy that set God above humans, humans above animals, animals above inanimate living things like plants, and plants above non-living things like rocks. This concept originated with Plato and expressed the idea that there is a proper order within all things, and among all things, based on complexity, from the tiniest grains of sand to heaven and God. When everything was in its proper position, there was harmony.

This "great chain of being" was likewise reflected in the human social structure, in which royalty, nobility, gentry, and peasantry were not mere social classes but considered almost different species. If the chain were broken, *everything* was upset and *everyone* suffered.

Any upset in this great chain was portended by signs and divinations in nature—signs in the stars, the weather, unusual animal behavior, etc. Shakespeare makes much of these signs in his plays.

6. Elizabethans, likewise, still maintained their belief in the Divine Rule of Kings, the belief that the reigning monarch was God's agent, and to rebel against a reigning monarch was to rebel against God. To rebel against a reigning monarch was to upset the great chain, and disastrous consequences followed.

One of Elizabeth's favorite courtiers had just published a tract called "The Dutie of a King in His Royal Office," in which he wrote, "Kings are justly called gods; for that they exercise a manner or resemblance of divine power upon earth."

7. In England, there was a succession crisis—Queen Elizabeth was 66 years old, obviously nearing death, and had no children. She had refused to marry, and had never named an heir. The potential horrors of an unclear succession were still very fresh in the minds of Elizabethans who remembered the long-lasting and bloody Wars of the Roses that resulted from two rival branches of the royal family vying for the throne. Even more recently, the rapid successions of Edward, Lady Jane Gray, Mary, and then Elizabeth—and the many challenges Elizabeth had faced early in her reign—made the topic of who would succeed Elizabeth, and what would happen if an appropriate heir were not found and named, a cause of great concern.

Shakespeare was not able to comment directly on his country's political situation, but through the theater he provided a sharp commentary that politically aware theatergoers would appreciate.

While Shakespeare had no way of predicting the future of English royalty, by sheer coincidence, 1599 was the year Oliver Cromwell was born. He would become an English military, political and religious leader (Puritan). After the English Civil War and the abolition of the monarchy and execution of Charles I in 1649, Cromwell would rule England as "Lord Protector" (essentially a military dictator), from 1653 until his death in 1658.

8. The English army was in Ireland attempting to suppress a rebellion.
9. The French King, Henry IV, had just signed the Treaty of Vervins, which ended a series of French religious and civil wars and put an end to Spanish interference with French internal affairs.

10. The first attempt at English colonization of the New World was in Roanoke 1585. A second attempt was made in 1587. This is the famous “Lost Colony” of Roanoke.
11. 1599 was the year of *Julius Caesar*’s first performance and the completion of Shakespeare’s Globe Theater.
12. Caesar was a popular subject in Shakespeare’s time. Many English writers saw numerous similarities between their own country’s current situation (Elizabeth’s lack of an heir, England’s establishment as a world power, the first attempts at colonization of the New World) and the political uncertainty faced by the first century BCE Romans. Shakespeare’s primary source for information was undoubtedly an English translation of Plutarch’s *Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans* translated by Thomas North, who used a French translation by Jacques Amyot, who, in turn, had used a Latin manuscript.

## II. Features of Shakespeare's Use of Language

### 1. blank verse

Shakespeare's essential pattern in his plays is **BLANK VERSE** (unrhymed iambic pentameter).

Therefore, whenever a reader notices a change in this pattern (a change in rhythm from iambic to trochaic; a shift in meter from pentameter to tetrameter; a shift from poetry to prose) there is a reason for the change.

With the change, Shakespeare is creating a mood, establishing character . . . something.

Be aware of shifts in language like this. For example:

1. commoners speak in prose and when Marullus speaks to the commoners, he switches to prose as well (Act I, scene i);
2. Casca speaks in prose when he relates the scene of Caesar's refusal of the crown (Act I, scene ii);
3. Brutus's speech to the crowd is in prose (Act III, scene ii).

### 4. use of figurative language (especially **SIMILE** and **METAPHOR**)

Shakespeare's characters often speak in similes and metaphors—to expand ideas and amplify **IMAGERY**.

Be certain not to miss the “like,” or the text will indeed seem incomprehensible. For example, in Act IV, scene I, Antony tells Octavius of his feelings about Lepidus:

Octavius, I have seen more days than you:  
And though we lay these honours on this man,  
To ease ourselves of divers slanderous loads,  
He shall but bear them **as the ass bears gold**,  
To groan and sweat under the business,  
Either led or driven, as we point the way;  
And having brought our treasure where we will,  
Then take we down his load, and turn him off,  
**Like to the empty ass**, to shake his ears,  
And graze in commons.

Antony compares Lepidus to a pack animal, but he does not expect Lepidus to actually carry heavy loads physically. Nor is Antony referring to any actual donkey. He is simply describing the way he thinks Lepidus will deal with the “honours” laid upon him—that is, he will take little note of them other than to be flattered and thus be willing to do as the other two triumvirs say.

### III. The Tragic Hero

The **tragic hero**, according to Aristotle, was a man (god, demi-god, hero, high-ranking official) who rises to a high position and then falls from that high position—usually to utter desolation and/ or death. Two forces seem equally powerful in classical tragedy: the tragic hero's tragic flaw (or *hamartia*) and fate.

Some tragic heroes clearly bring about their own downfall, as in the case of Creon in *Antigone*, whose downfall is due to his hubris (excessive pride)—he believes his Law holds precedence over the gods' sense of Right.

Other tragic heroes seem to be more a pawn of Fate, like Oedipus who has done everything in his power (as had his parents before him) to prevent the fatal prophesy from coming to pass that Oedipus would murder his father and marry his mother. It is in the very act of trying to avoid destiny that the prophesy is fulfilled.

By the Renaissance, however, people generally felt themselves to be less pawns of fate and more in control of their own destinies. The Elizabethan tragic hero, therefore, is much more often responsible for his own downfall. This “waste of human potential” as it were seems to be much more tragic to the Elizabethans than the vagaries of fate.



## IV. Historical References

### The Roman Dictator

To the Romans, *Dictator* did not mean what it means to us today. It was a legitimate political office of the Roman Republic. The dictator (Latin for “one who dictates or orders”) was officially known as the *Magister Populi* (“Master of the People”), the *Praetor Maximus* (“The supreme Praetor”), and the *Magister Peditum* (“Master of the Infantry”).

When the Roman Republic was established, the position of chief executive was divided between two Consuls, so that no one person would wield excessive power and become a tyrant. It was felt, however, that a situation might arise in which it would be necessary for a single individual to hold absolute power for a brief period of time. The title of this office was *Dictator*.

No one was eligible for the office of Dictator who had not previously served as consul. When a Dictator was considered necessary, the Senate passed a *senatus consultum*, an order that one of the consuls would nominate a Dictator to serve for a period of six months. The nomination was either *rei gerendae causa* (for the matter to be done), or *seditionis sedandae causa* (for the putting down of rebellion). In many cases, the Dictator resigned at the completion of the task for which he had been nominated, even if the six-month term had not yet expired.

After the Dictator was appointed, all of the other governmental offices continued as before, with the exception that they were now accountable to the Dictator and obligated to obey his orders at all times and without question.

The Dictator's power was superior to the consuls' in that the Dictator enjoyed greater independence from the Senate, the ability to punish without a trial, and complete immunity from being held accountable for his actions. His greatest power, however, came from the fact that his decisions needed no approval from any other individual. Unlike the Consuls, who had to cooperate with the Senate, the Dictator could act on his own authority. There was no higher authority than the Dictator to appeal to.

Normally, government officials were immune from prosecution while they held office, but as soon as their terms expired, they could be prosecuted for whatever crimes they had committed while in office. The Dictator, however, was immune from prosecution for life.

The Dictator, powerful as he was, had no control over the public treasury and did rely on the Senate to supply the funds to implement his programs and commands. He was not allowed to leave Italy during his term. He was not allowed to ride on horseback within Rome without the prior approval of the people.

Julius Caesar served his first dictatorship *rei gerendae causa*. During his term, he modified it to a full year. He was again appointed Dictator *rei gerendae causa* for a full year in 46 BCE. This dictatorship was “renewed” nine times so that he was essentially Dictator for ten years. A year later, the Senate voted to make him *dictator perpetuus* (usually rendered in English as “dictator for life”, but properly meaning “perpetual dictator”). He was assassinated a month after this “appointment,” as several of the senators most likely honestly feared Caesar's becoming a king.

## A Timeline of Key Historical Events Affecting the Action of the Play

60 BCE:

“The First Triumvirate” or “The Three-Headed Monster:” Pompey, Crassus, Caesar

59 BCE:

Caesar gives his only daughter, Julia, in marriage to Pompey. Caesar, as Consul, angers the powerful Optimate political party, which threatens to prosecute him at the end of his term (see above).

58 BCE:

Caesar leaves Rome for Gaul (Germany and France) and expands Roman Empire into Europe.

54 BCE:

Julia dies in childbirth

52 BCE:

Pompey marries Cornelia Metella, the daughter of one of Caesar’s greatest enemies.

49 BCE:

Caesar’s term as Proconsul in Gaul expires. Pompey and the Senate order him to disband his army and return to Rome, where he will face the prosecution from which he has been immune (see above).

Disobeying the order to disband, Caesar and his troops cross the Rubicon River, entering the jurisdiction in which he can be seized and imprisoned, essentially declaring civil war against his former ally.

48 BCE:

Caesar’s troops defeat Pompey’s.

Pompey flees to Egypt.

Caesar follows and is presented with Pompey’s head. The Egyptians had betrayed Pompey and killed him as a “gift” for Caesar.

46 BCE:

Caesar returns triumphantly to Rome.

(This marks the beginning of Shakespeare’s play.)

Caesar is appointed *Dictator* (see above), and many question his autocratic rule and see his governing as a threat to the Republic.

45 BCE:

Caesar plans a public celebration for his triumph over Pompey. This angers many, since only triumphs over *foreign* “enemies” are to be celebrated. Pompey was a fellow Roman. Caesar acts more and more like a monarch, appointing people to government posts with no input or consent of the Senate, issuing coins with his likeness, etc.

He allows his statues to be decorated in much the same way that statues of the gods would be. (Note how in I ii Marullus and Flavius are punished for removing the adornments from Caesar’s statues.)

44 BCE:

At the feast of Lupercalia (February 15), Caesar is named *dictator perpetuus*, perpetual dictator.

Caesar is assassinated on the portico of the theater built by Pompey the Great. The Curia, in the Forum, where the Senate usually sat, had been severely damaged by fire and was being rebuilt.

(Shakespeare alludes to both the feast of the Lupercalia and the Ides of March, even though he seems to condense the appointment and the assassination into a single event.)

Octavius meets with Antony to collect his inheritance. Caesar’s will named Octavius as his adopted son and left the nineteen-year-old everything, but Antony had seized Caesar’s papers and fortune. They eventually come to blows.

Remember in III, i that Antony was hesitant for Octavius to come to Rome, and that Octavius arrived earlier than Antony wanted—with an army.

43 BCE:

The Second Triumvirate is formed: Octavius, Antony, and Lepidus (IV, i)

42 BCE:

Julius Caesar is proclaimed a god; Octavian becomes “son of a god”.

Triumvirate defeats Brutus and Cassius at Battle of Philippi.

This is the final battle in the play, V, ii—v.

# *Julius Caesar*

## Discussion Topics/Questions

1. What is Shakespeare's purpose in creating different speech patterns for different (types of) characters? Why do some characters speak in prose and others in poetry? Pay special attention to the eulogies given in Act III.
2. Why would Elizabethans have considered the slaying of Caesar an unnatural act? Point out how this idea is reinforced by comments and incidents from the play. Include discussion on how the play concludes.
3. Discuss the different reasons for the conspirators' desires to see Caesar dead. Be sure to determine motives for each character.
4. The wives of Caesar and Brutus appear only briefly in the play. How does Shakespeare use them?
5. Why is Lucius almost always seen sleeping? What does this say about his master, Brutus?
6. Why is there no significant comic relief in this play?
7. Is Brutus a good example of an Aristotelian tragic hero? Try to see both sides of the question.

## PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 1:

The following soliloquy is from Act II, scene I. In it, Brutus contemplates Caesar's power. Read the passage carefully and then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze Brutus's inner conflict and explain how this conflict contributes to the overall meaning of the play.

BRUTUS:

- It must be by his death, and, for my part,  
I know no personal cause to spurn at him,  
But for the general. He would be crown'd:  
How that might change his nature, there's the question.
- 5 It is the bright day that brings forth the adder  
And that craves wary walking. Crown him?—that;—  
And then, I grant, we put a sting in him  
That at his will he may do danger with.  
The abuse of greatness is when it disjoins
- 10 Remorse from power, and, to speak truth of Caesar,  
I have not known when his affections sway'd  
More than his reason. But 'tis a common proof  
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,  
Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;
- 15 But when he once attains the upmost round,  
He then unto the ladder turns his back,  
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees  
By which he did ascend. So Caesar may;  
Then, lest he may, prevent. And, since the quarrel
- 20 Will bear no color for the thing he is,  
Fashion it thus, that what he is, augmented,  
Would run to these and these extremities;  
And therefore think him as a serpent's egg  
Which hatch'd would as his kind grow mischievous,
- 25 And kill him in the shell.

## PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 2:

The following speech is from Act II, scene i. In it, Brutus responds to Cassius's assertion that the conspirators should "swear [their] resolution." In a well-organized essay, discuss how Shakespeare uses language, tone, and point of view to reveal Brutus's character. Do not merely offer a character description of Brutus.

BRUTUS:

- No, not an oath. If not the face of men,  
The sufferance of our souls, the time's abuse—  
If these be motives weak, break off betimes,  
And every man hence to his idle bed;  
5 So let high-sighted tyranny range on  
Till each man drop by lottery. But if these,  
As I am sure they do, bear fire enough  
To kindle cowards and to steel with valor  
The melting spirits of women, then, countrymen,  
10 What need we any spur but our own cause  
To prick us to redress? What other bond  
Than secret Romans that have spoke the word  
And will not palter? And what other oath  
Than honesty to honesty engaged  
15 That this shall be or we will fall for it?  
Swear priests and cowards and men cautelous,  
Old feeble carrions and such suffering souls  
That welcome wrongs; unto bad causes swear  
Such creatures as men doubt; but do not stain  
20 The even virtue of our enterprise,  
Nor the insuppressive mettle of our spirits,  
To think that or our cause or our performance  
Did need an oath; when every drop of blood  
That every Roman bears, and nobly bears,  
25 Is guilty of a several bastardy  
If he do break the smallest particle  
Of any promise that hath pass'd from him.

### PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 3:

The following exchange from Act III, scene i immediately precedes the assassination. Read the scene carefully and write a well-organized essay in which you analyze Caesar's use of language and explain how his references to himself motivate the conspirators and contribute to the overall political message of the play.

CAESAR:

Are we all ready? What is now amiss  
That Caesar and his Senate must redress?

METELLUS:

Most high, most mighty, and most puissant Caesar,  
Metellus Cimber throws before thy seat  
5 An humble heart. *Kneels.*

CAESAR:

I must prevent thee, Cimber.  
These couchings and these lowly courtesies  
Might fire the blood of ordinary men  
And turn preordinance and first decree  
10 Into the law of children. Be not fond  
To think that Caesar bears such rebel blood  
That will be thaw'd from the true quality  
With that which melteth fools—I mean sweet words,  
Low-crooked court'sies, and base spaniel-fawning.  
15 Thy brother by decree is banished.  
If thou dost bend and pray and fawn for him,  
I spurn thee like a cur out of my way.  
Know, Caesar doth not wrong, nor without cause  
Will he be satisfied.

METELLUS:

20 Is there no voice more worthy than my own,  
To sound more sweetly in great Caesar's ear  
For the repealing of my banish'd brother?

BRUTUS:

I kiss thy hand, but not in flattery, Caesar,  
Desiring thee that Publius Cimber may  
25 Have an immediate freedom of repeal.

CAESAR:

What, Brutus?

CASSIUS:

Pardon, Caesar! Caesar, pardon!  
As low as to thy foot doth Cassius fall  
To beg enfranchisement for Publius Cimber.

CAESAR:

- 30 I could be well moved, if I were as you;  
If I could pray to move, prayers would move me;  
But I am constant as the northern star,  
Of whose true-fix'd and resting quality  
There is no fellow in the firmament.  
35 The skies are painted with unnumber'd sparks;  
They are all fire and every one doth shine;  
But there's but one in all doth hold his place.  
So in the world, 'tis furnish'd well with men,  
And men are flesh and blood, and apprehensive;  
40 Yet in the number I do know but one  
That unassailable holds on his rank,  
Unshaked of motion; and that I am he,  
Let me a little show it, even in this;  
That I was constant Cimber should be banish'd,  
45 And constant do remain to keep him so.

CINNA:

O Caesar—

CAESAR:

Hence! Wilt thou lift up Olympus?



#### PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 4:

While some critics insist that Caesar must be the tragic hero of the play that bears his name, most modern critics see Brutus as the real tragic hero. In a well-organized essay, explain what tragic flaw Brutus possesses and how it affects the outcome of the play. Do not merely summarize the plot.

#### PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 5:

Many novels and plays explore the dilemma of a character faced with either a morally ambiguous situation or the discrepancy between a personal desire and a public duty. In a well-written essay, examine how Brutus is this type of character, and analyze how his dilemma provides the foundation for the tragic plot of the play. Do not merely summarize the plot or offer a character analysis of Brutus.

#### PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 6:

Although the tragedy is entitled *Julius Caesar*, it does not end with the death of Caesar. In a well-organized essay, explain the significance of the final two acts in terms of the structure of the tragic plot and the development of the tragic hero. Do not merely summarize the plot.

## PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 1-10:

Read the following passage from Act I, scene ii carefully before you choose your answers:

CASSIUS:

- Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world  
Like a Colossus, and we petty men  
Walk under his huge legs and peep about  
To find ourselves dishonorable graves.
- 5 Men at some time are masters of their fates:  
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,  
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.  
Brutus, and Caesar: what should be in that Caesar?  
Why should that name be sounded more than yours?
- 10 Write them together, yours is as fair a name;  
Sound them, it doth become the mouth as well;  
Weigh them, it is as heavy; conjure with 'em,  
Brutus will start a spirit as soon as Caesar.  
Now, in the names of all the gods at once,
- 15 Upon what meat doth this our Caesar feed  
That he is grown so great? Age, thou art shamed!  
Rome, thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods!  
When went there by an age since the great flood  
But it was famed with more than with one man?
- 20 When could they say till now that talk'd of Rome  
That her wide walls encompass'd but one man?  
Now is it Rome indeed, and room enough,  
When there is in it but one only man.  
O, you and I have heard our fathers say
- 25 There was a Brutus once that would have brook'd  
The eternal devil to keep his state in Rome  
As easily as a king.

1. By comparing Brutus' name to Caesar's, Cassius hopes to
  - (A) flatter Brutus.
  - (B) make Brutus jealous of Caesar.
  - (C) advance Caesar's fame.
  - (D) enlist Brutus' aid in the conspiracy.
  - (E) remind Brutus of his noble ancestry.
2. Lines 5 – 7 refer to
  - (A) the Elizabethan belief that lives are governed by astrology.
  - (B) the Renaissance belief that humans create their own destinies.
  - (C) Cassius's desire to overthrow Caesar.
  - (D) Caesar's position as Emperor of Rome.
  - (E) Brutus' ancestors.
3. In the context of the passage, the word "start" (line 13) most likely means
  - (A) begin.
  - (B) give life to.
  - (C) call forth.
  - (D) bind.
  - (E) startle.
4. Cassius' tone in the first half of the speech can best be described as
  - (A) questioning.
  - (B) contemplative.
  - (C) bitter.
  - (D) regretful.
  - (E) exuberant.
5. Cassius' speech could best be summarized
  - (A) Caesar is no more a man that you and I are.
  - (B) To crown Caesar would destroy the Republic.
  - (C) Caesar is a hero such as has not been seen in Rome in generations.
  - (D) Caesar is truly godlike.
  - (E) Humans do not need to be mere pawns of Destiny.
6. The pronoun "they" (line 20) refers to
  - (A) the gods.
  - (B) "the breed of noble bloods."
  - (C) Cassius's and Brutus's fathers.
  - (D) the people of Rome.
  - (E) people who "talk'd of Rome."

7. Why does Cassius mention "Brutus" in line 25?
- (A) He is an ancestor of the current Brutus.
  - (B) Cassius wants to appeal to Brutus' noble ancestry.
  - (C) Cassius believes that by referring to a man of the same name, he can more easily sway Brutus.
  - (D) The past Brutus also opposed a man named Caesar for the good of the state.
  - (E) Cassius wants to provoke Brutus into rebelling.
8. The word "age," as used in line 16 most likely means
- (A) present time.
  - (B) historical period.
  - (B) maturity.
  - (C) infirmity.
  - (D) ferment.
9. Based on this passage, Cassius thinks Caesar's rise to power came about due to
- (A) fate.
  - (B) Caesar's ambition.
  - (C) historical precedent.
  - (D) the weak will of the Senate.
  - (E) the beliefs of the populace.
10. Based on this passage, Cassius thinks Caesar should not be crowned because he
- (A) wants Brutus to rule.
  - (B) thinks Caesar is incapable of ruling well.
  - (C) disagrees with the commoners, who want Caesar to be king.
  - (D) feels that Rome should not be ruled by one man.
  - (E) believes fate decrees that Caesar not rule.

## PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 11-20:

Read the following passage from Act III, scene ii carefully before you choose your answers:

ANTONY:

- Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears!  
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.  
The evil that men do lives after them,  
The good is oft interred with their bones;  
5 So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus  
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious;  
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,  
And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.  
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest—  
10 For Brutus is an honorable man;  
So are they all, all honorable men—  
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.  
He was my friend, faithful and just to me;  
But Brutus says he was ambitious,  
15 And Brutus is an honorable man.  
He hath brought many captives home to Rome,  
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill,  
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?  
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept;  
20 Ambition should be made of sterner stuff.  
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,  
And Brutus is an honorable man.  
You all did see that on the Lupercal  
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,  
25 Which he did thrice refuse. Was this ambition?  
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,  
And sure he is an honorable man.  
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,  
But here I am to speak what I do know.  
30 You all did love him once, not without cause;  
What cause withholds you then to mourn for him?  
O judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts,  
And men have lost their reason. Bear with me;  
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,  
35 And I must pause till it come back to me.

11. To give Antony's speech more power, Shakespeare begins the first line with
- (A) a trochaic foot.
  - (B) a spondaic foot.
  - (C) an iambic foot.
  - (D) a dactyllic foot.
  - (E) an anapestic foot.
12. The expression "lend me your ears" (line 1) is an example of
- (A) anaphora.
  - (B) personification.
  - (C) chiasmus.
  - (D) litotes.
  - (E) synecdoche.
13. Lines 3 and 4 can best be interpreted to mean
- (A) funeral speeches traditionally praise the deceased.
  - (B) Roman citizens were usually buried with mementoes from their lives in their coffins.
  - (C) a person's judgment after death will weigh his good deeds against his mistakes.
  - (D) in death, everyone gets to start over with a clean slate.
  - (E) a person's good deeds are soon forgotten while his mistakes are long remembered.
14. As Antony repeats his famous line, "Brutus is an honorable man," his tone evolves from
- (A) sympathetic to caustic.
  - (B) condemning to condoning.
  - (C) sincere to ironic.
  - (D) emphatic to resigned.
  - (E) hostile to bereft.
15. The predominant tone of this speech can best be characterized as
- (A) sarcastic.
  - (B) vengeful.
  - (C) sorrowful.
  - (D) deceitful.
  - (E) nationalistic.
16. The use of the word "were" in line 7 is an example of
- (A) past perfect tense.
  - (B) indicative mood.
  - (C) subjunctive mood.
  - (D) chiasmus.
  - (E) plurality.

17. As it is used in this speech “ambition” is a “grievous fault” because it includes
- (A) amassing wealth.
  - (B) exercising power.
  - (C) military conquest.
  - (D) physical strength.
  - (E) depriving others.
18. Lines 32 and 33 refer to the belief that
- (A) humans are highly developed animals.
  - (B) reason is the trait that separates humans from animals.
  - (C) even the animals mourn for the assassinated Caesar.
  - (D) to mourn excessively would be to act like a brute beast.
  - (E) the judgment of the conspirators’ crime lies with the beasts.
19. Although there is no stage direction, lines 33-35 make it apparent that Antony
- (A) is brokenhearted by Caesar’s death.
  - (B) wishes to be buried beside Caesar.
  - (C) knows that the conspirators originally wanted to kill him too.
  - (D) is overcome with grief and cannot continue speaking.
  - (E) has reached the end of his planned speech and will improvise the rest.
20. Shakespeare employs litotes in line 30 in order to
- (A) emphasize Caesar’s vast generosity.
  - (B) achieve a weak positive.
  - (C) demonstrate Antony’s rhetorical skill.
  - (D) show Brutus to be ungenerous.
  - (E) meet the demands of his iambic pentameter line.

## PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 21-30:

Read the following passage from the very end of the play carefully before you choose your answers:

SECOND SOLDIER:

Room, ho! Tell Antony, Brutus is ta'en.

FIRST SOLDIER:

I'll tell the news. Here comes the general.

*Enter Antony.*

Brutus is ta'en, Brutus is ta'en, my lord.

ANTONY:

Where is he?

LUCILIUS:

- 5 Safe, Antony, Brutus is safe enough.  
I dare assure thee that no enemy  
Shall ever take alive the noble Brutus;  
The gods defend him from so great a shame!  
When you do find him, or alive or dead,  
10 He will be found like Brutus, like himself.

ANTONY:

- This is not Brutus, friend, but, I assure you,  
A prize no less in worth. Keep this man safe,  
Give him all kindness; I had rather have  
Such men my friends than enemies. Go on,  
15 And see whe'er Brutus be alive or dead,  
And bring us word unto Octavius' tent  
How everything is chanced.

*Exeunt.*

SCENE v.

Another part of the field.

*Enter Brutus, Dardanius, Clitus, Strato, and Volumnius.*

BRUTUS:

Come, poor remains of friends, rest on this rock.

CLITUS:

- 20 Statilius show'd the torchlight, but, my lord,  
He came not back. He is or ta'en or slain.

BRUTUS:

Sit thee down, Clitus. Slaying is the word:  
It is a deed in fashion. Hark thee, Clitus.

*Whispers*

CLITUS:

What, I, my lord? No, not for all the world.

BRUTUS:

Peace then, no words.



CLITUS:  
25 I'll rather kill myself.  
BRUTUS:  
Hark thee, Dardanius. *Whispers.*  
DARDANIUS:  
Shall I do such a deed?  
CLITUS:  
O Dardanius!  
DARDANIUS:  
O Clitus!  
CLITUS:  
30 What ill request did Brutus make to thee?  
DARDANIUS:  
To kill him, Clitus. Look, he meditates.  
CLITUS:  
Now is that noble vessel full of grief,  
That it runs over even at his eyes.  
BRUTUS:  
Come hither, good Volumnius, list a word.  
VOLUMNIUS:  
35 What says my lord?  
BRUTUS:  
Why, this, Volumnius:  
The ghost of Caesar hath appear'd to me  
Two several times by night; at Sardis once,  
And this last night here in Philippi fields.  
40 I know my hour is come.  
VOLUMNIUS:  
Not so, my lord.  
BRUTUS:  
Nay I am sure it is, Volumnius.  
Thou seest the world, Volumnius, how it goes;  
Our enemies have beat us to the pit; *Low alarums.*  
45 It is more worthy to leap in ourselves  
Than tarry till they push us. Good Volumnius,  
Thou know'st that we two went to school together;  
Even for that our love of old, I prithee,  
Hold thou my sword-hilts, whilst I run on it.  
VOLUMNIUS:  
50 That's not an office for a friend, my lord.

*Alarum still.*

CLITUS:

Fly, fly, my lord, there is no tarrying here.

BRUTUS:

Farewell to you, and you, and you, Volumnius.

Strato, thou hast been all this while asleep;

Farewell to thee too, Strato. Countrymen,

55 My heart doth joy that yet in all my life

I found no man but he was true to me.

I shall have glory by this losing day,

More than Octavius and Mark Antony

By this vile conquest shall attain unto.

60 So, fare you well at once, for Brutus' tongue

Hath almost ended his life's history.

Night hangs upon mine eyes, my bones would rest

That have but labor'd to attain this hour.

*Alarum. Cry within, "Fly, fly, fly!"*

CLITUS:

Fly, my lord, fly.

BRUTUS:

65 Hence! I will follow.

*Exeunt Clitus, Dardanius, and Volumnius.*

I prithee, Strato, stay thou by thy lord.

Thou art a fellow of a good respect;

Thy life hath had some smatch of honor in it.

Hold then my sword, and turn away thy face,

70 While I do run upon it. Wilt thou, Strato?

STRATO:

Give me your hand first. Fare you well, my lord.

BRUTUS:

Farewell, good Strato.

*Runs on his sword*

Caesar, now be still;

I kill'd not thee with half so good a will. *Dies.*

*Alarum. Retreat. Enter Octavius, Antony, Messala, Lucilius, and the Army.*

OCTAVIUS:

75 What man is that?

MESSALA.

My master's man. Strato, where is thy master?

STRATO:

Free from the bondage you are in, Messala:

The conquerors can but make a fire of him;

For Brutus only overcame himself,

80 And no man else hath honor by his death.

LUCILIUS:

So Brutus should be found. I thank thee, Brutus,  
That thou hast proved Lucilius' saying true.

OCTAVIUS:

All that served Brutus, I will entertain them.  
Fellow, wilt thou bestow thy time with me?

STRATO:

85      Ay, if Messala will prefer me to you.

OCTAVIUS:

Do so, good Messala.

MESSALA:

How died my master, Strato?

STRATO:

I held the sword, and he did run on it.

MESSALA:

90      Octavius, then take him to follow thee  
That did the latest service to my master.

ANTONY:

95      This was the noblest Roman of them all.  
All the conspirators, save only he,  
Did that they did in envy of great Caesar;  
He only, in a general honest thought  
And common good to all, made one of them.  
His life was gentle, and the elements  
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up  
And say to all the world, "This was a man!"

OCTAVIUS:

100      According to his virtue let us use him  
With all respect and rites of burial.  
Within my tent his bones tonight shall lie,  
Most like a soldier, ordered honorably.  
So call the field to rest, and let's away,  
To part the glories of this happy day.      *Exeunt.*

21. Brutus' suicide accomplishes all of the following except
- (A) it pacifies Caesar's ghost.
  - (B) it ends the war between Antony and Octavius.
  - (C) it maintains the honor of Brutus' family.
  - (D) it emphasizes his honorable nature.
  - (E) it makes Octavius' rise to power possible.
22. "The pit" to which Brutus refers in line 44 is most likely
- (A) a metaphoric "pit of despair."
  - (B) the pit of Hell.
  - (C) the entrance to the Underworld.
  - (D) a literal hole in the battlefield.
  - (E) the grave.
23. As used in line 65, the word "hence" means
- (A) therefore.
  - (B) thus.
  - (C) away.
  - (D) where.
  - (E) here.
24. According to the passage, Brutus takes the appearance of Caesar's ghost to mean that
- (A) Brutus will die soon.
  - (B) Brutus' army will lose the war.
  - (C) Brutus has brought dishonor to his family.
  - (D) the rest of Brutus' life will be unlucky.
  - (E) Brutus' conscience bothers him.
25. When Brutus says, "I kill'd not thee [Caesar] with half so good a will," he most likely means that he
- (A) knows his death will profit the Republic.
  - (B) regrets having been duped into the conspirators' plot.
  - (C) should have been the one to read the will at the funeral.
  - (D) did not really participate in the assassination.
  - (E) still questions his motive for participating in the assassination.

26. The lines:

I shall have glory by this losing day,  
More than Octavius and Mark Antony  
By this vile conquest shall attain unto

most likely mean that Brutus

- (A) had expected to enter Rome victorious.
  - (B) hopes to be forgotten after he is dead.
  - (C) will hold an honored place in history.
  - (D) will curse Octavius and Antony with his dying breath.
  - (E) has been tricked into defeat by dishonorable opponents.
27. What is the most likely purpose of Antony's last speech in praise of the dead Brutus?
- (A) to show the audience that Antony truly loved Brutus.
  - (B) to remind the audience of Brutus' good qualities.
  - (C) to emphasize Antony's vacillating nature.
  - (D) to suggest a reconciliation between Antony and Octavius.
  - (E) to offer a final comparison between Antony and Caesar.
28. Brutus' suicide indicates that, to the Romans,
- (A) a defeat was not complete until the opponent was dead.
  - (B) death in combat was glorious.
  - (C) even suicide was preferable to the shame of being taken prisoner.
  - (D) only weak cowards would take their own lives.
  - (E) defeat on the battlefield was the greatest possible shame.
29. By calling Brutus "the noblest Roman of them all," Antony is essentially admitting that
- I. even Caesar had selfish motives.
  - II. of all the conspirators, only Brutus acted for the good of the Republic.
  - III. he and Octavius are not as noble and selfless as Brutus was.
  - IV. Brutus was rightfully the next Emperor of Rome.
- (A) I above.
  - (B) I and II above.
  - (C) III above.
  - (D) I, II, and III above.
  - (E) IV above.
30. The fact that Octavius speaks the last lines in the play indicates that
- (A) he was Caesar's nephew and heir.
  - (B) as a supporter of Caesar, he had already separated himself from Antony's army and influence.
  - (C) he will be the one to restore order and rule in the period following the close of the play.
  - (D) he was a friend of Brutus as well as Caesar.
  - (E) his character was probably played by William Shakespeare.

## MULTIPLE CHOICE ANSWERS

### With Explanations

1. Comparing Caesar to Brutus to show that Brutus is in every way at least as deserving of greatness as Caesar is certainly flattering to Brutus (A), but it is not flattery for its own sake. By the same token, Cassius does try to incite Brutus' jealousy (B), but again, **there is the ulterior motive of enlisting Brutus' aid in the conspiracy (D)**. Cassius is obviously envious of Caesar's fame, so (C) is not a plausible choice, and he does not refer to either Caesar's or Brutus' ancestry (E). **This (D) is the correct answer.**
2. Men at some time are masters of their fates:  
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,  
But in ourselves..  
  
(A) is excluded when Cassius says, "The fault...is *not* in our stars." (C) certainly is true of the entire speech, but not these lines in particular. (D) is excluded by the fact that Caesar is not, in fact, an emperor, and there is no mention of Brutus' ancestors (E). **(B) remains the only plausible choice, especially when Cassius says, "Men at some time are masters of their fates."**
3. Line 12 begins the sentence: "Conjure with them, / Brutus will start a spirit as soon as Caesar."  
  
To "begin" a spirit (A) makes no sense. Nor is it logical to talk about giving life to a spirit (B), the insubstantial shade of a dead person. "Bind" (D) and "startle" (E) likewise do not make sense. **Thus (C), "call forth" is the only reasonable choice.**
4. The questions Cassius asks are all rhetorical, almost argumentative, thus eliminating (A) as a choice. The oath, "by all the gods together," and other exclamations make (B) unlikely. Nor does Cassius express any regret (D) beyond the acknowledgement that it is his and Brutus' own fault that they have not attained the greatness of Caesar. Certainly, in that he is not enjoying Caesar's hero's welcome to Rome, he cannot be said to be exuberant (E). **Clearly he is bitter (C) that Caesar, and not he or the noble Brutus, has become Rome's hero.**
5. Clearly, Cassius does not want to see Caesar crowned (B), but, from the very first line, Cassius is asserting the essential fact that Caesar is nothing more than a flesh and blood human being, just as Brutus is. (B) and (C) are excluded by the simple fact that Cassius' speech is not at all in praise of Caesar. (E) is one point in Cassius' overall argument, but not the entire argument. **Thus (A) is the best choice. Caesar and Brutus are both humans and therefore both deserving of the same greatness.**
6. For the sake of his rhythm pattern and to achieve emphasis, Shakespeare is using an inverted word order here. The sentence reads, "When could they **that talk'd of Rome** say till now / That her wide walls encompass'd but one man?"

"That talked of Rome" is a relative, subordinate clause, identifying the "they" (E).

7. The antecedent for “he” in (A) is ambiguous. Is “he” the other Brutus or Cassius himself? This ambiguity eliminates (A) as a plausible choice. (C) is tempting, but too general and vague, not dealing with the fact that the other Brutus is the current Brutus’ ancestor. (D) is too limiting and literal. (E) is also true, but does not necessitate the mention of Brutus’ ancestor. **Only (B) acknowledges that the mention is an appeal to Brutus’ ancestry.**
8. A first, quick reading might tempt one to believe that Cassius is cursing his and Brutus’ chronological age for their present situation, but then it becomes clear that he is comparing the present time with the past, thus eliminating (B), (C), and (D). As he is criticizing his current age (A) and comparing it to the past, **it is apparent that (A) is the best choice.**
9. (A) is eliminated by Cassius’ assertion that it is *not* the stars that have caused the current situation. Never once does Cassius fault Caesar’s ambition (B). Cassius’ references to the past ages, when Rome was large enough for more than one great man and when Brutus’ ancestor fought the Roman kings makes (C) an impossible choice. (D) and (E) are both tempting, but it is clear that Cassius is referring to “great men,” those with the power and influence to resist this one man’s rise to power. **It is the Senate (D) Cassius is displeased with, not the common masses.**
10. A careless reader might be tempted to select (A) because of Cassius’ comparison of Brutus and Caesar in the first several lines of the speech. However, the closing lines and Cassius’ repetition of “one man” clearly indicate that the individual rule of a *monarch* is what Cassius fears. **Thus (D) is the correct choice.**
11. It is nearly impossible to read the opening *Friends* as an unstressed syllable to make “Friends, Rom-” an iambic foot. Yet the first syllable of *Romans* is clearly accented. **Thus, the first two syllables are accented, giving us a spondaic foot (B),** and Antony a very powerful beginning to his speech.

A trochaic foot (A) is a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed (won’ – der).

An iambic foot (C) , of course, is unstressed followed by stressed (sup – pose’).

A dactylic foot (D) is a stressed followed by two unstressed (won’-der-ful).

An anapestic foot (E) is two unstressed followed by a stressed (sub-mar-ine’).

12. Anaphora (A) is the rhetorical repetition of words or a phrase at the beginning of a series of sentences.  
 Personification (B) is the attributing of human characteristics to non-human objects.  
 Chiasmus (C) is the rhetorical reversal of grammatical structures or ideas in successive phrases or clauses.  
 Litotes (D) is the use of a negative to achieve a weak positive.  
**Synecdoche (E) is the use of a part to represent the whole.**

13. The implication that a eulogy should praise the deceased (A) is present in line 2. (B) is too literal a reading of line 4. (C) is eliminated by Antony's contrast of the evil living while the good is buried. (D) is not supported at all. **Only (E) remains as a plausible choice.**
14. Antony seems to be caustic throughout, and his "refusal" to praise Caesar is far from sympathetic, thus eliminating (A). He is never overtly condemning (B), and his speech increases in emphasis, eliminating (D) and (E). **One could see Antony's first use of his famous line as an acknowledgement that Brutus allowed him to speak at the funeral. After that, his use of the line is clearly ironic (C).**
15. As a contrast to question 14, this question asks for the overall tone, not a progression. Antony never stoops to any form of condemnation or overt call to vengeance (B). Nor is he overly sorrowful (C), claiming matter-of-factly that he has not come to praise Caesar. While he is rhetorically manipulating the crowd, there is nothing deceitful (D) in his tone (what would a deceitful tone sound like, anyway?). And there is no appeal to national fervor (E). **His increasingly ironic reference to Brutus and the other conspirators as "honorable men" is, however, sarcastic (A).**
16. Past perfect tense (A) is formed with the verb "had" plus the past participle of the main verb. The indicative mood (B) states an apparent fact, while the **subjunctive mood (C) states a condition contrary to actual fact ("if" contrary to fact). It is indicated with the verb "were."** In this instance, Antony is saying that Caesar really **was not ambitious, but if he were ambitious, it would have been a grievous fault.** Chiasmus (D) is a reversal of grammatical structures for rhetorical effect, and plurality (E) has to do with the number of the noun or pronoun relative to its verb and / or antecedents. "Were" is a plural form, but its subject *it* is singular. Hence, there is something occurring in the sentence beyond a mere past tense plural construction.
17. In Antony's rebuttal to Brutus' charge that Caesar was "ambitious," Antony does not refer to anything other than the money Caesar brought into the general treasury and his compassion for the poor. While the issue of Caesar's refusing the crown might imply (B), **(E) is the better choice in that it is this that Antony explicitly denounces.**
18. (A) was neither a Roman nor an Elizabethan belief. (C) is practically a giveaway. (D) is eliminated by the fact that Antony does not speak about grief and mourning, and (E) is eliminated by the fact that "judgment" here is used as a synonym for "reason" and has fled to the beasts, not fallen on the conspirators. **If judgment has fled to beasts, and men have lost their reason, then (B) is the appropriate choice.**
19. (A) is not incorrect, but not the best choice. (B) is too literal a misread of Antony's saying his heart is in Caesar's coffin, as is (C). (E) is illogical, given the context of Antony's superb rhetorical and oratorical skill evidenced by this speech. **Therefore, only (D) remains as a plausible choice. He is overcome, his heart (the seat of his love) is with Caesar, and he must pause.**



20. (B) is what litotes do (does?).
21. According to Roman tradition, death is preferable to dishonor. Should Brutus be taken in battle, he would be paraded back into Rome as a traitor. He would either be ransomed or executed. In either case, he would live the rest of his life having dishonored his name. Death—even death by suicide—is the more preferable fate. Brutus also feels the appearances of Caesar’s ghost convince him of betraying his friend and predict his imminent death. Thus (A) and (C) and (D) are eliminated. Brutus and Cassius’ defeat creates a power vacuum in Rome that will allow Octavius and Antony to return as victors and the new rulers, thus eliminating (E). **As there is no war in the play between Antony and Octavius, however, Brutus’s suicide can have no impact. Hence (B) is the correct choice.**
22. (A) and (D) are simply not supportable by the text. (B), (C), and (E) seem, at first, to be equally plausible. However, there is little in the context—other than the fact of death—to suggest either (B) or (C), and certainly Brutus would not believe himself marked for Hell (B). **Given that he is contemplating suicide, asks several of his companions to assist him, and does, in fact, kill himself in this scene, all support that he believes he as been pushed to the grave and would rather jump in of his own accord (i.e. commit suicide).**
23. Denotatively, the only possible choices are (A), (B), and (C). (E) might be tempting, except that *hence* is not a location but a direction. **As Octavius and Antony’s troops are near, and Brutus is instructing his companions to flee, (C) is the only choice that makes sense in this context.**
24. While telling Volumnius about the appearance of Caesar’s ghost, Brutus says, “I know my hour is come...Our enemies have beat us to the pit; / It is more worthy to leap in ourselves / Than tarry till they push us,” clearly indicating that **the appearances of the ghost have portended his defeat and imminent death (A).**
25. From his first conversations with Cassius and the other conspirators, Brutus has weighed his public loyalty to the state against his private loyalty to his friend Caesar. He admitted that he knew of no reason why Caesar would need to die other than the *possibility* that Caesar would become a tyrant. The possibility of envy being even a part of Brutus’ motivation has always plagued him. **Therefore (E) is the most plausible answer.**
26. Although he does not elaborate on the exact nature of the honor he believes he will achieve by his defeat, Brutus says, “I shall have glory by this losing day,” which clearly establishes (C) as the best answer.

27. (A) is unlikely, as Antony has only ever shown himself to change loyalties and alliances as it served his purpose. (C) is tempting, but does not keep with the structure of the tragedy in which the hero's death must elicit audience sympathy. (D) is unlikely, as there are no signs that a reconciliation is necessary. The speech does not compare Caesar to Brutus, only highlights Brutus' nobility. **Therefore, as the tragic hero must remain a sympathetic character for the audience, and his death must elicit pity, (B) is the most plausible choice.**
28. As Brutus is the defeated, (A) is not logical, and (B) is eliminated by the fact that he has not died in combat. Strato also claims that no one will have honor in Brutus' death but Brutus, suggesting that it was not glorious to *die* in combat so much as to kill others. (D) would suggest that Brutus was a weak coward. (E) is tempting, but limited only to the defeat in battle. **Only (C) considers the aftermath of the defeat and the motives for Brutus' action.**
29. I. is certainly a possibility given Caesar's tendency to be swayed by flattery.  
II. is certainly true, and Antony even says this later in the same speech.  
III. is likewise true, as has been evidenced by their own rivalry and their treatment of Lepidus.  
IV. is impossible, as there has not yet been a Roman Emperor, and Brutus did not aspire to such a rank.

**The correct answer is, therefore, (D) I, II, and III above.**

30. The convention in Shakespearean tragedies is that the character who delivers the last lines will be the character to re-establish order and govern the remade society. Examples include Malcolm in *Macbeth*, Cornwall (and sometimes Edgar) in *King Lear*, Fortinbras in *Hamlet*, Richmond (Henry VII) in *Richard III*, the Prince in *Romeo and Juliet*, etc. **Therefore, the fact that Octavius delivers the last lines suggests that he will be the restorer of order and new ruler (C).** Historically, Octavius did become Caesar Augustus, the first true Roman Emperor.

# Julius Caesar

## Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition Teaching Unit

### Study Guide Teacher's Copy

#### Act I, scene i

1. What dramatic technique does Shakespeare use to start his play?

*He starts the play in media res (“in the middle of something”). The action has already started prior to the first scene.*

2. What is the significance of Marullus' rebuke of the commoners?

*It foreshadows much of the rest of the play and shows the fickle nature of the commoners: first they adored Pompey, and now they adore Caesar, who has defeated and killed Pompey.*

3. Why does the Second Commoner pun?

*The commoner can be seen as a foil for Marullus and Flavius, whose speech is proper and dignified. The commoners also speak in prose, whereas the tribunes speak in iambic pentameter, which marks most of the speech in Shakespeare's plays. Also, Shakespeare's audience would have liked the word-play, and Shakespeare uses the cleverness of the puns—and the fact that Marullus is baffled by them—to show that the commoners are not brainless beings, but actually quite clever.*

4. Identify and explain the cobbler's puns.

*“...I am but, as you would say, a cobbler.” – one who botches or messes up a job.*

*“...a mender of bad soles.” – could be misconstrued to mean “souls.”*

*“...all that I live by is with the awl...” – “awl” is a tool for repairing shoes, but is pronounced “all.”*

5. Why are Marullus and Flavius upset about Caesar's triumphant return?

*There are several reasons. First, there is the personal envy. They realize that Caesar's rise will inevitably lead to their decline. Secondly, they are worried about the future of the Roman republic. Prior to the republic, Rome was ruled by a series of vicious kings, who were overthrown when the republic was established. If Caesar were to be crowned king, Rome very well might return to its primitive state in which no one enjoyed any rights or security. Finally, there is the issue that Caesar is returning "victorious," not having defeated a foreign enemy and enriching Rome's treasury with ransomable prisoners, but having defeated a fellow Roman, one who had been a close and trusted friend of Caesar's. In fact, historically, Pompey had been Caesar's son-in-law until the death of Caesar's daughter Julia.*

6. Why do the Tribunes chase the commoners away, and for what does Marullus reprimand them?

*The masses are celebrating Caesar's victory over Pompey, and the Tribunes think that this shows the worst ingratitude after what Pompey had done for them in the past.*

7. What literary term is illustrated by the following quotation:

*"And do you now put on your best attire?  
And do you now cull out a holiday?  
And do you now strew flowers in his way..."?*

*This passage is an example of anaphora.*

## Act I, scene ii

1. Why does Caesar mention his desire that Calpurnia stand "directly in Antonio's way"?

*It reflects his concern about Calpurnia's barrenness. Without an heir, there can be no Caesarian dynasty (as it is implied he desires).*

2. How might Caesar's concern reflect the concerns of his Elizabethan audience?

*Like Caesar, Elizabeth had no apparent heir to her throne. Since the reign of Elizabeth's grandfather, Henry VII, the issue of succession had been fairly clear (with a few minor uprisings at the death of Edward and the ascension of Mary). This period of relative tranquility followed the generations-long Wars of the Roses. Now, Elizabeth's death would mark the end of the Tudor Dynasty, and, without a clear heir, the same type of civil disturbance could arise again.*

3. Why are the tribunes Flavius and Marullus punished?

*They removed decorations from Caesar's statues (as they discussed at the end of the previous scene).*

4. What is the soothsayer's warning to Caesar? What does it mean?

*The soothsayer calls out, "...beware the ides of March." This means Caesar should be careful on March 15<sup>th</sup>.*

5. What problem with time sequences does Shakespeare present to his audience?

*As will become clearer in subsequent scenes, Caesar's triumphal entry, Antony's ceremonial race, and the presentation of the crown to Caesar happened on the Lupercanal, which is in February. The assassination occurred on the Ides of March (the middle of March). Yet the progress from the action of this scene to the assassination in III, i make it seem as if the assassination happened on the day immediately following this triumphal entry.*

6. What fear does Brutus note?

*Brutus says, "I do fear, the people/Choose Caesar for their king."*

7. According to Cassius, what happened when Caesar and Cassius went swimming in the Tiber? What is the point of this story?

*Cassius claims that he had to save Caesar from drowning, the point being that Caesar is just as weak and mortal as anyone else. The story illustrates both Caesar's human frailty and Cassius' first-hand knowledge of it.*

8. What does Cassius say about fate, free will, and being "underlings"?

*Cassius believes that if common people are "underlings," they are so not because it is fated to be ("in our stars"); rather, it is within all people to decide their own fate. The contrast between destiny and free will will be a recurring theme in the play.*

9. What is noticeably different about Casca's speech pattern compared to Caesar's or Brutus'? Why is this significant?

*Casca speaks in prose, whereas Caesar and Brutus speak in verse. This is significant because Casca is narrating to the audience important action that the audience has not seen: Antony's offering Caesar the crown and Caesar's refusing it. The content of Casca's account is too important—establishing the crowd's love of Caesar, and Caesar's own attitude toward being king (his show of refusing the title, but suggestions that he really wants it)—that Shakespeare does not want it lost in language. Therefore, Casca speaks in plain prose.*

10. What two physical ailments of Caesar's are mentioned in this scene? Why are they significant?

*Caesar is deaf in one ear and has the "falling sickness" (epilepsy). This is important, because Caesar is a human—a physically impaired human at that. Yet he allows others to treat him as a god, even hints at being a deity. Historically, under Octavius' reign (as Caesar Augustus), Julius Caesar was declared a god and Augustus declared the son of a god.*

11. In response to the "falling sickness," what is the meaning of Cassius' sarcasm?

*Cassius claims that he, Casca, and Brutus have the "falling sickness" because they are falling down and submitting to Caesar's rise in power, instead of standing up to him and stopping it.*

### Act I, scene iii

1. Why do the conspirators plant papers on Brutus's chair?

*They know that if he thinks the populace supports Caesar's overthrow, Brutus will back the assassination.*

2. There are four specific things Casca has seen. What are they? How does Casca interpret these strange happenings? How does Cassius? How would Shakespeare's audience have interpreted them?

1. *A slave had his left hand burning with fire, yet his hand "...remain'd unscorch'd."*
2. *Casca met a lion that did not bother him, just passed him by.*
3. *A throng of frightened women "...swore they saw/Men all in fire walk up and down the streets."*
4. *The day before, an owl sat "...Hooting and shrieking."*

*Casca believes these events are omens, signs that the gods are displeased with humans: "Either there is a civil strife in heaven, / Or else the world too saucy with the gods / Incenses them to send destruction."*

*Cassius, on the other hand, relishes the omens and interprets them as signs that Caesar's ambition has upset the balance of nature, and the conspirators are justified in their plan to kill him and restore the balance.*

3. How do the signs highlight Shakespeare's apparent problem with time sequences?

*One of the signs Casca reports is the appearance of an owl in the marketplace the day before. This "day before" would be, on the one hand March 13—the day before the day before the Ides of March; but it is also—following the action of the play—the day before Caesar's triumphal entry into Rome.*

4. On whom does Cassius blame Caesar's power? Why is this significant?

*At first, Cassius blames Caesar's power on the gods, but then he blames it on the weakness of the Romans: "Let it be who it is: for Romans now/Have thews and limbs like to their ancestors;/But, woe the while! our fathers' minds are dead,/And we are govern'd with our mothers' spirits;/Our yoke and sufferance show us womanish." This is significant because, if the gods are to blame, then there is nothing mortals can do. But if it is the fault of mortal weakness, then "stronger men" can take action.*

5. Cassius describes Caesar as a wolf and a lion, and the Romans as sheep. What literary term is illustrated here? What is its significance?

*This selection is an example of a metaphor: "And why should Caesar be a tyrant then?/Poor man! I know he would not be a wolf/But that he sees the Romans are but sheep:/He were no lion, were not Roman hinds." What Cassius is saying is that, if Caesar is the predator "devouring" the Roman people's hard-won rights and privileges, then it is only because the Romans themselves have acted like his prey.*

6. Why is it important to the conspirators to have Brutus come in with them?

*Brutus is held in high esteem by the people, and, while the other conspirator's motives will be suspect, Brutus' motives will be viewed as pure.*

## Act II, scene I

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?

*Brutus has no personal reasons to criticize Caesar. It is Brutus' fear, however, that if Caesar were to become king, he might become a tyrant because that is the way of human nature. Brutus does admit that Caesar has always been a rational man: "...I have not known when his affections sway'd / More than his reason." It is for the political good of the people that Brutus thinks thus. The conflict between the private and public selves is one of the major issues in the play. Brutus' opinion supports this theme, because it is not for personal reasons, but political ones that he is considering conspiring against Caesar.*

2. What are the "exhalations" by which Brutus reads the letter Lucius delivers?

*Meteors, which light the night in protest of the conspiracy to kill Caesar (nature rebels against the "unnatural" act of regicide).*

3. What strategical error do Brutus and Cassius make when they are discussing Caesar's death? Why do they commit such a blunder?

*They discount Antony as "but a limb of Caesar" when, in the end, he causes the deaths of both. Brutus, as a man of integrity, wants Caesar's death to be a "sacrifice" for the good of the Republic. To kill Antony, too, would turn their noble sacrifice into an act of savage butchery.*

4. What does the fact that Caesar is so easily swayed by flattery say about his character?

*Caesar is fully human. In fact, as a human, he is probably not particularly noble or "great." Notice how Brutus did not succumb to Cassius' earlier attempt at flattery.*

5. Why does Portia stab herself?

*To prove herself worthy of Brutus's confidence.*

## Act II, scene ii

1. What is the significance of Calpurnia's dream, as recounted by Caesar?

*It foreshadows Caesar's death and the events which follow it. The conspirators bathe their hands in Caesar's blood, after they murder him. It also foreshadows the hundred senators that Messala reports as killed (in Act IV, scene iii); Calpurnia dreamt of 100 spouts of blood pouring from Caesar's statue.*

2. What types of evidence does Calpurnia offer to support her assertion that Caesar should stay home?

*Natural (strange occurrences), supernatural (the soothsayer's prophecy), and personal (her nightmare).*

## Act II, scene iii

1. What is the purpose of this scene?

*Dramatically, this scene provides some dramatic irony, in that the audience already knows that the assassination is going to be successful, despite Artemidorus' attempt to warn it. It also further highlights Caesar's hubris, his sense of immortality, in that it provides yet another warning for Caesar to ignore.*

2. What major theme does Artemidorus' letter advance?

*Artemidorus writes: "If thou read this, O Caesar, thou mayst live; If not, the Fates with traitors do contrive." This advances the theme of Fate versus free will. Apparently, Artemidorus believes that Caesar can change his Fate if he has the will to do so.*



## Act II, scene iv

1. Why is Portia so distracted?

*She knows of the plot and fears for Brutus's well-being.*

2. What is the soothsayer's plan?

*He will wait until Caesar is not pressed with people and then again warn Caesar of the harm that is plotted against him.*

3. Why is Shakespeare going to such lengths to try to warn Caesar?

*Shakespeare is clearly establishing the theme that, while events might seem to be fated (all signs and omens point to Caesar's death), human events and outcomes are shaped by human decision and action. Caesar is warned of his impending doom, and he consistently chooses to ignore all warnings.*

## Act III, scene i

1. What motivates Caesar to say he will not read Artemidorus' letter first?

*In Caesar's attempt to appear magnificent, he chooses to look at the things that pertain to him personally last. This tendency will prove to be fatal.*

2. What is significant about the way Caesar opens the senatorial session?

*Again showing a self-glorifying, pompous nature, Caesar invites people to submit their petitions to "Caesar and his Senate."*

3. Why does Metellus bring a petition to Caesar?

*This is a ruse to get the conspirators close enough to stab Caesar. It also provides Shakespeare with one last opportunity to show Caesar's hubris, claiming to be immovable, as constant as the North Star, the only man in the entire human race to hold his position while all others circle around him.*

4. Who is the first to stab Caesar?

*Casca is first to stab Caesar.*

5. What is interesting about Caesar's reaction to the stab from Brutus?

*Caesar does not succumb to the political betrayal of the other conspirators, but he dies at the personal betrayal of his friend Brutus.*

6. What figure of speech or rhetorical device is exemplified by Caesar's famous, "Et tu, Brute?- Then fall, Caesar!"

*Caesar's recognition that he is also betrayed by his friend is an example of anagnorisis: the moment of realization of a truth. Later, before his own death, Brutus will have an anagnorisis in which he realizes that, when choosing civic loyalty over personal loyalty, he made the wrong decision.*

7. What is the significance of the simile: "How like a deer stricken by many princes / Dost thou here lie!"?

*In Renaissance England, deer were animals protected by law so that only royalty and high-ranking nobility could hunt them. One probable myth about Shakespeare's life is that he originally left his hometown of Stratford to avoid a charge of poaching deer on a local nobleman's land. The image here, then, is that Caesar is the deer, the noble game animal, slain by so many princes.*

8. What additional blunder do Cassius and Brutus commit in agreeing to let Antony speak at Caesar's funeral?

*Brutus erroneously believes that, by speaking first, he can "win" the audience and set the tone for the funeral. The fact is, however, that, in terms of rhetoric, forensic, and oratory, the speaker who speaks last generally has the advantage.*

### Act III, scene ii

1. What is the reason Brutus gives for Caesar's death?

*Brutus was ambitious and would have put all of Rome in bondage to feed his ambition. Brutus answers the public by stating: "Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more."*

2. What rhetorical devices does Brutus employ in his speech?

*While not as effective as Antony's speech, Brutus does effectively employ a number of rhetorical devices:*

*Parallelism: As Caesar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honor him; but as he was ambitious, I slew him. There is tears for his love, joy for his fortune, honor for his valor, and death for his ambition.*

*Antithesis: Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more. Had you rather Caesar were living and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead to live all freemen?*

*Anaphora: If any, speak, for him have I offended. Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? If any, speak, for him have I offended. Who is here so vile that will not love his country? If any, speak, for him have I offended. I pause for a reply.*

3. What is being foreshadowed by Brutus' ending his speech by saying: "With this I depart, – that, as I slew my best lover for the good of Rome, I have the same dagger for myself, when it shall please my country to need my death"?

*Clearly Shakespeare is foreshadowing Brutus' death on his own sword.*

4. Compare Antony's speech with Brutus'. Why is Antony's more successful?

*The opening lines of each speech are nearly identical: (Brutus: Romans, countrymen, and lovers! Hear me for my cause, and be silent, that you may hear. Antony: Friends! Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears!)*

*Antony's speech is more successful for a number of reasons. First of all, he reverses the order of the appellations so that Friends comes first. Brutus ended weakly on the exaggerated "lovers." Secondly, Brutus follows his greeting essentially with a command to "shut up." His approach is pompous, a nobleman speaking to the rabble. Antony, however, while also asking for silence so he can be heard, employs a synecdoche and does not alienate his audience. Brutus' entire speech is in prose. Shakespeare does allow him to employ a few effective rhetorical devices, but Shakespeare saves the strongest rhetoric and the verse for Antony's speech. Finally, Brutus' speech appeals to the mob's reason (you wouldn't want a king and then have to give up your freedoms, would you?) while Antony appeals more to their emotions (pardon me, I am too broken up about this death to continue, his claiming to know which conspirator made which stab-wound and cataloging them for the mob, the reading of Caesar's "will," etc.).*

5. When does Antony also employ anaphora in his speech?

*Antony's repetition of the "honorable man" motif is an example of anaphora.*

6. At the end of his speech, Antony claims to lack what talent?

*Antony claims to have no talent as a speaker. In many instances throughout this play, language is used to deceive and misinform. Antony is obviously a talented speaker.*

7. What do the reactions of the mob indicate?

*The Roman mob can be described as fickle and ready to go along with the most persuasive speaker.*

### **Act III, scene iii**

1. What is the dramatic significance of this short scene?

*It signals the decline of the Roman republic. The death of the poet Cinna is meaningless; the crowd kills him for "bad verses" (line 30) and for sharing a name with Cinna the conspirator when they can find no better cause. This killing marks the change to a mobocracy (from the republic/dictatorship led by Caesar).*

## Act IV, scene i

1. What are Antony, Octavius, and Lepidus doing at the opening of this scene? What is suggested about their collective and individual characters?

*They are consolidating their power by marking to be killed those they consider threats. They seem a heartless and bloodthirsty lot. Lepidus agrees to the execution of his brother, so long as Antony agrees to his nephew's death—which he does.*

2. How does Antony show himself to be ruthless in this scene?

*Not only does Antony easily mark people close to him for death, but he plans to use Lepidus to perform the unpopular tasks while, at the same time, planning to cheat him out of the rewards.*

3. Historically, what is Shakespeare dramatizing in this scene?

*After the death of Caesar and several years of civil war, Octavius, Antony, and Lepidus formed the "Second Triumverate" and ruled the Roman Empire. The three-way coalition did not last long, and Octavius eventually emerged as the sole ruler, the first true Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus.*

## Act IV, scene ii

1. What is suggested about Cassius' character even before he appears in this scene?

*Cassius was "very concerned" about Brutus' friendship and loyalty when Cassius needed Brutus to legitimize the assassination of Caesar. That being accomplished, however, and the aftermath not being what Cassius had expected, he is not so warm a friend.*

2. Why does Brutus request that the conference be held inside?

*He expects to argue with Cassius, and the two armies should not hear discord between their leaders since they are supposed to be the same force.*

## Act IV, scene iii

1. Why is Brutus so outraged at official corruption? What does this indicate about his character?

*Brutus did not kill his good friend Caesar so others can make dirty profits. This affirms not only Brutus' integrity and honor, but also his idealism and naivety.*

2. What does Cassius mean when he calls the bribery a “nice offense”?

*In this instance, the word “nice” means “minor” or “trivial.”*

3. What do Brutus and Cassius argue about? What is the tone of their argument? What is the significance of their argument?

*The argument rambles through many topics, but ultimately boils down to who likes whom and who has been the better friend to whom. When they argue about who is the better soldier, they actually sound like spoiled children. The significance is that, while Octavius and Antony have been able to forge an alliance, Brutus and Cassius' alliance is falling apart.*

4. How do the two allies pacify one another? How convincing are they?

*Brutus rather weakly asserts that he is short-tempered and not used to hiding his anger, even though it passes soon. Cassius claims that he simply inherited a foul disposition from his mother. They are not at all convincing and actually disagree again later about whether they should march to the enemy or allow the enemy to march to them.*

5. What does Cassius mean in line 111 when he refers to “Pluto's mine”?

*Pluto is the Roman god of the underworld; however, many critics believe that the reference to Pluto was a mistake—either Shakespeare's or one of the copy clerks' or printers' who made the earliest copies of the play. Modern critics believe the reference should be to Plutus, the Roman god of riches. “Dearer” is used to mean, “having more value,” “Pluto's mine,” (Plutus') refers to gold mines. Cassius is trying to prove that he has “...a heart...richer than gold...”*

6. Why and how did Portia kill herself?

*She swallowed hot coals because she couldn't bear both Brutus's absence and the news that Octavius and Antony were winning.*

7. Brutus says that “There is a tide in the affairs of men...” What does he mean by this?

*Brutus means that there is a time that is right to take action; if that moment is missed, it is gone forever.*

8. What prophecy of Calpurnia's do Brutus' and Messala's letters confirm?

*Calpurnia dreamed of the hundred spouts of blood, and one hundred senators have been executed by the Triumverate.*

9. What is the significance of the appearance of Caesar's ghost?

*With the exception of the ghost of Hamlet's father, who appears to motivate his son to action, Shakespeare's ghosts (the ghost of Banquo in Macbeth, the ghosts of Richard's victims in Richard III, and the ghost of Caesar in this play) indicate both a guilty conscience and an uncertainty about the future. The appearance of Caesar's ghost, after the confrontation with Cassius and the discussion of the pending battle with Octavius and Antony, most likely indicates Brutus' remorse at having taken part in the assassination, and his fear that his own future is uncertain—most likely to be determined at Philippi.*

10. How does the appearance of the ghost clarify the real conflict of the play?

*Due to the significance of ghosts in Shakespeare's plays, the audience now knows that the conflict of this play is not external: not Brutus versus Cassius or the conspirators versus the triumverate; but internal: Brutus versus himself.*

## Act V, scene I

1. What does Antony mean when he accuses Octavius of "crossing" him? What is he implying?

*One of the definitions of cross in the Oxford English Dictionary is to "thwart" or "oppose." By accusing Octavius of "opposing" him, Antony is implying that he is the authority. After all, he is older and more experienced than Octavius; he was Caesar's beloved friend, and trusted confidante, and naturally assumes that he will "pick up" where Caesar "left off."*

2. What is Octavius clearly implying by his response?

*Octavius is clearly telling Antony that he does not consider the older man to be the one "in charge." He tells Antony, "I'm not opposing you, this is what I am going to do." He was, after all, named as Caesar's son and heir in Caesar's will, and will become the Emperor Caesar Augustus. Shakespeare is suggesting the beginning of Octavius' rise in these military actions.*

3. What is significant about the way Antony addresses Octavius in this scene?

*This is the first time Octavius is addressed directly as "Caesar."*

4. What effect does Shakespeare achieve by the debate the warring parties have prior to their battle? How does he achieve this affect?

*Shakespeare uses puns and repetitions to portray both sides of the “debate” as silly and childish.*

5. What is significant about Messala’s reference to Pompey?

*The first several scenes of the play, in which the conspirators were worried about the future of the Republic and their own freedoms, depicted Caesar’s triumphal return to Rome after the civil war in which he defeated Pompey.*

6. What is the significance of the omen Cassius reports he saw?

*Two eagles, noble birds of prey, fed from the soldiers’ hands, signifying that the marching troops themselves were noble. Once the troops reached the battle field, however, the predators deserted the army and were replaced by carrion eaters (“ravens, crows, and kites”). Clearly, the defeat of Cassius’ and Brutus’ troops is being presaged, but also the idea that less-noble beings will profit from their deaths.*

7. What is being foreshadowed when Brutus tells Cassius, “Think not, thou noble Roman, / That ever Brutus will go bound to Rome”?

*Shakespeare is foreshadowing Brutus’ suicide in the event his and Cassius’ troops lose the battle.*

## **Act V, scene ii**

1. Why does Shakespeare include this scene?

*Brutus gives orders that are revealed, in the next scene, to cause the downfall of the entire army. It is proof of his poor military planning and his more idealistic, abstract nature.*

## **Act V, scene iii**

1. According to Titinius, why is Cassius’ side losing to Antony’s forces?

*Brutus attacked Octavius prematurely, thus allowing Antony to encircle Cassius’ forces.*

2. How does Cassius die? Why?

*Cassius has Pindarus kill him because he believes Titinius, a close friend, has been killed, thus the battle is lost. Furthermore, Cassius dies on the very sword he used to kill Caesar.*

3. It turns out that Cassius killed himself prematurely. Why?

*Titinius is still alive, and Brutus' forces have almost defeated the army of Octavius.*

4. Explain the metaphor Titinius uses to lament Cassius' death.

*The flowing of Cassius' red blood is like the setting of a red sun. Cassius' death is his personal sunset, and Cassius is the "sun of Rome" that is setting.*

## **Act V, scene iv**

1. What effect is Shakespeare creating with this series of relatively short scenes?

*Shakespeare creates an almost cinematic effect changing the action and the scene quickly.*

2. Why does Lucilius impersonate Brutus?

*He knows they will not prevail and wishes Brutus to be safe.*

3. How does Antony respond to the impersonation?

*He orders that Lucilius be treated with all courtesy, for he is impressed with the friend's loyalty.*

## **Act V, scene v**

1. Why does Brutus commit suicide?

*There are several reasons. First, an important Roman ideal was "Death before Dishonor." Brutus would rather be dead than be led back to Rome in chains and treated like a traitor. Secondly, whoever killed Brutus in battle would be greatly honored, and Brutus is unwilling that anyone of Antony's or Octavius' camps should have that honor. Thirdly, he promised the mob at Caesar's funeral that he was prepared to die by the same dagger with which he killed Caesar if ever Rome demanded it. The assassination of Caesar did not strengthen the Roman republic or bring peace and security to its citizens, so there is a certain justice in Brutus' keeping this promise. Finally, he believes that the appearances of Caesar's ghost are signs to him that it is his time to die.*

2. How do Antony and Octavius treat Brutus' body?

*Brutus' body is treated with great respect because Antony and Octavius believe that of all the conspirators, Brutus is the only one who acted for the good of Rome and not for his own selfish ends.*



3. On what note does the play end?

*Octavius and Antony, the ultimate victors, restate Brutus's honorable nature and honor his virtue by according him the rites of burial, and his followers a place in their employment. However, the fate of Rome is still wavering; the war did not really settle anything.*

4. What is significant about the fact that the character Octavius has the closing lines of the play?

*Typically in Shakespeare's plays, especially his tragedies and histories, the final speaker is the character who will restore the order that has been disrupted during the course of the play (think of Malcolm in Macbeth, Cornwall—sometimes Edgar—in King Lear, and Richmond—Henry VII—in Richard III). Historically, Octavius, Antony, and Lepidus ruled for a while as a Triumverate, but Octavius eventually emerged as the first Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus.*

5. What event would you identify as the climax of the play? Why?

*Answers will certainly vary, but one good suggestion is that the climax occurs during Antony's speech at Caesar's funeral. This is an early event for a climax, but it is the moment that the wrongness of Caesar's assassination is established and the tide seems to turn against the conspirators.*

*Another possibility is the death of Cassius because that is the moment the audience knows that the conspirators are defeated. They are operating on poor advice and miscommunication. They have argued among themselves, and Cassius has lost confidence to such a degree that he has himself killed prematurely.*

# *Julius Caesar*

## Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition Teaching Unit

### Study Guide Student Copy

#### Act I, scene i

1. What dramatic technique does Shakespeare use to start his play?
2. What is the significance of Marullus' rebuke of the commoners?
3. Why does the Second Commoner pun?

4. Identify and explain the cobbler's puns.
5. Why are Marullus and Flavius upset about Caesar's triumphant return?
6. Why do the Tribunes chase the commoners away, and for what does Marullus reprimand them?
7. What literary term is illustrated by the following quotation:  
    "And do you now put on your best attire?  
    And do you now cull out a holiday?  
    And do you now strew flowers in his way..."?

## Act I, scene ii

1. Why does Caesar mention his desire that Calpurnia stand “directly in Antonio’s way”?
2. How might Caesar’s concern reflect the concerns of his Elizabethan audience?
3. Why are the tribunes Flavius and Marullus punished?
4. What is the soothsayer’s warning to Caesar? What does it mean?
5. What problem with time sequences does Shakespeare present to his audience?
6. What fear does Brutus note?

7. According to Cassius, what happened when Caesar and Cassius went swimming in the Tiber? What is the point of this story?
8. What does Cassius say about fate, free will, and being “underlings”?
9. What is noticeably different about Casca’s speech pattern compared to Caesar’s or Brutus’? Why is this significant?
10. What two physical ailments of Caesar’s are mentioned in this scene? Why are they significant?
11. In response to the “falling sickness,” what is the meaning of Cassius’ sarcasm?

## Act I, scene iii

1. Why do the conspirators plant papers on Brutus's chair?
2. There are four specific things Casca has seen. What are they? How does Casca interpret these strange happenings? How does Cassius? How would Shakespeare's audience have interpreted them?
3. How do the signs highlight Shakespeare's apparent problem with time sequences?
4. On whom does Cassius blame Caesar's power? Why is this significant?
5. Cassius describes Caesar as a wolf and a lion, and the Romans as sheep. What literary term is illustrated here? What is its significance?
6. Why is it important to the conspirators to have Brutus come in with them?

## Act II, scene I

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?
2. What are the "exhalations" by which Brutus reads the letter Lucius delivers?
3. What strategical error do Brutus and Cassius make when they are discussing Caesar's death? Why do they commit such a blunder?
4. What does the fact that Caesar is so easily swayed by flattery say about his character?
5. Why does Portia stab herself?

### **Act II, scene ii**

1. What is the significance of Calpurnia's dream, as recounted by Caesar?
2. What types of evidence does Calpurnia offer to support her assertion that Caesar should stay home?

### **Act II, scene iii**

1. What is the purpose of this scene?
2. What major theme does Artemidorus' letter advance?

### **Act II, scene iv**

1. Why is Portia so distracted?
2. What is the soothsayer's plan?
3. Why is Shakespeare going to such lengths to try to warn Caesar?



### Act III, scene i

1. What motivates Caesar to say he will not read Artemidorus' letter first?
2. What is significant about the way Caesar opens the senatorial session?
3. Why does Metellus bring a petition to Caesar?
4. Who is the first to stab Caesar?
5. What is interesting about Caesar's reaction to the stab from Brutus?
6. What figure of speech or rhetorical device is exemplified by Caesar's famous, "*Et tu, Brute? - Then fall, Caesar!*"
7. What is the significance of the simile: "How like a deer stricken by many princes / Dost thou here lie!"?
8. What additional blunder do Cassius and Brutus commit in agreeing to let Antony speak at Caesar's funeral?

## Act III, scene ii

1. What is the reason Brutus gives for Caesar's death?
2. What rhetorical devices does Brutus employ in his speech?
3. What is being foreshadowed by Brutus' ending his speech by saying: "With this I depart, – that, as I slew my best lover for the good of Rome, I have the same dagger for myself, when it shall please my country to need my death"?
4. Compare Antony's speech with Brutus'. Why is Antony's more successful?
5. When does Antony also employ anaphora in his speech?
6. At the end of his speech, Antony claims to lack what talent?
7. What do the reactions of the mob indicate?

### **Act III, scene iii**

1. What is the dramatic significance of this short scene?

### **Act IV, scene i**

1. What are Antony, Octavius, and Lepidus doing at the opening of this scene? What is suggested about their collective and individual characters?
2. How does Antony show himself to be ruthless in this scene?
3. Historically, what is Shakespeare dramatizing in this scene?

### **Act IV, scene ii**

1. What is suggested about Cassius' character even before he appears in this scene?
2. Why does Brutus request that the conference be held inside?

## Act IV, scene iii

1. Why is Brutus so outraged at official corruption? What does this indicate about his character?
2. What does Cassius mean when he calls the bribery a “nice offense”?
3. What do Brutus and Cassius argue about? What is the tone of their argument? What is the significance of their argument?
4. How do the two allies pacify one another? How convincing are they?
5. What does Cassius mean in line 111 when he refers to “Pluto’s mine”?

6. Why and how did Portia kill herself?
7. Brutus says that “There is a tide in the affairs of men...” What does he mean by this?
8. What prophecy of Calpurnia’s do Brutus’ and Messala’s letters confirm?
9. What is the significance of the appearance of Caesar’s ghost?
10. How does the appearance of the ghost clarify the *real* conflict of the play?

## Act V, scene I

1. What does Antony mean when he accuses Octavius of “crossing” him? What is he implying?
2. What is Octavius clearly implying by his response?
3. What is significant about the way Antony addresses Octavius in this scene?
4. What effect does Shakespeare achieve by the debate the warring parties have prior to their battle? How does he achieve this affect?
5. What is significant about Messala’s reference to Pompey?
6. What is the significance of the omen Cassius reports he saw?
7. What is being foreshadowed when Brutus tells Cassius, “Think not, thou noble Roman,  
/ That ever Brutus will go bound to Rome”?

### **Act V, scene ii**

1. Why does Shakespeare include this scene?

### **Act V, scene iii**

1. According to Titinius, why is Cassius' side losing to Antony's forces?
2. How does Cassius die? Why?
3. It turns out that Cassius killed himself prematurely. Why?
4. Explain the metaphor Titinius uses to lament Cassius' death.

### **Act V, scene iv**

1. What effect is Shakespeare creating with this series of relatively short scenes?
2. Why does Lucilius impersonate Brutus?
3. How does Antony respond to the impersonation?

### **Act V, scene v**

1. Why does Brutus commit suicide?
2. How do Antony and Octavius treat Brutus' body?
3. On what note does the play end?
4. What is significant about the fact that the character Octavius has the closing lines of the play?
5. What event would you identify as the climax of the play? Why?



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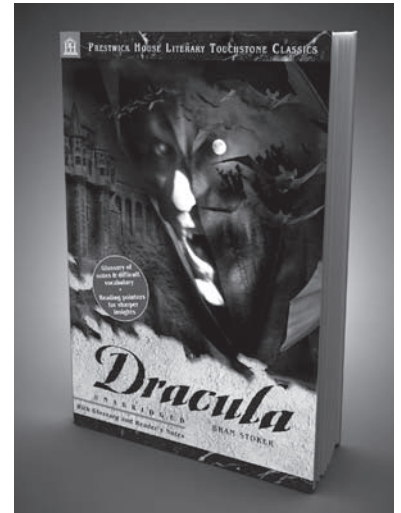
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