

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar

Drama by William Shakespeare



Video link at
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Can your **CONSCIENCE** mislead you?

COMMON CORE

RL 3 Analyze how complex characters with conflicting motivations develop, interact with others, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

RL 4 Determine the figurative and connotative meanings of words and phrases as they are used in a text. **RL 9** Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work. **RL 10** Read and comprehend dramas.

When making a difficult decision, you may be urged to let your conscience be your guide—in other words, to rely on an internal sense of what is right and wrong. But how foolproof is your conscience? In *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*, a man guided by the highest ideals fails to foresee the consequences of his actions.

QUICKWRITE Think of a time when you made a wrong decision, even though your intention was good. Write a paragraph explaining why you had this unexpected outcome.



Background

● TEXT ANALYSIS: SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY

A **tragedy** is a drama in which a series of actions leads to the downfall of the main character, or **tragic hero**. In Shakespeare's tragedies, the hero is usually the title character. However, many critics believe that the tragic hero of *Julius Caesar* is not Caesar but another character, a prominent Roman named Brutus.

As you read, pay attention to these characteristics of Shakespearean tragedy:

- Because the tragic hero is a person of high rank, his or her fate has an impact on all of society.
- The hero has a **tragic flaw**—a fatal error in judgment or a weakness in character—that contributes to his or her downfall.
- Characters sometimes reveal their motives in **soliloquies** or **asides**, speeches that express thoughts that are hidden from other characters.

● READING STRATEGY: READING SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMA

Shakespeare's plays, with their unusual vocabulary, grammar, and word order, can be challenging for modern readers. The following reading strategies can help:

- Read the synopsis, or summary, at the beginning of each scene to get an idea of what will happen in the scene.
- If you have trouble understanding a passage, use the sidenotes to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words and gain helpful information. However, you do not necessarily need to understand every word to understand and enjoy the play.
- Rearrange sentences that have unusual word order to create a familiar sentence structure.
- Use the stage directions and details in dialogue to help you visualize the play's settings and action.
- As you read, use a chart like the one shown to help you identify and analyze important characters in the play. Revise the chart as you learn more about the characters.

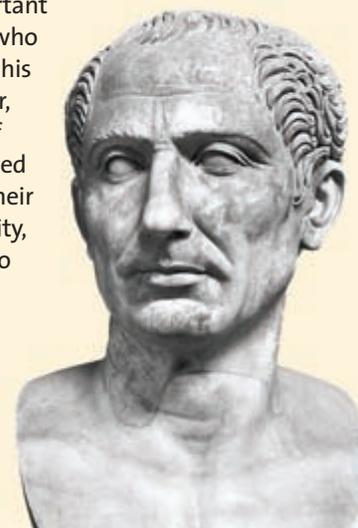
<i>Important Characters</i>	<i>Who Are They?</i>	<i>Personality</i>
<i>Julius Caesar</i>	<i>dictator of Rome</i>	

Past and Present

Julius Caesar is a history play as well as a tragedy. For the Elizabethans, the ancient past offered important lessons about their own political problems. Like Rome under Caesar, England was governed by a strong ruler, Elizabeth I. The queen had survived several plots against her life, and by 1599, when Shakespeare wrote his play, she was an elderly woman. Many English people feared that her death would lead to civil unrest.

Caesar's Rise to Power

The story of Julius Caesar, a Roman general, politician, and orator who lived from 100 to 44 B.C., was well-known in Shakespeare's time. One of the greatest military leaders in Roman history, Caesar is famous for conquering Gaul, a land that corresponds roughly to modern-day France and Belgium. Caesar's growing power alarmed Rome's senators, who feared that he would seize control of the government. In 49 B.C., the Senate ordered him to give up his command in one of Rome's provinces. Caesar refused the order and crossed with his troops into Italy, starting a civil war. Caesar was opposed by Pompey, a former friend and ally. By 45 B.C., Caesar had defeated his opponents and was governing as an absolute ruler. Generous in victory, Caesar gave important positions to men who had recently been his enemies. However, many members of the nobility resented his disregard for their traditional authority, and some began to plot against him.



Bust of Julius Caesar



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

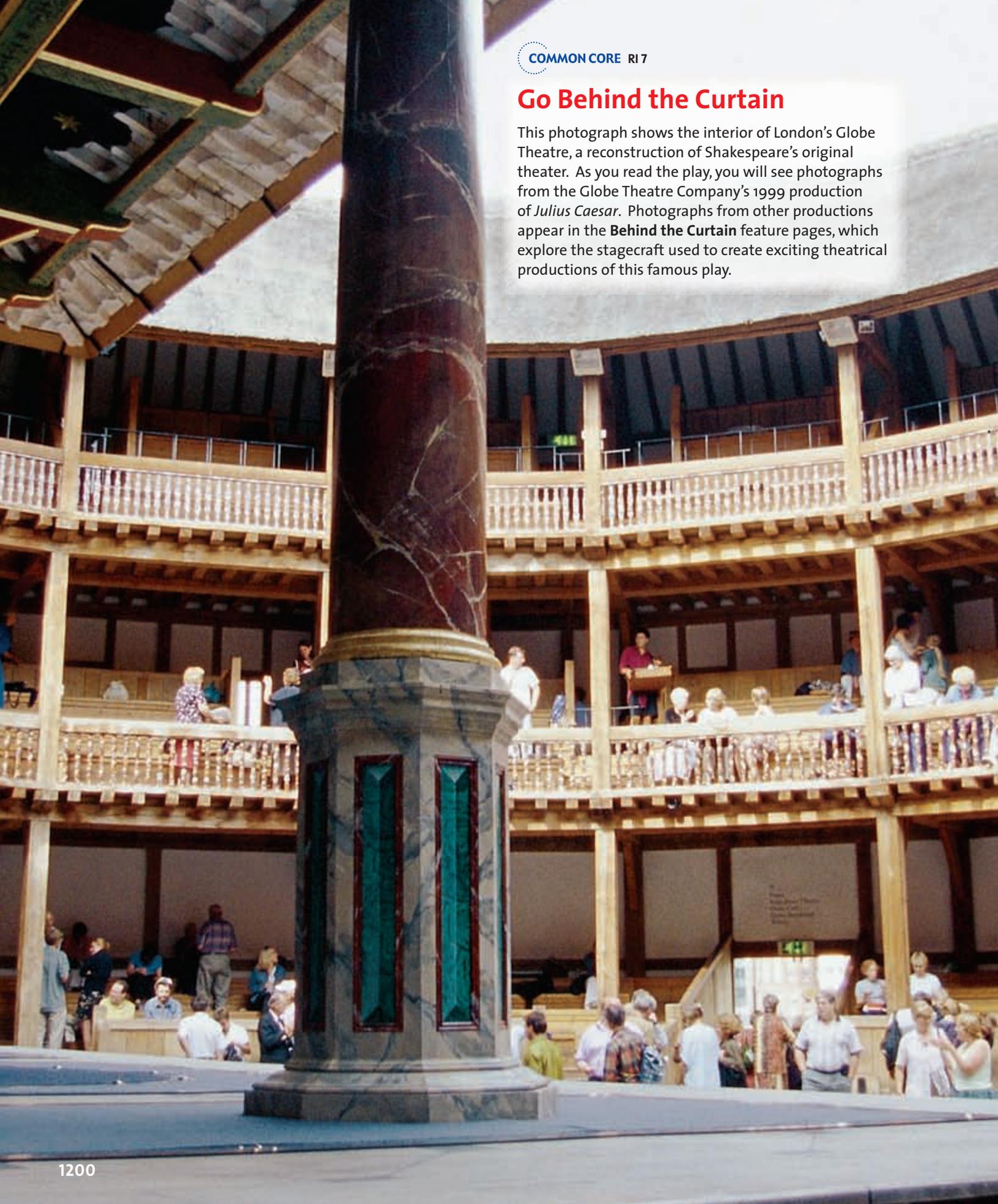
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Go Behind the Curtain

This photograph shows the interior of London's Globe Theatre, a reconstruction of Shakespeare's original theater. As you read the play, you will see photographs from the Globe Theatre Company's 1999 production of *Julius Caesar*. Photographs from other productions appear in the **Behind the Curtain** feature pages, which explore the stagecraft used to create exciting theatrical productions of this famous play.



The Tragedy of

JULIUS CÆSAR

William Shakespeare

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Julius Caesar

TRIUMVIRS AFTER THE DEATH OF JULIUS CAESAR

Octavius Caesar

Marcus Antonius

M. Aemilius Lepidus

SENATORS

Cicero

Publius

Popilius Lena

CONSPIRATORS AGAINST JULIUS CAESAR

Marcus Brutus

Cassius

Casca

Trebonius

Ligarius

Decius Brutus

Metellus Cimber

Cinna

Flavius and Marullus,
tribunes of the people

Artemidorus of Cnidos,
a teacher of Rhetoric

A Soothsayer

Cinna, *a poet*

Another Poet

FRIENDS TO BRUTUS AND CASSIUS

Lucilius

Titinius

Messala

Young Cato

Volumnius

SERVANTS TO BRUTUS

Varro

Clitus

Claudius

Strato

Lucius

Dardanius

Pindarus, *servant to Cassius*

Calpurnia, *wife to Caesar*

Portia, *wife to Brutus*

The Ghost of Caesar

Senators, Citizens, Guards,
Attendants, Servants, etc.

TIME

44 B.C.

PLACE

Rome; the camp near Sardis;
the plains of Philippi

Act One

Scene 1 A street in Rome.

The play begins on February 15, the religious feast of Lupercal. Today the people have a particular reason for celebrating. Julius Caesar has just returned to Rome after a long civil war in which he defeated the forces of Pompey, his rival for power. Caesar now has the opportunity to take full control of Rome. **A**

In this opening scene, a group of workmen, in their best clothes, celebrate in the streets. They are joyful over Caesar's victory. The workers meet Flavius and Marullus, two tribunes—government officials—who supported Pompey. The tribunes express their anger at the celebration, and one worker responds with puns. Finally, the two tribunes scatter the crowd.

Flavius. Hencel home, you idle creatures, get you home!

Is this a holiday? What, know you not,

Being mechanical, you ought not walk

Upon a laboring day without the sign

5 Of your profession? Speak, what trade art thou?

First Commoner. Why, sir, a carpenter.

Marullus. Where is thy leather apron and thy rule?

What dost thou with thy best apparel on?

You, sir, what trade are you?

10 **Second Commoner.** Truly sir, in respect of a fine workman I am but, as you would say, a cobbler.

Marullus. But what trade art thou? Answer me directly.

Second Commoner. A trade, sir, that I hope I may use with a safe conscience, which is indeed, sir, a mender of bad soles.

15 **Flavius.** What trade, thou knave? Thou naughty knave, what trade?

Second Commoner. Nay, I beseech you, sir, be not out with me. Yet if you be out, sir, I can mend you.

Marullus. What mean'st thou by that? Mend me, thou saucy fellow?

Second Commoner. Why, sir, cobble you.

20 **Flavius.** Thou art a cobbler, art thou?

Second Commoner. Truly, sir, all that I live by is with the awl. I meddle with no tradesman's matters nor women's matters, but with all. I am indeed, sir, a surgeon to old shoes. When they are in great

25 danger, I recover them. As proper men as ever trod upon neat's leather have gone upon my handiwork.

COMMON CORE RL.4

A ENGLISH ROOTS

English words stem from a variety of root languages. Many words come from Latin and Greek, but some, such as *begin*, come from Germanic origins. In Old English, *begin* was formed *beginnan*, from the German *beginnen*. Use a thesaurus to investigate synonyms of *begin*, then use a dictionary to determine the etymology of these words.

2–5 What, know . . . profession: Since you are craftsmen (**mechanical**), you should not walk around on a workday without your work clothes and tools (**sign / Of your profession**). *What is Flavius's attitude toward these workers?*

10–26 In this conversation, a shoemaker (**cobbler**) makes a series of puns about his trade, which Marullus and Flavius fail to understand. Imagine the workmen laughing as Marullus and Flavius grow increasingly angry, wondering what is so funny.

15–16 Flavius accuses the commoner of being a wicked, sly person (**naughty knave**), but the commoner begs Flavius not to be angry with him (**be not out with me**).

18 Marullus thinks the cobbler means "I can mend your behavior." He accuses the cobbler of being disrespectful (**saucy**).

21–23 The cobbler jokes about the similarity of **awl** (a shoemaker's tool) to the word *all*.

26 neat's leather: calfskin, used to make expensive shoes. The cobbler means that even rich people come to him for shoes.

Julius Caesar in the Globe Theatre's 1999 production



Flavius. But wherefore art not in thy shop today?
Why dost thou lead these men about the streets?

Second Commoner. Truly, sir, to wear out their shoes, to get
30 myself into more work. But indeed, sir, we make holiday to see
Caesar and to rejoice in his triumph.

Marullus. Wherefore rejoice? What conquest brings he home?
What tributaries follow him to Rome
To grace in captive bonds his chariot wheels?

35 You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!

O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome!
Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft
Have you climbed up to walls and battlements,
To tow'rs and windows, yea, to chimney tops,

40 Your infants in your arms, and there have sat
The livelong day, with patient expectation,
To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome.

And when you saw his chariot but appear,
Have you not made an universal shout,

45 That Tiber trembled underneath her banks

To hear the replication of your sounds
Made in her concave shores?

And do you now put on your best attire?

And do you now cull out a holiday?

50 And do you now strew flowers in his way
That comes in triumph over Pompey's blood?
Be gone!

Run to your houses, fall upon your knees,
Pray to the gods to intermit the plague

55 That needs must light on this ingratitude.

Flavius. Go, go, good countrymen, and for this fault

Assemble all the poor men of your sort;

Draw them to Tiber banks, and weep your tears

Into the channel, till the lowest stream

60 Do kiss the most exalted shores of all.

[*Exeunt all the Commoners.*]

See, wher' their basest metal be not moved.

They vanish tongue-tied in their guiltiness.

Go you down that way towards the Capitol;

This way will I. Disrobe the images

65 If you do find them decked with ceremonies.

Marullus. May we do so?

You know it is the feast of Lupercal.

Flavius. It is no matter. Let no images

Be hung with Caesar's trophies. I'll about

27 **wherefore:** why.

33–34 **What . . . wheels:** What captured prisoners march chained to the wheels of his chariot?

37 **Pompey:** a former Roman ruler, defeated by Caesar in 48 B.C. Pompey was murdered a year after his defeat.

45 **Tiber:** a river that runs through Rome.

46 **replication:** echo.

49 **cull out:** select.

51 **Pompey's blood:** Caesar is returning to Rome in triumph after defeating Pompey's sons in Spain.

54–55 **intermit . . . ingratitude:** hold back the deadly illness that might be just punishment for your behavior.

58–60 **weep . . . of all:** weep into the Tiber River until it overflows.

Exeunt (Latin): They leave.

61 Flavius and Marullus are now alone, having shamed the workers into leaving the street. Flavius says that they will now see if they have touched (**moved**) the workers' poor characters (**basest metal**).

64–65 **Disrobe . . . ceremonies:** Strip the statues of any decorations you find on them.

70 And drive away the vulgar from the streets.
So do you too, where you perceive them thick.
These growing feathers plucked from Caesar's wing
Will make him fly an ordinary pitch,
Who else would soar above the view of men
75 And keep us all in servile fearfulness.

[*Exeunt.*]

Scene 2 *A public place in Rome.*

As Caesar attends the traditional race at the festival of Lupercal, a soothsayer warns him to beware the ides of March, or March 15. (The middle day of each month was called the ides.) When Caesar leaves, Cassius and Brutus speak. Cassius tries to turn Brutus against Caesar by using flattery, examples of Caesar's weaknesses, and sarcasm about Caesar's power. Caesar passes by again, expressing his distrust of Cassius. Cassius and Brutus learn of Caesar's reluctant rejection of a crown that his friend Antony has offered him. They agree to meet again to discuss what must be done about Caesar.

[*A flourish of trumpets announces the approach of Caesar. A large crowd of Commoners has assembled; a Soothsayer is among them. Enter Caesar, his wife Calpurnia, Portia, Decius, Cicero, Brutus, Cassius, Casca, and Antony, who is stripped for running in the games.*]

Caesar. Calpurnia.

Casca. Peace, ho! Caesar speaks.

Caesar. Calpurnia.

Calpurnia. Here, my lord.

Caesar. Stand you directly in Antonius' way
When he doth run his course. Antonius.

5 **Antony.** Caesar, my lord?

Caesar. Forget not in your speed, Antonius,
To touch Calpurnia; for our elders say
The barren, touched in this holy chase,
Shake off their sterile curse.

Antony. I shall remember.

10 When Caesar says "Do this," it is performed.

Caesar. Set on, and leave no ceremony out.

[*Flourish of trumpets. Caesar starts to leave.*]

Soothsayer. Caesar!

Caesar. Ha! Who calls?

Casca. Bid every noise be still. Peace yet again!

15 **Caesar.** Who is it in the press that calls on me?
I hear a tongue shriller than all the music

69–71 I'll about . . . thick: I'll go around and scatter the rest of the commoners. Do the same yourself wherever they are forming a crowd.

72–75 These . . . fearfulness: Flavius compares Caesar to a bird. He hopes that turning away some of Caesar's supporters (**growing feathers**) will prevent him from becoming too powerful.

3–9 Stand . . . curse: Antony (Antonius) is about to run in a race that is part of the Lupercal celebration. Caesar refers to the superstition that a **sterile** woman (one unable to bear children) can become fertile if touched by one of the racers.

9–10 I shall . . . performed: *What do these lines tell you about Antony's attitude toward Caesar?*

12–15 The fortuneteller (**soothsayer**) who calls out Caesar's name can hardly be heard above the noise of the crowd (**press**). Casca tells the crowd to quiet down.

Cry “Caesar!” Speak. Caesar is turned to hear.

Soothsayer. Beware the ides of March. **B**

Caesar. What man is that?

Brutus. A soothsayer bids you beware the ides of March.

20 **Caesar.** Set him before me; let me see his face.

Cassius. Fellow, come from the throng; look upon Caesar.

Caesar. What say'st thou to me now? Speak once again.

Soothsayer. Beware the ides of March.

Caesar. He is a dreamer; let us leave him. Pass.

[*Trumpets sound. Exeunt all but Brutus and Cassius.*]

25 **Cassius.** Will you go see the order of the course?

Brutus. Not I.

Cassius. I pray you do.

Brutus. I am not gamesome. I do lack some part
Of that quick spirit that is in Antony.

30 Let me not hinder, Cassius, your desires.
I'll leave you.

Cassius. Brutus, I do observe you now of late;
I have not from your eyes that gentleness
And show of love as I was wont to have.

35 You bear too stubborn and too strange a hand
Over your friend that loves you.

Brutus. Cassius,
Be not deceived. If I have veiled my look,
I turn the trouble of my countenance
Merely upon myself. Vexed I am

40 Of late with passions of some difference,
Conceptions only proper to myself,
Which give some soil, perhaps, to my behaviors;
But let not therefore my good friends be grieved
(Among which number, Cassius, be you one)

45 Nor construe any further my neglect
Than that poor Brutus, with himself at war,
forgets the shows of love to other men.

Cassius. Then, Brutus, I have much mistook your passion,
By means whereof this breast of mine hath buried

50 Thoughts of great value, worthy cogitations.
Tell me, good Brutus, can you see your face?

Brutus. No, Cassius, for the eye sees not itself
But by reflection, by some other things.

18 ides of March: March 15.

COMMON CORE RL 2

B MOTIFS IN DRAMA

A **motif** is an element or concept that appears throughout a play and helps develop the plot and theme. In *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*, one motif is the appearance of omens foreshadowing doom for Caesar and turmoil for Rome. What omen appears in lines 17–19? How do you think this omen might affect the plot of the play?

25–28 Cassius asks if Brutus is going to watch the race (**the order of the course**), but Brutus says he is not fond of sports (**gamesome**).

32–34 **I do observe . . . to have:** Lately I haven't seen the friendliness in your face that I used to see (**was wont to have**).

37–42 Brutus explains that if he has seemed distant, it is only because he has been preoccupied with conflicting emotions (**passions of some difference**), and that these private thoughts may have stained his conduct.

48–50 **I have . . . cogitations:** I have misunderstood your feelings. As a result, I have kept certain thoughts to myself.

Cassius. 'Tis just.

55 And it is very much lamented, Brutus,
That you have no such mirrors as will turn
Your hidden worthiness into your eye,
That you might see your shadow. I have heard
Where many of the best respect in Rome
60 (Except immortal Caesar), speaking of Brutus
And groaning underneath this age's yoke,
Have wished that noble Brutus had his eyes.

Brutus. Into what dangers would you lead me, Cassius,
That you would have me seek into myself

65 For that which is not in me?

Cassius. Therefore, good Brutus, be prepared to hear;
And since you know you cannot see yourself
So well as by reflection, I, your glass,
Will modestly discover to yourself

70 That of yourself which you yet know not of.
And be not jealous on me, gentle Brutus.
Were I a common laughers, or did use
To stale with ordinary oaths my love
To every new protester; if you know
75 That I do fawn on men and hug them hard,
And after scandal them; or if you know
That I profess myself in banqueting
To all the rout, then hold me dangerous.

[*Flourish and shout.*]

Brutus. What means this shouting? I do fear the people

80 Choose Caesar for their king.

Cassius. Ay, do you fear it?
Then must I think you would not have it so.

Brutus. I would not, Cassius, yet I love him well.
But wherefore do you hold me here so long?
What is it that you would impart to me?

85 If it be aught toward the general good,
Set honor in one eye and death i' the other,
And I will look on both indifferently;
For let the gods so speed me as I love
The name of honor more than I fear death.

90 **Cassius.** I know that virtue to be in you, Brutus,
As well as I do know your outward favor.
Well, honor is the subject of my story.
I cannot tell what you and other men
Think of this life, but for my single self,
95 I had as lief not be as live to be

55–62 it is . . . eyes: It is too bad you don't have a mirror that would show you your inner qualities (**hidden worthiness**). In fact, many respected citizens suffering under Caesar's rule (**this age's yoke**) have wished that Brutus could see how things stand. *What is Cassius suggesting to Brutus?*

66–70 Therefore . . . not of: Listen, Brutus, since you cannot see yourself, I will be your mirror (**glass**) and show you what you truly are.

71 jealous on me: suspicious of me.

72–78 Were I . . . dangerous: If you think I am a fool (**common laughers**) or someone who pretends to be the friend of everyone I meet, or if you believe that I show friendship and then talk evil about my friends (**scandal them**) behind their backs, or that I try to win the affections of the common people (**all the rout**), then consider me dangerous.

85–87 Brutus declares that he would not care whether he faced death if the matter Cassius has in mind concerns the public welfare (general good**).**

91 outward favor: physical appearance.

In awe of such a thing as I myself.
 I was born free as Caesar, so were you;
 We both have fed as well, and we can both
 Endure the winter's cold as well as he.
 100 For once, upon a raw and gusty day,
 The troubled Tiber chafing with her shores,
 Caesar said to me, "Dar'st thou, Cassius, now
 Leap in with me into this angry flood
 And swim to yonder point?" Upon the word,
 105 Accoutered as I was, I plunged in
 And bade him follow. So indeed he did.
 The torrent roared, and we did buffet it
 With lusty sinews, throwing it aside
 And stemming it with hearts of controversy.
 110 But ere we could arrive the point proposed,
 Caesar cried, "Help me, Cassius, or I sink!"
 I, as Aeneas, our great ancestor,
 Did from the flames of Troy upon his shoulder
 The old Anchises bear, so from the waves of Tiber
 115 Did I the tired Caesar. And this man
 Is now become a god, and Cassius is
 A wretched creature and must bend his body
 If Caesar carelessly but nod on him.
 He had a fever when he was in Spain,
 120 And when the fit was on him, I did mark
 How he did shake. 'Tis true, this god did shake.
 His coward lips did from their color fly
 And that same eye whose bend doth awe the world
 Did lose his luster. I did hear him groan.
 125 Ay, and that tongue of his that bade the Romans
 Mark him and write his speeches in their books,
 Alas, it cried, "Give me some drink, Titinius,"
 As a sick girl! Ye gods! it doth amaze me
 A man of such a feeble temper should
 130 So get the start of the majestic world
 And bear the palm alone.
 [*Shout. Flourish.*]
Brutus. Another general shout?
 I do believe that these applauses are
 For some new honors that are heaped on Caesar.
 135 **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.

95–96 I had . . . I myself: I would rather not live, than to live in awe of someone no better than I am.

101 troubled . . . shores: The Tiber River was rising in the middle of a storm.

105 Accoutered: dressed.

107–109 we did . . . controversy: We fought the raging river with strong muscles (**lusty sinews**), conquering it with our spirit of competition (**hearts of controversy**).

110 ere: before.

112–115 I, as Aeneas . . . Caesar: Aeneas (ī-nē'əs), the mythological founder of Rome, carried his father, Anchises (ān-kī'sēz'), out of the burning city of Troy. Cassius says he did the same for Caesar when he became exhausted.

117 bend his body: bow.

122 His coward . . . fly: His lips turned pale.

123 bend: glance.

125–131 that tongue . . . alone: The same tongue that has led Romans to memorize his speeches cried out in the tone of a sick girl. I'm amazed that such a weak man should get ahead of the rest of the world and appear as the victor (**bear the palm**) all by himself. (A palm leaf was a symbol of victory in war.)

135–136 he doth . . . Colossus: Cassius compares Caesar to Colossus, the huge statue of the Greek god Apollo at Rhodes. The statue supposedly spanned the entrance to the harbor and was so high that ships could sail through the space between its legs. *What is Cassius's tone in these lines?*

Men at some time are masters of their fates.
 140 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?
 Write them together: yours is as fair a name.
 145 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,
 Upon what meat doth this our Caesar feed
 150 That he is grown so great? Age, thou are 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?
 When could they say (till now) that talked of Rome
 155 That her wide walls encompassed 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
 There was a Brutus once that would have brooked
 160 The eternal devil to keep his state in Rome
 As easily as a king.

Brutus. That you do love me I am nothing jealous.
 What you would work me to, I have some aim.
 How I have thought of this, and of these times,
 165 I shall recount hereafter. For this present,
 I would not (so with love I might entreat you)
 Be any further moved. What you have said
 I will consider; what you have to say
 I will with patience hear, and find a time
 170 Both meet to hear and answer such high things.
 Till then, my noble friend, chew upon this:
 Brutus had rather be a villager
 Than to repute himself a son of Rome
 Under these hard conditions as this time
 175 Is like to lay upon us.

Cassius. I am glad
 That my weak words have struck but thus much show
 Of fire from Brutus.

[Voices and music are heard approaching.]

Brutus. The games are done, and Caesar is returning.

Cassius. As they pass by, pluck Casca by the sleeve,
 180 And he will (after his sour fashion) tell you

140–141 The fault . . . underlings: It is not the stars that have determined our fate; we are inferiors through our own fault.

146 Conjure: call up spirits.

150 Age . . . shamed: It is a shameful time (Age) in which to be living.

159–161 There was . . . a king: Cassius is referring to an ancestor of Brutus who drove the last of the ancient kings from Rome.

162 am nothing jealous: am sure.

163 have some aim: can guess.

164–167 How I have . . . moved: I will tell you later (recount hereafter) my thoughts about this topic. For now, I ask you as a friend not to try to convince me further.
What does this request suggest about Brutus's character?

170 meet: appropriate.

COMMON CORE RL 4

Language Coach

Roots and Affixes A word's **root** may contain the word's core meaning. The Latin root *put*, as in *reputation* and *computer*, means “think over.” What do you think to *repute himself* means in line 173?

What hath proceeded worthy note today.

[*Reenter Caesar and his train of followers.*]

Brutus. I will do so. But look you, Cassius!
The angry spot doth glow on Caesar's brow,
And all the rest look like a chidden train.

185 Calpurnia's cheek is pale, and Cicero
Looks with such ferret and such fiery eyes
As we have seen him in the Capitol,
Being crossed in conference by some senators.

Cassius. Casca will tell us what the matter is.
[*Caesar looks at Cassius and turns to Antony.*]

190 **Caesar.** Antonius.

Antony. Caesar?

Caesar. Let me have men about me that are fat,
Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights.
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;

195 He thinks too much, such men are dangerous.

Antony. Fear him not, Caesar, he's not dangerous.
He is a noble Roman, and well given.

Caesar. Would he were fatter! But I fear him not.
Yet if my name were liable to fear,

200 I do not know the man I should avoid
So soon as that spare Cassius. He reads much,
He is a great observer, and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men. He loves no plays
As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music.

205 Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort
As if he mocked himself and scorned his spirit
That could be moved to smile at anything.
Such men as he be never at heart's ease
Whiles they behold a greater than themselves,

210 And therefore are they very dangerous.
I rather tell thee what is to be feared
Than what I fear, for always I am Caesar.
Come on my right hand, for this ear is deaf,
And tell me truly what thou think'st of him. **C**

[*Trumpets sound. Exeunt Caesar and all his train except Casca, who stays behind.*]

215 **Casca.** You pulled me by the cloak. Would you speak with me?

Brutus. Ay, Casca. Tell us what hath chanced today
That Caesar looks so sad.

Casca. Why, you were with him, were you not?

181 worthy note: worthy of notice.

184 chidden train: a group of followers who have been scolded.

185–188 Cicero was a highly respected senator. Brutus says he has the angry look of a **ferret** (a fierce little animal), the look he gets when other senators disagree with him.

190–214 Brutus and Cassius take Casca aside. The conversation Caesar has with Antony is not heard by any of the other characters around them.

197 Antony says that Cassius, despite his appearance, is a supporter of Caesar.

202–203 he looks . . . deeds of men: He sees hidden motives in men's actions.

C BLANK VERSE

Reread lines 208–214 aloud, tapping out the stressed syllables with your finger. Which line in this passage varies from strict iambic pentameter?

216 hath chanced: has happened.

Brutus. I should not then ask Casca what had chanced.

220 **Casca.** Why, there was a crown offered him; and
being offered him, he put it by with the back of his
hand, thus. And then the people fell a-shouting.

Brutus. What was the second noise for?

Casca. Why, for that too.

225 **Cassius.** They shouted thrice. What was the last cry for?

Casca. Why, for that too.

Brutus. Was the crown offered him thrice?

Casca. Ay, marry, was't! and he put it by thrice, every time
gentler than other; and at every putting-by mine honest
230 neighbors shouted.

Cassius. Who offered him the crown?

Casca. Why, Antony.

Brutus. Tell us the manner of it, gentle Casca.

Casca. I can as well be hanged as tell the manner of it. It was
235 mere foolery; I did not mark it. I saw Mark Antony offer him a
crown—yet 'twas not a crown neither, 'twas one of these
coronets—and, as I told you, he put it by once. But for all that,
to my thinking, he would fain have had it. Then he offered it to
him again; then he put it by again; but to my thinking, he was
240 very loath to lay his fingers off it. And then he offered it the
third time. He put it the third time by; and still as he refused it,
the rabblement hooted, and clapped their chapped hands, and
threw up their sweaty nightcaps, and uttered such a deal of
stinking breath because Caesar refused the crown that it had,
245 almost, choked Caesar; for he swooned and fell down at it.
And for mine own part, I durst not laugh, for fear of opening
my lips and receiving the bad air.

Cassius. But soft, I pray you. What, did Caesar swoon?

Casca. He fell down in the market place and foamed at mouth
250 and was speechless.

Brutus. 'Tis very like. He hath the falling sickness.

Cassius. No, Caesar hath not it; but you, and I,
And honest Casca, we have the falling sickness.

Casca. I know not what you mean by that, but I am sure Caesar
255 fell down. If the tag-rag people did not clap him and hiss him,
according as he pleased and displeased them, as they use to do
the players in the theater, I am no true man.

Brutus. What said he when he came unto himself?

221 **put it by:** pushed it aside.

228 **Ay, marry, was't:** Yes, indeed, it was. *Marry* was a mild oath used in Shakespeare's time (but not in ancient Rome). The word means "by the Virgin Mary."

237 **coronets:** small crowns.

238 **fain:** gladly.

240 **loath:** reluctant.

242 **rabblement:** unruly crowd.

245 **swooned:** fainted.

248 **soft:** Wait a moment.

251 **falling sickness:** epilepsy.

252–253 Cassius's pun on the term **falling sickness** suggests that they have fallen low under Caesar's rule.

Casca. Marry, before he fell down, when he perceived the
260 common herd was glad he refused the crown, he plucked me ope
his doublet and offered them his throat to cut. An I had been a
man of any occupation, if I would not have taken him at a word
I would I might go to hell among the rogues. And so he fell.
When he came to himself again, he said, if he had done or said
265 anything amiss, he desired their worships to think it was his
infirmity. Three or four wenches where I stood cried, “Alas,
good soul!” and forgave him with all their hearts. But there’s no
heed to be taken of them. If Caesar had stabbed their mothers,
they would have done no less. **D**

270 **Brutus.** And after that, he came thus sad away?

Casca. Ay.

Cassius. Did Cicero say anything?

Casca. Ay, he spoke Greek.

Cassius. To what effect?

275 **Casca.** Nay, an I tell you that, I’ll ne’er look you i’ the face again.
But those that understood him smiled at one another and shook
their heads; but for mine own part, it was Greek to me. I could
tell you more news, too. Marullus and Flavius, for pulling scarfs
off Caesar’s images, are put to silence. Fare you well. There was
280 more foolery yet, if I could remember it.

Cassius. Will you sup with me tonight, Casca?

Casca. No, I am promised forth.

Cassius. Will you dine with me tomorrow?

285 **Casca.** Ay, if I be alive, and your mind hold, and your
dinner worth eating.

Cassius. Good. I will expect you.

Casca. Do so. Farewell both.

[*Exit.*]

Brutus. What a blunt fellow is this grown to be!
He was quick mettle when he went to school.

290 **Cassius.** So is he now in execution
Of any bold or noble enterprise,
However he puts on this tardy form.
This rudeness is a sauce to his good wit,
Which gives men stomach to digest his words
295 With better appetite.

Brutus. And so it is. For this time I will leave you.
Tomorrow, if you please to speak with me,
I will come home to you; or if you will,
Come home to me, and I will wait for you.

260–261 plucked me . . . doublet: tore open his jacket.

261–263 An . . . rogues: If (An) I had been a worker with a proper tool, may I go to hell with the sinners (**rogues**) if I would not have done as he asked (**taken him at a word**).

265 amiss: wrong.

265–266 his infirmity: due to his sickness.

266 wenches: common women.

D BLANK VERSE

Notice that Shakespeare chose prose instead of blank verse for Casca’s speeches. Which of Casca’s **character traits** may have inspired this choice?

279 put to silence: silenced by removal from office, exile, or death. *What does this detail suggest about Caesar’s rule?*

282 I am promised forth: I have another appointment.

289 quick mettle: clever, intelligent.

290–295 So is . . . appetite: Casca can still be intelligent in carrying out an important project. He only pretends to be slow (**tardy**). His rude manner makes people more willing to accept (**digest**) the things he says.

Behind the Curtain

COMMON CORE RI.7

Set Design

In a theatrical production, the **set design** helps audiences imagine the time and place in which the action occurs. Some designers use scenery and props to create the illusion of specific rooms or outdoor locations.

Others try to suggest the essence of a play's setting through elements such as platforms, stairs, and columns. How do the features of these sets for *Julius Caesar* differ?

Set for the Shakespeare Theatre's 1993–1994 production



Set for a 2005 production at the Warf1 Theatre



Set for a 2005 production at the Belasco Theatre

300 **Cassius.** I will do so. Till then, think of the world.

[*Exit Brutus.*]

Well, Brutus, thou art noble; yet I see
Thy honorable mettle may be wrought
From that it is disposed. Therefore it is meet
That noble minds keep ever with their likes;

305 For who so firm that cannot be seduced?
Caesar doth bear me hard, but he loves Brutus.

If I were Brutus now and he were Cassius,
He should not humor me. I will this night,
In several hands, in at his windows throw,

310 As if they came from several citizens,
Writings, all tending to the great opinion
That Rome holds of his name; wherein obscurely
Caesar's ambition shall be glanced at.
And after this let Caesar seat him sure,

315 For we will shake him, or worse days endure. **E**

[*Exit.*]

Scene 3 *A street in Rome.*

It is the night of March 14. Amid violent thunder and lightning, a terrified Casca fears that the storm and other omens predict terrible events to come. Cassius interprets the storm as a sign that Caesar must be overthrown. Cassius and Casca agree that Caesar's rise to power must be stopped by any means. Cinna, another plotter, enters, and they discuss how to persuade Brutus to follow their plan.

[*Thunder and lightning. Enter, from opposite sides, Casca, with his sword drawn, and Cicero.*]

Cicero. Good even, Casca. Brought you Caesar home?
Why are you breathless? and why stare you so?

Casca. Are not you moved when all the sway of earth
Shakes like a thing unfirm? O Cicero,

5 I have seen tempests when the scolding winds
Have rived the knotty oaks, and I have seen
The ambitious ocean swell and rage and foam
To be exalted with the threat'ning clouds;
But never till tonight, never till now,

10 Did I go through a tempest dropping fire.
Either there is a civil strife in heaven,
Or else the world, too saucy with the gods,
Incenses them to send destruction.

Cicero. Why, saw you anything more wonderful?

15 **Casca.** A common slave—you know him well by sight—
Held up his left hand, which did flame and burn

302 Thy . . . wrought: Your honorable nature can be manipulated.

306 bear me hard: hold a grudge against me.

308 He should . . . me: I wouldn't let him influence me.

308–312 I will . . . his name: Cassius plans to leave messages at Brutus's home that appear to be from several people.

E SOLILOQUY

Why would Cassius not want Brutus to hear the thoughts he expresses in lines 301–315?

3 sway of earth: the natural order of things.

5 tempests: storms.

6 rived: torn.

8 To be exalted with: to raise themselves to the level of.

11–13 Either . . . destruction: Either there is a civil war in heaven, or the world has so insulted the gods that they want to destroy us.

14 saw . . . wonderful: Did you see anything else that was strange?

Like twenty torches joined; and yet his hand,
 Not sensible of fire, remained unscorched.
 Besides—I ha' not since put up my sword—
 20 Against the Capitol I met a lion,
 Who glared upon me, and went surly by
 Without annoying me. And there were drawn
 Upon a heap a hundred ghastly women,
 Transformed with their fear, who swore they saw
 25 Men, all in fire, walk up and down the streets.
 And yesterday the bird of night did sit
 Even at noonday upon the market place,
 Hooting and shrieking. When these prodigies
 Do so conjointly meet, let not men say,
 30 “These are their reasons, they are natural,”
 For I believe they are portentous things
 Unto the climate that they point upon. **F**
Cicero. Indeed it is a strange-disposed time.
 But men may construe things after their fashion,
 35 Clean from the purpose of the things themselves.
 Comes Caesar to the Capitol tomorrow?
Casca. He doth, for he did bid Antonius
 Send word to you he would be there tomorrow.
Cicero. Good night then, Casca. This disturbed sky
 40 Is not to walk in.
Casca. Farewell, Cicero.
 [*Exit Cicero.*]
 [*Enter Cassius.*]
Cassius. Who's there?
Casca. A Roman.
Cassius. Casca, by your voice.
Casca. Your ear is good. Cassius, what night is this!
Cassius. A very pleasing night to honest men.
Casca. Who ever knew the heavens menace so?
 45 **Cassius.** Those that have known the earth so full of faults.
 For my part, I have walked about the streets,
 Submitting me unto the perilous night,
 And, thus unbraced, Casca, as you see,
 Have bared my bosom to the thunder-stone;
 50 And when the cross blue lightning seemed to open
 The breast of heaven, I did present myself
 Even in the aim and very flash of it.

18 Not sensible of fire: not feeling the fire.

19–20 I ha' not . . . lion: I haven't put my sword back into its scabbard since I saw a lion at the Capitol building.

22–23 drawn . . . heap: huddled together.

23 ghastly: ghostly white.

26 bird of night: the owl, usually seen only at night.

28–32 When these . . . upon: When strange events (**prodigies**) like these happen at the same time (**conjointly meet**), no one should say there are natural explanations for them. I believe they are bad omens (**portentous things**) for the place where they happen.

33–35 Cicero agrees that the times are strange, but he says that people can misinterpret events.

F TRAGEDY

How does Casca's speech in lines 15–32 help build **suspense**?

41 Who's there?: Cassius probably has his sword out; with no light other than moonlight, it could be dangerous to come upon a stranger in the street.

46–52 Cassius brags that he offered himself to the dangerous night, with his coat open (**unbraced**), exposing his chest to the lightning. *Why might he do this?*

Casca. But wherefore did you so much tempt the heavens?
It is the part of men to fear and tremble
55 When the most mighty gods by tokens send
Such dreadful heralds to astonish us.

Cassius. You are dull, Casca, and those sparks of life
That should be in a Roman you do want,
Or else you use not. You look pale, and gaze,
60 And put on fear, and cast yourself in wonder,
To see the strange impatience of the heavens.
But if you would consider the true cause
Why all these fires, why all these gliding ghosts,
Why birds and beasts, from quality and kind;
65 Why old men fool and children calculate;
Why all these things change from their ordinance,
Their natures, and preformed faculties,
To monstrous quality, why, you shall find
That heaven hath infused them with these spirits
70 To make them instruments of fear and warning
Unto some monstrous state.
Now could I, Casca, name to thee a man
Most like this dreadful night
That thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars
75 As doth the lion in the Capitol;
A man no mightier than thyself or me
In personal action, yet prodigious grown
And fearful, as these strange eruptions are.

Casca. 'Tis Caesar that you mean. Is it not, Cassius?
80 **Cassius.** 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 governed with our mothers' spirits,
Our yoke and sufferance show us womanish.
85 **Casca.** Indeed, they say the senators tomorrow
Mean to establish Caesar as king,
And he shall wear his crown by sea and land
In every place save here in Italy.

Cassius. I know where I will wear this dagger then;
90 Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius.
Therein, ye gods, you make the weak most strong;
Therein, ye gods, you tyrants do defeat.
Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass,
Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron,
95 Can be retentive to the strength of spirit;
But life, being weary of these worldly bars,

54–56 It is . . . astonish us: Men are supposed to be frightened when the gods send dreadful signs (**tokens**) of what is to come.

58 want: lack.

62–71 Cassius insists that heaven has brought about such things as birds and animals that change their natures (**from quality and kind**) and children who predict the future (**calculate**)—all these beings that act unnaturally (**change from their ordinance / Their natures, and preformed faculties**). Heaven has done all this, he says, to warn the Romans of an evil condition that they should correct.

77 prodigious grown: become enormous and threatening.

80–84 Romans . . . womanish: Modern Romans have muscles (**thews**) and limbs like our ancestors, but we have the minds of our mothers, not our fathers. Our acceptance of servitude (**yoke and sufferance**) shows us to be like women, not like men. (In Shakespeare's time—and in ancient Rome—women were considered weak creatures.)

88 save: except.

89–90 I know . . . deliver Cassius: I will free myself from slavery (**bondage**) by killing myself (**wear this dagger**).

91 Therein: through suicide.

95 be retentive to: hold in.

Never lacks power to dismiss itself.
If I know this, know all the world besides,
That part of tyranny that I do bear
100 I can shake off at pleasure.

[*Thunder still.*]

Casca. So can I.
So every bondman in his own hand bears
The power to cancel his captivity.

Cassius. And why should Caesar be a tyrant then?
Poor man! I know he would not be a wolf
105 But that he sees the Romans are but sheep;
He were no lion, were not Romans hinds.
Those that with haste will make a mighty fire
Begin it with weak straws. What trash is Rome,
What rubbish and what offal, when it serves
110 For the base matter to illuminate
So vile a thing as Caesar! But, O grief,
Where hast thou led me? I, perhaps, speak this
Before a willing bondman. Then I know
My answer must be made. But I am armed,
115 And dangers are to me indifferent.

Casca. You speak to Casca, and to such a man
That is no fleering telltale. Hold, my hand.
Be factious for redress of all these griefs,
And I will set this foot of mine as far
120 As who goes farthest.

Cassius. There's a bargain made.
Now know you, Casca, I have moved already
Some certain of the noblest-minded Romans
To undergo with me an enterprise
Of honorable-dangerous consequence;
125 And I do know, by this they stay for me
In Pompey's Porch; for now, this fearful night,
There is no stir or walking in the streets,
And the complexion of the element
In favor's like the work we have in hand,
130 Most bloody, fiery, and most terrible.

[*Enter Cinna.*]

Casca. Stand close awhile, for here comes one in haste.

Cassius. 'Tis Cinna. I do know him by his gait.
He is a friend. Cinna, where haste you so?

Cinna. To find out you. Who's that? Metellus Cimber?

89–100 *What impression does Cassius convey of himself in this speech?*

103–111 Cassius says the only reason for Caesar's strength is the weakness of the Romans, who are female deer (**hinds**) and trash (**offal**) for allowing such a person as Caesar to come to power.

111–114 Cassius says that he will have to pay the penalty for his words if Casca is a submissive slave (**willing bondsman**). *Why does Cassius suggest that he may have spoken too freely to Casca?*

117 fleering telltale: sneering tattletale.

118–120 Be factious . . . farthest: Form a group, or faction, to correct (**redress**) these wrongs, and I will go as far as any other man.

125–126 by this . . . Porch: Right now, they wait (**stay**) for me at the entrance to the theater Pompey built.

128–130 the complexion . . . terrible: The sky (**element**) looks like the work we have ahead of us—bloody, full of fire, and terrible.

132 gait: manner of walking.

135 **Cassius.** No, it is Casca, one incorporate
To our attempts. Am I not stayed for, Cinna?

Cinna. I am glad on't. What a fearful night is this!
There's two or three of us have seen strange sights.

Cassius. Am I not stayed for? Tell me.

Cinna. Yes, you are.

140 O Cassius, if you could
But win the noble Brutus to our party—

Cassius. Be you content. Good Cinna, take this paper
And look you lay it in the praetor's chair,
Where Brutus may but find it, and throw this

145 In at his window. Set this up with wax
Upon old Brutus' statue. All this done,
Repair to Pompey's Porch, where you shall find us.
Is Decius Brutus and Trebonius there?

Cinna. All but Metellus Cimber, and he's gone
150 To seek you at your house. Well, I will hie
And so bestow these papers as you bade me.

Cassius. That done, repair to Pompey's Theater.

[*Exit Cinna.*]

Come, Casca, you and I will yet ere day
See Brutus at his house. Three parts of him

155 Is ours already, and the man entire
Upon the next encounter yields him ours.

Casca. O, he sits high in all the people's hearts,
And that which would appear offense in us,
His countenance, like richest alchemy,

160 Will change to virtue and to worthiness.

Cassius. Him and his worth and our great need of him
You have right well conceited. Let us go,
For it is after midnight, and ere day
We will awake him and be sure of him.

[*Exeunt.*]

135–136 it is . . . stayed for: This is Casca, who is now part of our plan (**incorporate / To our attempts**). Are they waiting for me?

142–146 Cassius tells Cinna to place letters for Brutus at several locations, including the seat of the praetor, a position held by Brutus.

150–151 I will . . . bade me: I'll hurry (**hie**) to place (**bestow**) these papers as you instructed me.

154–156 Three parts . . . yields him ours: We've already won over three parts of Brutus. The next time we meet him, he will be ours completely.

157–160 he sits . . . worthiness: The people love Brutus. What would seem offensive if we did it will, like magic (**alchemy**), become good and worthy because of his involvement.

162 conceited: judged.

Comprehension

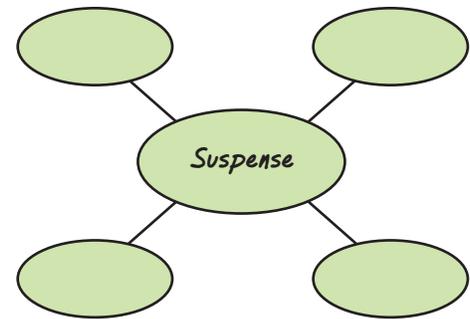
- 1. Recall** Why do the tribunes Flavius and Marullus become angry with the commoners at the beginning of the play?
- 2. Recall** How does Caesar respond to the Soothsayer's warning?
- 3. Recall** According to Casca, what happened at the games when Mark Antony offered Caesar a crown?
- 4. Clarify** Why does Cassius send letters to Brutus that appear to have been written by other people?

COMMON CORE

RL 3 Analyze how complex characters with conflicting motivations develop, interact with others, and advance the plot or develop the theme. **RL 5** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text and order events within it create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Text Analysis

- 5. Examine Blank Verse** Identify which characters speak in blank verse and which ones speak in prose in Act One, Scene 1. What can you tell about the characters in this scene based on whether their dialogue is in verse or prose?
- 6. Analyze Suspense** In Scene 3, Shakespeare creates excitement about what will happen next in the play. Use a graphic organizer like the one shown to identify details in the scene that help build suspense.
- 7. Reading Shakespearean Drama** Review the chart you created as you read, and compare the personalities of Brutus and Cassius. In your opinion, which character would make a better leader? Give reasons for your answer.
- 8. Draw Conclusions About Motivation** In Scenes 2 and 3, Cassius explains why he is opposed to Caesar. Does Cassius seem motivated more by personal rivalry or by concern for the future of Rome? Cite details to support your conclusion.
- 9. Make Judgments** Reread Casca's description of Caesar's behavior at the games in lines 215–287 of Scene 2. Do Caesar's words and actions suggest that he is becoming a tyrant? Support your answer with evidence from the play.



Text Criticism

- 10. Historical Context** When Shakespeare wrote *Julius Caesar*, Europe did not have any democratically elected leaders; most nations were governed by powerful monarchs such as England's Queen Elizabeth I. How might a modern audience's reaction to the events in Act One differ from the reaction of an Elizabethan audience? Discuss specific examples in your response.