

# Act Two

## Scene 1 Brutus' orchard in Rome.

It is a few hours before dawn on March 15—the *ides of March*. Brutus, unable to sleep, walks in his garden. He faces a crucial decision: accept Caesar's growing power or kill Caesar and thus end his rule. While considering the problem, Brutus receives an anonymous letter (from Cassius) suggesting that Brutus take action against Caesar. Shortly after, Cassius and the conspirators visit Brutus, and they all agree to assassinate Caesar that day. After the conspirators leave, Brutus' wife, Portia, asks him to confide what has been troubling him. **A**

**Brutus.** What, Lucius, ho!

I cannot by the progress of the stars

Give guess how near to day. Lucius, I say!

I would it were my fault to sleep so soundly.

5 When, Lucius, when? Awake, I say! What, Lucius!

[Enter Lucius from the house.]

**Lucius.** Called you, my lord?

**Brutus.** Get me a taper in my study, Lucius.

When it is lighted, come and call me here.

**Lucius.** I will, my lord.

[Exit.]

[Brutus returns to his brooding.]

10 **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 crowned.  
How that might change his nature, there's the question.

It is the bright day that brings forth the adder,  
15 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  
Remorse from power. And to speak truth of Caesar,

20 I have not known when his affections swayed  
More than his reason. But 'tis a common proof  
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,  
Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;  
But when he once attains the upmost round,

25 He then unto the ladder turns his back,  
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees  
By which he did ascend. So Caesar may.

### COMMON CORE RL.4

#### **A** WORD ORIGINS

The word *assassin* is derived from an Arabic word for fighters during the Crusades who tried to kill leaders of the European armies. Reread the introduction to this scene. Given what you know of the etymology of *assassin*, why does it apply to this situation?

**4 I would . . . soundly:** I wish I could sleep so soundly.

**7 taper:** candle.

**10–12 It must . . . general:** Caesar would need to be killed; and I have no personal reason to attack him, only concern for the general welfare.

**15 craves:** demands.

**19 Remorse:** compassion.

**20 affections swayed:** passions ruled.

**21–27** Brutus says that for an ambitious person, humility (**lowliness**) is like a ladder that only remains useful until the climber reaches the top rung (**round**).  
*How does this metaphor relate to the argument for overthrowing Caesar?*

Brutus and Portia in the Globe Theatre's 1999 production



Then lest he may, prevent. And since the quarrel  
Will bear no color for the thing he is,  
30 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, hatched, would as his kind grow mischievous,  
And kill him in the shell.

[*Reenter Lucius with a letter.*]

35 **Lucius.** The taper burneth in your closet, sir.  
Searching the window for a flint, I found  
This paper, thus sealed up, and I am sure  
It did not lie there when I went to bed.

[*Gives him the letter.*]

**Brutus.** Get you to bed again; it is not day.

40 Is not tomorrow, boy, the ides of March?

**Lucius.** I know not, sir.

**Brutus.** Look in the calendar and bring me word.

**Lucius.** I will, sir.

[*Exit.*]

**Brutus.** The exhalations, whizzing in the air,

45 Give so much light that I may read by them.

[*Opens the letter and reads.*]

“Brutus, thou sleep'st. Awake, and see thyself!

Shall Rome, etc. Speak, strike, redress!”

“Brutus, thou sleep'st. Awake!”

Such instigations have been often dropped

50 Where I have took them up.

“Shall Rome, etc.” Thus must I piece it out:

Shall Rome stand under one man's awe? What, Rome?

My ancestors did from the streets of Rome

The Tarquin drive when he was called a king.

55 “Speak, strike, redress!” Am I entreated

To speak and strike? O Rome, I make thee promise,

If the redress will follow, thou receivest

Thy full petition at the hand of Brutus!

[*Reenter Lucius.*]

**Lucius.** Sir, March is wasted fifteen days.

[*Knocking within.*]

60 **Brutus.** 'Tis good. Go to the gate, somebody knocks.

[*Exit Lucius.*]

Since Cassius first did whet me against Caesar,  
I have not slept.

**28–34 lest . . . shell:** Rather than let Caesar do that, I should take steps to prevent it. Since our case against Caesar is weak (**Will bear no color**) at present, we must shape (**Fashion**) our argument against him in the following way: We know what kind of person Caesar is now. If his true nature were allowed to develop (**augmented**), it would reach terrible extremes. So we must treat him as a serpent's egg and kill him before he hatches.

**35 closet:** private room.

**44 exhalations:** meteors.

**47 redress:** right a wrong. The letter is meant to suggest certain things to Brutus, without actually spelling them out.

**49 instigations:** suggestions.

**51 Thus . . . out:** I must guess the rest of the sentence.

**52 Shall . . . awe:** Should Rome have such fear and respect for just one man?

**53–54 My ancestors . . . king:** Brutus refers to an ancestor who drove out Rome's last king. After that, rule by the Senate was established.

**56–58 I make . . . Brutus:** I promise you, Rome, if a remedy for our troubles can follow from my action, you will get what you need from Brutus.

**61 whet me:** sharpen my appetite.

Between the acting of a dreadful thing  
And the first motion, all the interim is  
65 Like a phantasma or a hideous dream.  
The genius and the mortal instruments  
Are then in council, and the state of man,  
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then  
The nature of an insurrection.

[*Reenter* Lucius.]

70 **Lucius.** Sir, 'tis your brother Cassius at the door,  
Who doth desire to see you.

**Brutus.** Is he alone?

**Lucius.** No, sir, there are more with him.

**Brutus.** Do you know them?

**Lucius.** No, sir. Their hats are plucked about their ears  
And half their faces buried in their cloaks,  
75 That by no means I may discover them  
By any mark of favor.

**Brutus.** Let 'em enter.

[*Exit* Lucius.]

They are the faction. O conspiracy,  
Sham'st thou to show thy dang'rous brow by night,  
When evils are most free? O, then by day  
80 Where wilt thou find a cavern dark enough  
To mask thy monstrous visage? Seek none,  
conspiracy, hide it in smiles and affability!  
For if thou path, thy native semblance on,  
No Erebus itself were dim enough  
85 To hide thee from prevention. **B**

[*Enter the conspirators, Cassius, Casca, Decius, Cinna, Metellus  
Cimber, and Trebonius.*]

**Cassius.** I think we are too bold upon your rest.  
Good morrow, Brutus. Do we trouble you?

**Brutus.** I have been up this hour, awake all night.  
Know I these men that come along with you?

90 **Cassius.** Yes, every man of them; and no man here  
But honors you; and every one doth wish  
You had but that opinion of yourself  
Which every noble Roman bears of you.  
This is Trebonius.

**Brutus.** He is welcome hither.

95 **Cassius.** This, Decius Brutus.

**Brutus.** He is welcome too.

**63–69 Between . . . insurrection:** The time between the earliest thought of a terrible act and the actual performance of it is a nightmare. The soul (**genius**) and body (**mortal instruments**) debate the subject, while the man himself feels like a kingdom undergoing a civil war.

**70 brother:** Cassius, the husband of Brutus' sister, is his brother-in-law.

**75–76 by no . . . favor:** There is no way I can tell who they are.

**77–85 O conspiracy . . . prevention:** If these plotters are afraid to be seen at night, how will they keep these terrible plans from showing on their faces during the day? They must smile and show friendliness (**affability**). If they go out showing their true natures (**native semblance**), even the dark gateway to hell (**Erebus** *ēr'ə-bēs*) could not hide them.

### **B** SOLILOQUY

Reread lines 61–69 and 77–85. What feelings does Brutus reveal in these two soliloquies?

**86 I think . . . rest:** I think we may have come too early.

**COMMON CORE** RL 4

### Language Coach

**Multiple Meanings** *But*, which usually means *except*, has other meanings, especially in older writings. In lines 90–91, *but* creates a double negative (with “no man”), which, according to the laws of mathematics and English grammar, results in a positive. Rephrase these lines in positive terms.



**Cassius.** This, Casca; this, Cinna; and this, Metellus Cimber.

**Brutus.** They are all welcome.

What watchful cares do interpose themselves  
Betwixt your eyes and night?

100 **Cassius.** Shall I entreat a word?

[*They whisper.*]

**Decius.** Here lies the east. Doth not the day break here?

**Casca.** No.

**Cinna.** O, pardon, sir, it doth; and yon grey lines  
That fret the clouds are messengers of day.

105 **Casca.** You shall confess that you are both deceived.

Here, as I point my sword, the sun arises,  
Which is a great way growing on the south,  
Weighing the youthful season of the year.  
Some two months hence, up higher toward the north

110 He first presents his fire; and the high east  
Stands as the Capitol, directly here.

[*Brutus and Cassius rejoin the others.*]

**Brutus.** Give me your hands all over, one by one.

**Cassius.** And let us swear our resolution.

**Brutus.** No, not on oath. If not the face of men,

115 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.

So let high-sighted tyranny range on  
Till each man drop by lottery. But if these

120 (As I am sure they do) bear fire enough  
To kindle cowards and to steel with valor  
The melting spirits of women, then, countrymen,  
What need we any spur but our own cause

To prick us to redress? what other bond

125 Than secret Romans that have spoke the word

And will not palter? and what other oath

Than honesty to honesty engaged  
That this shall be, or we will fall for it?

Swear priests and cowards and men cautelous,

130 Old feeble carrions and such suffering souls

That welcome wrongs; unto bad causes swear  
Such creatures as men doubt; but do not stain

The even virtue of our enterprise,

Nor the insuppressive mettle of our spirits,

135 To think that or our cause or our performance

Did need an oath when every drop of blood

**98–99 What watchful . . . night:** What troubles keep you awake at night?

**100 Shall I entreat a word?:** Cassius asks Brutus to step aside and talk privately with him. While they talk, the others chatter about the sky (lines 101–111), pretending to be not at all interested in what Cassius and Brutus are discussing.

**104 fret:** stripe.

**107–108 Which is . . . year:** from a southerly direction, since it is still early in the year.

**114–119 If not . . . lottery:** We do not need to swear our loyalty to one another. The sadness of people's faces, our own suffering, and the awful time we live in—if these aren't strong enough to hold us together, then let us all go back to bed. In that case, let tyranny live, while we die off, one at a time, by chance (**by lottery**).

**126 palter:** go back on our word.

**129–131 Swear priests . . . wrongs:** Swearing oaths is for priests, crafty men, old men on the verge of death, and wretches who welcome injustice.

**134 insuppressive mettle:** unconquerable courage.

**135 or our cause . . . performance:** either our cause or our actions.

That every Roman bears, and nobly bears,  
Is guilty of a several bastardy  
If he do break the smallest particle  
140 Of any promise that hath passed from him.

**Cassius.** But what of Cicero? Shall we sound him?  
I think he will stand very strong with us.

**Casca.** Let us not leave him out.

**Cinna.** No, by no means.

**Metellus.** O, let us have him! for his silver hairs  
145 Will purchase us a good opinion  
And buy men's voices to commend our deeds.  
It shall be said his judgment ruled our hands;  
Our youths and wildness shall no whit appear,  
But all be buried in his gravity.

150 **Brutus.** O, name him not! Let us not break with him,  
For he will never follow anything  
That other men begin.

**Cassius.** Then leave him out.

**Casca.** Indeed he is not fit. **C**

**Decius.** Shall no man else be touched but only Caesar?

155 **Cassius.** Decius, well urged. I think it is not meet  
Mark Antony, so well beloved of Caesar,  
Should outlive Caesar. We shall find of him  
A shrewd contriver; and you know, his means,  
If he improve them, may well stretch so far  
160 As to annoy us all; which to prevent,  
Let Antony and Caesar fall together.

**Brutus.** Our course will seem too bloody, Caius Cassius,  
To cut the head off and then hack the limbs,  
Like wrath in death and envy afterwards;  
165 For Antony is but a limb of Caesar.  
Let us be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius.  
We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar,  
And in the spirit of men there is no blood.  
O that we then could come by Caesar's spirit  
170 And not dismember Caesar! But, alas,  
Caesar must bleed for it! And, gentle friends,  
Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully;  
Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods,  
Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds.  
175 And let our hearts, as subtle masters do,  
Stir up their servants to an act of rage  
And after seem to chide 'em. This shall make

**138 guilty . . . bastardy:** not truly Roman.

**141 sound him:** see what he thinks of the matter.

**144–146 his silver . . . deeds:** his old age will win us popular support.

### **C** TRAGEDY

The development of the conspiracy is an important part of the **plot** of *Julius Caesar*. Who seems to be in charge in lines 112–153, Brutus or Cassius? Cite details to support your answer.

**169–170** Brutus wishes they could remove Caesar's soul without having to destroy his body.

**174 Not . . . hounds:** Let's not chop him up like the body of an animal to be fed to dogs.

Our purpose necessary, and not envious;  
Which so appearing to the common eyes,  
180 We shall be called purgers, not murderers.  
And for Mark Antony, think not of him;  
For he can do no more than Caesar's arm  
When Caesar's head is off.

**Cassius.** Yet I fear him,  
For in the ingrafted love he bears to Caesar—

185 **Brutus.** Alas, good Cassius, do not think of him!  
If he love Caesar, all that he can do  
Is to himself—take thought, and die for Caesar.  
And that were much he should; for he is given  
To sports, to wildness, and much company.

190 **Trebonius.** There is no fear in him. Let him not die,  
For he will live and laugh at this hereafter.

[*Clock strikes.*]

**Brutus.** Peace! Count the clock.

**Cassius.** The clock hath stricken three.

**Trebonius.** 'Tis time to part.

**Cassius.** But it is doubtful yet  
Whether Caesar will come forth today or no;  
195 For he is superstitious grown of late,  
Quite from the main opinion he held once  
Of fantasy, of dreams, and ceremonies.  
It may be these apparent prodigies,  
The unaccustomed terror of this night,  
200 And the persuasion of his augurers  
May hold him from the Capitol today.

**Decius.** Never fear that. If he be so resolved,  
I can o'ersway him; for he loves to hear  
That unicorns may be betrayed with trees  
205 And bears with glasses, elephants with holes,  
Lions with toils, and men with flatterers;  
But when I tell him he hates flatterers,  
He says he does, being then most flattered.  
Let me work,

210 For I can give his humor the true bent,  
And I will bring him to the Capitol.

**Cassius.** Nay, we will all of us be there to fetch him.

**Brutus.** By the eighth hour. Is that the uttermost?

**Cinna.** Be that the uttermost, and fail not then.

**175–180 let our hearts . . . murderers:** Let our hearts treat our hands (**servants**) the way sly masters do; we will let our hands do our dirty work, then later scold (**chide**) them for what they have done. This attitude will make us seem to the public (**common eyes**) to be healers (**purgers**) instead of murderers.

**184 ingrafted:** deep-rooted.

**188–189 And that . . . company:** And that is unlikely, for he loves sports, wild times, and socializing.

**190 There is no fear in him:** We have nothing to fear from Antony.

**193–201 But it is . . . Capitol today:** We don't know if Caesar will leave his house (**come forth**) today. Lately he has become superstitious, in contrast to the strong views (**main opinion**) he once had of such beliefs. The cause may be these strange events and the arguments of his fortunetellers (**augurers**). These things may keep him from coming to the Capitol today.

**203 o'ersway him:** change his mind.

**204–208** Decius tells of ways to trap shrewd animals. He says that Caesar, who loves to hear such stories, can also be trapped—by flattery.

**210 I can give . . . true bent:** I can get him into the right mood.

**213 By the . . . uttermost:** By eight o'clock. Do we all agree that eight is the latest we will be there?

215 **Metellus.** Caius Ligarius doth bear Caesar hard,  
 Who rated him for speaking well of Pompey.  
 I wonder none of you have thought of him.

**Brutus.** Now, good Metellus, go along by him.  
 He loves me well, and I have given him reasons.

220 Send him but hither, and I'll fashion him.

**Cassius.** The morning comes upon's. We'll leave you, Brutus.  
 And, friends, disperse yourselves; but all remember  
 What you have said and show yourselves true Romans.

**Brutus.** Good gentlemen, look fresh and merrily.

225 Let not our looks put on our purposes,  
 But bear it as our Roman actors do,  
 With untired spirits and formal constancy.  
 And so good morrow to you every one.

[*Exeunt all but Brutus.*]

Boy! Lucius! Fast asleep? It is no matter.  
 230 Enjoy the honey-heavy dew of slumber.  
 Thou hast no figures nor no fantasies  
 Which busy care draws in the brains of men;  
 Therefore thou sleep'st so sound.

[*Enter Portia, Brutus' wife.*]

**Portia.** Brutus, my lord!

**Brutus.** Portia! What mean you? Wherefore rise you now?

235 It is not for your health thus to commit  
 Your weak condition to the raw cold morning.

**Portia.** Nor for yours neither. Y'have ungently, Brutus,  
 Stole from my bed. And yesternight at supper  
 You suddenly arose and walked about,

240 Musing and sighing with your arms across;  
 And when I asked you what the matter was,  
 You stared upon me with ungentle looks.  
 I urged you further, then you scratched your head  
 And too impatiently stamped with your foot.

245 Yet I insisted, yet you answered not,  
 But with an angry wafture of your hand  
 Gave sign for me to leave you. So I did,  
 Fearing to strengthen that impatience  
 Which seemed too much enkindled, and withal

250 Hoping it was but an effect of humor,  
 Which sometime hath his hour with every man.  
 It will not let you eat nor talk nor sleep,  
 And could it work so much upon your shape  
 As it hath much prevailed on your condition,

**215–217 Caius . . . of him:** Caius Ligarius has a grudge against Caesar, who criticized him for supporting Pompey. I don't know why you haven't asked him to join our plot.

**220 fashion:** persuade.

**225 Let not . . . purposes:** Let's not let our appearances give away (**put on**) what we are planning to do.

**233** *As you read the conversation between Brutus and his wife, think about the kind of relationship they have.*

**COMMON CORE RL 4**

**Language Coach**

**Multiple Meanings** The word *stole* is a form of the verb *steal*. *Steal* can mean "to commit theft" or "to move secretly." What does it mean in line 238? How would we form this verb today? (*You have ungently, Brutus, \_\_\_\_ from my bed.*)

**245 Yet:** still.

**246 wafture:** waving.

**249 withal:** also.

**250 humor:** mood.



255 I should not know you Brutus. Dear my lord,  
Make me acquainted with your cause of grief.

**Brutus.** I am not well in health, and that is all.

**Portia.** Brutus is wise and, were he not in health,  
He would embrace the means to come by it.

260 **Brutus.** Why, so I do. Good Portia, go to bed.

**Portia.** Is Brutus sick, and is it physical  
To walk unbraced and suck up the humors  
Of the dank morning? What, is Brutus sick,  
And will he steal out of his wholesome bed

265 To dare the vile contagion of the night,  
And tempt the rheumy and unpurgéd air,  
To add unto his sickness? No, my Brutus.  
You have some sick offense within your mind,  
Which by the right and virtue of my place

270 I ought to know of; and upon my knees  
I charm you, by my once commended beauty,  
By all your vows of love, and that great vow  
Which did incorporate and make us one,  
That you unfold to me, yourself, your half,

275 Why you are heavy, and what men tonight  
Have had resort to you; for here have been  
Some six or seven, who did hide their faces  
Even from darkness.

**Brutus.** Kneel not, gentle Portia.

**Portia.** I should not need if you were gentle Brutus.

280 Within the bond of marriage, tell me, Brutus,  
Is it excepted I should know no secrets  
That appertain to you? Am I yourself  
But, as it were, in sort or limitation?  
To keep with you at meals, comfort your bed,

285 And talk to you sometimes? Dwell I but in the suburbs  
Of your good pleasure? If it be no more,  
Portia is Brutus' harlot, not his wife.

**Brutus.** You are my true and honorable wife,  
As dear to me as are the ruddy drops

290 That visit my sad heart.

**Portia.** If this were true, then should I know this secret.

I grant I am a woman, but withal  
A woman that Lord Brutus took to wife.

I grant that I am a woman, but withal

295 A woman well reputed, Cato's daughter.  
Think you I am no stronger than my sex,  
Being so fathered and so husbanded?

**253–255 And could . . . you Brutus:** If a mood like that could change your appearance (**shape**) the way it has changed your personality (**condition**), I would not recognize you.

**257** *Why do you think Brutus lies to Portia?*

**261–267 Is Brutus . . . sickness:** Do you expect me to believe that you're sick? Is it healthy to walk without a coat (**unbraced**) and breathe the air of a damp morning or the unhealthy night air that is not yet cleansed (**unpurged**) by the sun?

**268–270 You have . . . know of:** You have a sickness of the mind; as your wife, I have a right to know what it is.

**275 heavy:** sad.

**281 excepted:** made an exception that.

**283 in sort or limitation:** only in part.

**289–290 the ruddy . . . heart:** my blood.

## Behind the Curtain

COMMON CORE RI.7

### Casting

When **casting** roles for a Shakespearean play, directors don't necessarily try to match the race or even the gender of a character. (Originally, all of the roles were played by males.) However, physical traits are still important; a plump actor would generally not be chosen to play the "lean and hungry" Cassius. These photographs show three pairs of actors who have played Brutus and Portia. What traits set them apart? Which actors would you have chosen for the roles? Explain your response.

Brutus and Portia in the Shakespeare Theatre's 1993–1994 production



Brutus and Portia in the New York Shakespeare Festival's 1988 production



Brutus and Portia in the Globe Theatre's 1999 production



Tell me your counsels; I will not disclose 'em.  
I have made strong proof of my constancy,  
300 Giving myself a voluntary wound  
Here, in the thigh. Can I bear that with patience,  
And not my husband's secrets?

**Brutus.** O ye gods,  
Render me worthy of this noble wife!

[*Knocking within.*]

Hark, hark! one knocks. Portia, go in awhile,  
305 And by-and-by thy bosom shall partake  
The secrets of my heart.  
All my engagements I will construe to thee,  
All the charactery of my sad brows.  
Leave me with haste.

[*Exit Portia.*]

Lucius, who's that knocks?

[*Reenter Lucius with Caius Ligarius.*]

310 **Lucius.** Here is a sick man that would speak with you.

**Brutus.** Caius Ligarius, that Metellus spake of.  
Boy, stand aside. Caius Ligarius, how?

**Caius.** Vouchsafe good morrow from a feeble tongue.

**Brutus.** O, what a time have you chose out, brave Caius,  
315 To wear a kerchief! Would you were not sick!

**Caius.** I am not sick if Brutus have in hand  
Any exploit worthy the name of honor.

**Brutus.** Such an exploit have I in hand, Ligarius,  
Had you a healthful ear to hear of it.

320 **Caius.** By all the gods that Romans bow before,  
I here discard my sickness! Soul of Rome!

Brave son, derived from honorable loins!  
Thou like an exorcist has conjured up  
My mortified spirit. Now bid me run,

325 And I will strive with things impossible;  
Yea, get the better of them. What's to do?

**Brutus.** A piece of work that will make sick men whole.

**Caius.** But are not some whole that we must make sick?

**Brutus.** That must we also. What it is, my Caius,  
330 I shall unfold to thee as we are going  
To whom it must be done.

**Caius.** Set on your foot,  
And with a heart new-fired I follow you,  
To do I know not what; but it sufficeth

**296–302 Think you . . . secrets:** How can you consider me merely a typical woman when I am the daughter of Cato (a highly respected Roman) and the wife of Brutus? So tell me your secret. I have proven my strength by wounding myself here in the thigh. If I can put up with that pain, I can certainly deal with my husband's secrets.

**307–308 All may . . . brows:** I will explain all my dealings and the reason for my sad looks.

**313 Vouchsafe . . . tongue:** Accept a good morning from a sick man.

**315 kerchief:** a covering to protect the head during sickness.

**317 exploit:** deed.

**322 derived . . . loins:** descended from noble Romans.

**323 exorcist:** someone who can call up spirits.

**328 What is Caius hinting at?**

**331 Set on your foot:** Lead the way.

**333 it sufficeth:** It is enough.

That Brutus leads me on.

[*Thunder.*]

**Brutus.** Follow me then.

[*Exeunt.*]

## **Scene 2** *Caesar's house in Rome.*

*It is now past dawn on March 15. Like everyone else in Rome, Caesar and his wife have slept badly because of the storm. There is still some lightning and thunder. Caesar prepares to go to the Capitol; but because of the many threatening omens, his wife, Calpurnia, insists that he stay home. Caesar agrees, for Calpurnia's sake. He changes his mind, however, when Decius, one of the conspirators, persuades him that he must not seem swayed by his wife's superstitions. Although Caesar doesn't know it, the other conspirators are on their way to his house to make sure he does not decide to stay at home.*

[*Enter Caesar in his nightgown.*]

**Caesar.** Nor heaven nor earth have been at peace tonight.  
Thrice hath Calpurnia in her sleep cried out  
“Help, ho! They murder Caesar!” Who's within?

[*Enter a Servant.*]

**Servant.** My lord?

5 **Caesar.** Go bid the priests do present sacrifice,  
And bring me their opinions of success.

**Servant.** I will, my lord.

[*Exit.*]

[*Enter Caesar's wife, Calpurnia, alarmed.*]

**Calpurnia.** What mean you, Caesar? Think you to walk forth?  
You shall not stir out of your house today.

10 **Caesar.** Caesar shall forth. The things that threatened me  
Ne'er looked but on my back. When they shall see  
The face of Caesar, they are vanished.

**Calpurnia.** Caesar, I never stood on ceremonies,  
Yet now they fright me. There is one within,  
15 Besides the things that we have heard and seen,  
Recounts most horrid sights seen by the watch.  
A lioness hath whelped in the streets,  
And graves have yawned and yielded up their dead.  
Fierce fiery warriors fought upon the clouds  
20 In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,  
Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol.  
The noise of battle hurtled in the air,  
Horses did neigh, and dying men did groan,  
And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets.

**5–6 Go bid . . . success:** Roman priests would kill an animal as a sacrifice to the gods. Then they would cut the animal open and examine its internal organs for signs of future events.

**10–12 The things . . . vanished:** When I turn to face the things that threaten me, they disappear.

**13–26 Caesar, I never . . . fear them:** Calpurnia tells Caesar that she has never before believed in omens (**stood on ceremonies**), but now she is frightened. She describes the terrible things she has heard of from the men who were on guard during the night.

25 O Caesar, these things are beyond all use,  
And I do fear them!

**Caesar.** What can be avoided  
Whose end is purposed by the mighty gods?  
Yet Caesar shall go forth, for these predictions  
Are to the world in general as to Caesar.

30 **Calpurnia.** When beggars die there are no comets seen;  
The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes.

**Caesar.** Cowards die many times before their deaths;  
The valiant never taste of death but once.  
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,

35 It seems to me most strange that men should fear,  
Seeing that death, a necessary end,  
Will come when it will come. **D**

[*Reenter* Servant.]

What say the augurers?

**Servant.** They would not have you to stir forth today.  
Plucking the entrails of an offering forth,

40 They could not find a heart within the beast.

**Caesar.** The gods do this in shame of cowardice.  
Caesar should be a beast without a heart  
If he should stay at home today for fear.  
No, Caesar shall not. Danger knows full well

45 That Caesar is more dangerous than he.  
We are two lions littered in one day,  
And I the elder and more terrible,  
And Caesar shall go forth.

**Calpurnia.** Alas, my lord!  
Your wisdom is consumed in confidence.

50 Do not go forth today. Call it my fear  
That keeps you in the house and not your own.  
We'll send Mark Antony to the Senate House,  
And he shall say you are not well today.  
Let me upon my knee prevail in this.

55 **Caesar.** Mark Antony shall say I am not well,  
And for thy humor I will stay at home.

[*Enter* Decius.]

Here's Decius Brutus, he shall tell them so.

**Decius.** Caesar, all hail! Good morrow, worthy Caesar!  
I come to fetch you to the Senate House.

60 **Caesar.** And you are come in very happy time  
To bear my greetings to the senators

**25 beyond all use:** unlike anything we are accustomed to.

**26–29** Caesar insists that if these are omens and if the gods have destined that certain things will happen, no one can avoid them. He will go out, since the predictions, he believes, apply to the whole world, not only to himself.

**D TRAGIC HERO**

Reread lines 32–37. What is Caesar's attitude toward his fate?

**46 littered in one day:** born at the same time.

COMMON CORE RL 4

**Language Coach**

**Etymology** A word's **etymology** is its history. The word *humor* was originally a Latin word meaning "fluid." The ancients believed the human body contained four "humors" whose relative proportions determined an individual's personality. How is this etymology related to *humor's* meaning in line 56?



And tell them that I will not come today.  
Cannot, is false; and that I dare not, falser.  
I will not come today. Tell them so, Decius.

65 **Calpurnia.** Say he is sick.

**Caesar.** Shall Caesar send a lie?  
Have I in conquest stretched mine arm so far  
To be afeard to tell greybeards the truth?  
Decius, go tell them Caesar will not come.

**Decius.** Most mighty Caesar, let me know some cause,  
70 Lest I be laughed at when I tell them so.

**Caesar.** The cause is in my will: I will not come.  
That is enough to satisfy the Senate;  
But for your private satisfaction,  
Because I love you, I will let you know.

75 **Calpurnia** here, my wife, stays me at home.

She dreamt tonight she saw my statue,  
Which, like a fountain with an hundred spouts,  
Did run pure blood, and many lusty Romans  
Came smiling and did bathe their hands in it.

80 And these does she apply for warnings and portents  
And evils imminent, and on her knee  
Hath begged that I will stay at home today.

**Decius.** This dream is all amiss interpreted;  
It was a vision fair and fortunate.

85 Your statue spouting blood in many pipes,  
In which so many smiling Romans bathed,  
Signifies that from you great Rome shall suck  
Reviving blood, and that great men shall press  
For tinctures, stains, relics, and cognizance.

90 This by Calpurnia's dream is signified.

**Caesar.** And this way have you well expounded it.

**Decius.** I have, when you have heard what I can say:  
And know it now, the Senate have concluded  
To give this day a crown to mighty Caesar.

95 If you shall send them word you will not come,  
Their minds may change. Besides, it were a mock  
Apt to be rendered, for some one to say  
“Break up the Senate till another time,  
When Caesar's wife shall meet with better dreams.”

100 If Caesar hide himself, shall they not whisper  
“Lo, Caesar is afraid”?

Pardon me, Caesar, for my dear dear love  
To your proceeding bids me tell you this,  
And reason to my love is liable.

**65–68 Shall . . . not come:** Caesar is appalled by his wife's suggestion that he lie to a bunch of old men (**greybeards**) about his reason for not going to the Senate.

**80 portents:** signs of evil to come.

**83 amiss:** wrongly.

**83–90** Decius has to think fast. He promised the others that he could flatter Caesar into believing anything. Now he must give Caesar a new interpretation of Calpurnia's dream, one that will get him out of the house.

**88–89 great men . . . cognizance:** Great men will come to you for honors and souvenirs to remember you by.

**96–97 it were . . . rendered:** It's likely that someone will make a sarcastic comment.

**102–104 my dear . . . liable:** My sincere interest in your career (**proceeding**) makes me tell you this. My feeling for you overtakes my intelligence (**reason**).  
*What arguments does Decius use to change Caesar's mind?*

105 **Caesar.** How foolish do your fears seem now, Calpurnia!  
I am ashamed I did yield to them.  
Give me my robe, for I will go.  
[*Enter Brutus, Ligarius, Metellus, Casca, Trebonius, Cinna, and Publius.*]  
And look where Publius is come to fetch me.

**Publius.** Good morrow, Caesar.

**Caesar.** Welcome Publius.

110 What Brutus, are you stirred so early too?  
Good morrow, Casca. Caius Ligarius,  
Caesar was ne'er so much your enemy  
As that same ague which hath made you lean.  
What is't o'clock?

**Brutus.** Caesar, 'tis strucken eight.

115 **Caesar.** I thank you for your pains and courtesy.

[*Enter Antony.*]

See! Antony, that revels long o' nights,  
Is notwithstanding up. Good morrow, Antony.

**Antony.** So to most noble Caesar.

**Caesar.** Bid them prepare within.

I am to blame to be thus waited for.

120 Now, Cinna, now, Metellus. What, Trebonius!

I have an hour's talk in store for you;  
Remember that you call on me today;  
Be near me, that I may remember you.

**Trebonius.** Caesar, I will. [*Aside.*] And so near will I be

125 That your best friends shall wish I had been further.

**Caesar.** Good friends, go in and taste some wine with me,  
And we (like friends) will straightway go together. **E**

**Brutus.** [*Aside.*] That every like is not the same, O Caesar,  
The heart of Brutus yearns to think upon.

[*Exeunt.*]

### **Scene 3** *A street in Rome near the Capitol.*

*In this brief scene, Caesar has still another chance to avoid the path that leads to his death. Artemidorus, a supporter of Caesar, has learned about the plot. He reads a letter he has written to warn Caesar, and then waits in the street for Caesar to pass by on his way to the Capitol.*

[*Enter Artemidorus, reading a paper.*]

**Artemidorus.** "Caesar, beware of Brutus; take heed of Cassius; come not near Casca; have an eye to Cinna;

**113 ague:** sickness.

**116–117 Antony . . . up:** Even Antony, who parties (**revels**) late into the night, is up early today.

**124 Aside:** privately, in a way that keeps the other characters from hearing what is said. Think of it as a whisper that the audience happens to overhear.

#### **E DRAMATIC IRONY**

Why are Caesar's remarks in lines 126–127 an example of dramatic irony?

trust not Trebonius; mark well Metellus Cimber;  
Decius Brutus loves thee not; thou hast wronged Caius  
5 Ligarius. There is but one mind in all these men,  
and it is bent against Caesar. If thou beest not  
immortal, look about you. Security gives way to  
conspiracy. The mighty gods defend thee!

“Thy Lover,  
10 “ARTEMIDORUS.”

Here will I stand till Caesar pass along  
And as a suitor will I give him this.  
My heart laments that virtue cannot live  
Out of the teeth of emulation.  
15 If thou read this, O Caesar, thou mayst live;  
If not, the Fates with traitors do contrive.  
[Exit.]

#### **Scene 4** *In front of Brutus' house.*

*Brutus' wife, Portia, feels anxious about the conspiracy. She nervously orders the servant Lucius to go and see what is happening at the Capitol. She next meets the Soothsayer, who makes her even more anxious as he continues to predict danger for Caesar.*

[Enter Portia and Lucius.]

**Portia.** I prithee, boy, run to the Senate House.  
Stay not to answer me, but get thee gone!  
Why dost thou stay?

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

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

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

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

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

**9 Lover:** devoted friend.

**12 suitor:** a person making a petition or request.

**13–14 My heart . . . emulation:** My heart is sad that Caesar's greatness cannot escape jealousy (**the teeth of emulation**).

**16 contrive:** plot.

**5 Ere:** before.

**6 constancy:** determination

**9 keep counsel:** keep a secret. *What does Portia seem to have learned from Brutus since their last scene together?*

**15 what suitors press to him:** what petitioners stand near him.

**Portia.** Prithee, listen well.

I heard a bustling rumor like a fray,  
And the wind brings it from the Capitol.

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

[*Enter the Soothsayer.*]

**Portia.** Come hither, fellow. Which way hast thou been?

**Soothsayer.** At mine own house, good lady.

**Portia.** What is't o'clock?

**Soothsayer** About the ninth hour, lady.

**Portia.** Is Caesar yet gone to the Capitol?

25 **Soothsayer.** Madam, not yet. I go to take my stand,  
To see him pass on to the Capitol.

**Portia.** Thou hast some suit to Caesar, hast thou not?

**Soothsayer.** That I have, lady. If it will please Caesar  
To be so good to Caesar as to hear me,

30 I shall beseech him to befriend himself.

**Portia.** Why, know'st thou any harm's intended towards him?

**Soothsayer.** None that I know will be, much that I fear may chance.

Good morrow to you. Here the street is narrow.

The throng that follows Caesar at the heels,

35 Of senators, of praetors, common suitors,  
Will crowd a feeble man almost to death.

I'll get me to a place more void and there  
Speak to great Caesar as he comes along.

[*Exit.*]

**Portia.** I must go in. Ay me, how weak a thing

40 The heart of woman is! O Brutus,

The heavens speed thee in thine enterprise—

Sure the boy heard me.—Brutus hath a suit

That Caesar will not grant.—O, I grow faint.—

Run, Lucius, and commend me to my Lord;

45 Say I am merry. Come to me again

And bring me word what he doth say to thee. **F**

[*Exeunt severally.*]

**18 a bustling . . . fray:** a noise like a fight.

**20 Sooth:** truly.

**21** The Soothsayer is the same fortune-teller who warned Caesar to beware the ides of March. He is now on his way to the street near the Capitol building where he usually sits.

**27 suit:** petition.

**32 None . . . chance:** I'm not sure of any danger, but I fear that some may occur.

**37 void:** empty.

**42–43** Fearing that Lucius has overheard her mention of the plot against Caesar, Portia pretends to worry about a petition that Brutus is going to present today.

**F TRAGEDY**

Which details in this scene help build **suspense**?

**severally:** separately.

## Comprehension

1. **Recall** Why is Portia upset with Brutus?
2. **Recall** What has made Calpurnia concerned about Caesar's safety?
3. **Recall** Why are Artemidorus and the Soothsayer trying to reach Caesar as he makes his way to the Capitol?
4. **Summarize** How does Decius convince Caesar to change his mind about staying home?



**RL 3** Analyze how complex characters with conflicting motivations develop, interact with others, and advance the plot or develop the theme. **RL 10** Read and understand dramas.

## Text Analysis

5. **Reading Shakespearean Drama** Review the chart you created as you read. What have you learned about Caesar in Act Two?
6. **Analyze Shakespearean Tragedy** Using a chart like the one shown, identify soliloquies and asides in Act Two, and explain what each one reveals about the speaker. Which technique gives you more insight into a character's way of thinking? Explain your response.

<i>Scene and Line Nos.</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Soliloquy or Aside?</i>	<i>What It Reveals</i>

7. **Identify Mood** What mood do the two brief scenes at the end of Act Two help create? Cite details in your response.
8. **Make Inferences About Characters** Contrast the relationship between Caesar and Calpurnia with the relationship between Brutus and Portia. What do the differences suggest about the character of each man?
9. **Draw Conclusions** Is Brutus's decision to join the conspiracy driven more by his **conscience** or by Cassius's manipulation? Support your conclusion with evidence from the text.
10. **Evaluate Argument** Reread Brutus's soliloquy in lines 10–34 of Scene 1. Are you persuaded by his argument on the need to kill Caesar? Why or why not?

## Text Criticism

11. **Critical Interpretations** According to some critics, one reason *Julius Caesar* is so complex is that it offers widely differing views of the title character. Do you agree that the play allows you to form different impressions of Caesar as you read, or is his character portrayed consistently? Cite evidence to support your opinion.