

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

Julius Caesar
by William Shakespeare

Copyright © 2002 by Prestwick House, Inc., P.O. Box 658, Clayton, DE 19938.
1-800-932-4593. www.prestwickhouse.com Permission to copy this unit for
classroom use is extended to purchaser for his or her personal use. *This material,
in whole or part, may not be copied for resale.*

ISBN: 978-1-60389-581-1

Item No. 201581

Julius Caesar

Act I, Scene I

1. Even though *Julius Caesar* was written more than four hundred years ago, this play is still being produced on stages around the world, as well as being studied in classrooms everywhere. In an attempt to understand why this play continues to be meaningful and enjoyable so long after it was written, write a paragraph in answer to each of the following questions:
 - A. When and where did Julius Caesar live, how did he die, and what was his claim to fame?
 - B. Why do you think his story is still interesting to people of all ages even today?

Please be sure your paragraphs are written in complete sentences and that each word is spelled correctly.

2. All people who live in the United States are guaranteed equality under our Constitution. This was not so in Rome in the times of Julius Caesar. Flavius and Marullus are Tribunes; the other characters in this scene are Commoners. The dialogue between the two classes gives clues as to the social equality, or lack of equality, among the characters. To understand this more fully, complete the following:
 - A. Write a definition of what the words “tribune” and “commoner” meant in Rome in 44 B.C.
 - B. Write a one-sentence summary of how you think each of the Tribunes feels about the Commoners and how the Commoners feel about the Tribunes. Following that, find three lines of dialogue which show this in the words of a Tribune and three lines of dialogue showing this in the words of a Commoner.

Response Journal

3. The Tribunes and the Commoners also seem to have a difference of opinion about Julius Caesar. Marullus scolds the Commoners for once praising and lauding Pompey when he was victorious, only to turn their praise to Caesar when he defeated Pompey. Complete the following dialogue you might have with a friend about who is right in this situation, the Tribunes or the Commoners.

Your Friend: “Of course, the Commoners are right. For heaven’s sake, don’t we do the same thing every time we elect a new President of our own country?”

You:

Act I, Scene II

4. In Scene I, we learned all about the tensions underlying the action of the play. In this scene, we meet all the major characters and learn a great deal about them. Copy each of the following questions and write the answers next to them:
- A. What medical problem does Calpurnia have, and what does Caesar think might solve the problem?
 - B. What serious medical problem does Caesar have?
 - C. Copy the line of dialogue that describes Brutus’ greatest fear about Caesar.
 - D. Copy the famous lines by Caesar which describe the type of men he likes to have about him and the kind of “look” Cassius has.

Julius Caesar

5. Through Caesar's words, Shakespeare draws for us a clear picture of what the wily Cassius looks like. Brutus says that Cicero looks with "ferret and such fiery eyes." Draw as vivid a word image as you can of Caesar, Calpurnia, and Brutus. If you find any of Shakespeare's words in this scene to help you, feel free to use them. Using the following format, write a three-sentence description of each character:
 - A. In my mind's eye, I see Calpurnia...
 - B. Caesar is probably...
 - C. Brutus seems as if he is...

6. You will, of course, have noticed by now that the language of Shakespeare is quite a bit different than the language used today, even though both are English. Try your hand at making Shakespeare's language just like our own. Cassius delivers a soliloquy to the audience (the last dialogue of Scene III). Rewrite the soliloquy in Modern English as if you were saying those lines to an audience.

7. At the end of this scene, we see the beginnings of a plot to have Brutus replace Caesar. In order to have the plan succeed, a conspiracy will have to be formed. Even in the U.S., there have been some Presidential assassinations. Two of the most famous assassinations in history were those of President Abraham Lincoln and President John F. Kennedy. Choose one of these two crimes to research, and write a report on that event, which would be suitable for presentation to your class if your teacher would ask you to do so. In your report, include the following information:
 - A. The dates and places of that President's birth and death, which political party he belonged to, the names and ages of his wife and children at the time of his death, and where he is buried.
 - B. The circumstances surrounding that assassination, and who, if anyone, was found guilty of the crime.

Act I, Scene III

8. In this scene we meet Cicero, who is a member of the ruling class of Rome, as well as a writer, and a famous orator. There were in 44 B.C., of course, no forms of mass communication of ideas as we have today. Orators performed that function in the form of a speech, or oration. This oration usually had an impassioned emotional appeal and was given in a public place, most often outdoors to a large group of people. Perhaps the closest example of an oration with which you might be familiar is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech delivered in Washington, D. C., on August 28, 1963. Another famous oration would be President Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address." Research one or the other of these orations, and complete the following assignment based on your findings:

Write a paragraph telling how you would have felt if you had been present in either Washington or Gettysburg the day that speech was delivered. In your paragraph, tell what those words meant to you and the extent to which you were emotionally affected as you were hearing them. Begin your paragraph as follows:

It was very crowded at...

9. *Julius Caesar* takes place less than a half-century before Christianity. In those times, many gods, omens, portents, and superstitions were part of the everyday belief system of most Romans. Cicero says, "Indeed, it is a strange-disposed time:/But men may construe things after their fashion..." What are the strange sights that Casca tells Cicero he saw? Imagine that you had seen such things, but instead of telling a friend about them, you record them as an entry in your journal. Begin your journal entry as follows:

The gods are visiting strange things upon us. Am I to take it that the meaning of...

Julius Caesar

Act II, Scene I

10. It is three o'clock in the morning at Brutus' home on the Ides of March, March 15th according to the ancient Roman calendar. You will recall that in the opening scene of this play, a soothsayer warns Caesar to "Beware the ides of March," but Caesar pays no attention. The conspirators have arrived to talk Brutus into killing Caesar at eight that same morning in the Senate. Imagine you are also with Brutus in his garden when he agrees to do it. Write a speech in which you tell Brutus that he should *not* kill Caesar, giving him numerous reasons why you feel that way. Begin your dialogue:

You: Brutus! Brutus! Listen to me. I beg you...

11. Re-read the dialogue of the conspirators and their arguments as to why Caesar needs to be killed. Which of the arguments you believe finally convinced Brutus to join? You may feel that there is more than one argument that finally convinced him. Copy the exact quotations that you feel are the most convincing, including exact punctuation, and quotation marks. Use the format below to frame your answer:

The convincing conspirator

The conspirator's words

1.

2.