

Building Fluency through Reader's Theater

William Shakespeare's
THE TRAGEDY OF
Julius Caesar



TAMARA HOLLINGSWORTH
AND HARRIET ISECKE

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The Tragedy of Julius Caesar

Story Summary

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e Murder of Julius Caesar by Karl von Piloty/The Granger Collection, New York

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar is the tragic story of the betrayal and assassination of Roman ruler Julius Caesar in 44 BC. After successfully conquering much of the ancient world, Caesar invited to lead the Roman Empire. Cassius and other members of the Roman senate feared that Caesar would become a power-hungry dictator. They decided Caesar must be stopped. The Caesar's trusted friend, Brutus, to help murder Caesar as a patriotic act for the good of Rome.

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Tips for Performing Reader's Theater

Adapted from Aaron Shepard

Let your script hide your face. If you cannot see the audience, your script is too high.

Do not often when you speak. Do not just look at the script.

Remember so the audience knows what you are

loudly so everyone can hear you.

Remember with feeling. If the character is sad, let your

voice be sad. If the character is surprised, let your voice be surprised.

Remember to keep your hands and feet still.

Remember that even when you are not speaking, you are your character.

Tips for Performing Reader's Theater (cont.)

- If the audience laughs, wait for the laughter to stop before you speak again.
- If someone in the audience talks, do not pay attention.
- If someone walks into the room, do not pay attention.
- If you make a mistake, pretend it was right.
- If you drop something, try to leave it where it is. The audience is looking somewhere else.
- If a reader forgets to read his or her part, see if you can read the part instead, make something up, or just skip over it. Do not whisper to the reader!



Tragedy of Julius Caesar

Characters

Marc Antony

Brutus

Julius Caesar

Portia

Cassius

Octavius

Setting

This reader's theater is set in ancient Rome 44 BC. It begins on the streets of the ancient city and moves to the homes of both Julius Caesar and at the Senate. The story concludes on the battlefields at Philippi.



Act I, Scene I

The streets of Rome after the victorious Battle of Pharsalus

Marc Antony: Caesar, the holiday that Rome has declared in your honor is well deserved, and now it is time to rejoice!

Julius Caesar: Marc Antony, I feel greatly encouraged by your victory in Pompey. The sons of the Roman Republic, my archrivals, are dead. They are just like their father. I should look for in the days to come.

Marc Antony: I think we should look forward to you, the King of Rome, but I wonder why you are reluctant. I offered you the crown three times in front of the crowds, and you could not hear the people cheering wildly. Will you not accept?

Julius Caesar: Marc Antony, I cannot accept the crown at this time. I need to think carefully about my future.

Marc Antony: Why do you hesitate at the thought of the crown? It worries you so?



ar: I need to do what is in the best interest of Rome, my friend. I am also worried about what the soothsayer predicted. He said, "Beware the Ides of March." I do not understand what horror might occur on the fifteenth day of March.

ny: That soothsayer only speaks in riddles. There is nothing to fear, for you are a great hero, and Rome desperately needs you.

ar: I promise to think about your offer and make a decision very soon. Look, I see my soldiers, Brutus and Cassius. I deeply distrust Cassius, but Brutus has been a loyal soldier and a true friend. Let us wade to them, and then I must leave, for I have much to do.

Act I, Scene II

The streets of Rome a few minutes later

What is disturbing you, Brutus? You appear distant and deeply bothered lately. Draw closer, and speak to me about what is upsetting you.

I have been at war with myself, Cassius. I have strange and disturbing feelings about our victory in this battle.



Cassius: Brutus, you are a truly heroic man and could see yourself as everyone else sees you. Then you would realize how very honored and respected you are. Is that what is concerning you?

Brutus: No, Cassius. I am haunted by my feelings about what may happen with Caesar. I fear that the people want him to become king. I am concerned that his kingdom might overturn the republic of Rome.

Cassius: You speak as if you did not want Caesar. I am sure that Marc Antony's offer to be king is a good one.

Brutus: I do respect Caesar. I will bravely fight in battle, but my soul rebels at the idea of a king. There is something in men that is drawn to power over others is granted to them. I will leave. I will keep my worries to myself.

Cassius: Nonsense, Brutus. Why should you worry? There are many others who share your concerns. You must stand against Caesar becoming king. He does not deserve this honor.

Brutus: What are you saying?



Caesar is treated like a god even though he is merely a man. Many people agree that for the good of Rome, we must take action before Caesar has the chance to rule.

I bear no ill feelings against Caesar, but I will carefully consider what you have said. I only want to do as the people of Rome wish. You have given me much to think about.

Brutus, my friend, go home this evening and consider the terrible things that might happen to Rome if Caesar is made king. Maybe we should meet later to speak more about this.

Yes, Cassius. I will meet with you tonight. In the meantime, I will think more on this matter. Goodbye, my friend.

Goodbye, Brutus. Oh, I am glad that he is gone! I must get Brutus to help me, for Caesar loves and trusts Brutus, and without him, I have no possibility of getting near Caesar. Brutus wants only what is good for Rome, so I must convince him that all of Rome wants Caesar dead. I will write many anonymous letters expressing these sentiments and give them to Brutus. He will surely be fooled by the letters and join my cause.



Act I, Scene III

The home of Brutus and Portia

Portia: What is wrong with you, my husband? sick with worry.

Brutus: I am upset over a conversation I had. But it is not important, my dear.

Portia: If something concerns you, Brutus, there is something of great significance to me. But wait, someone is at the door. I will return in a moment.

Brutus: Who was at the door, Portia?

Portia: It was a servant whom I have not seen before. He brought letters for you. He told me to read them immediately. Can you tell me what they say?

Brutus: No, Portia, I cannot. But do not be alarmed. It does not concern you. Would you mind going alone for a while? I think I had better read these letters by myself.

Portia: You worry me, Brutus. It is not like you to be so secretive, but since you ask, I will go.



Oh, my! All of these letters call for Caesar's death. Perhaps, Cassius is telling the truth, and this is what the people of Rome want. I must be resolute and act now to make sure that Caesar does not destroy our beloved Rome. I shudder to think of the actions that I must take, but I will take them for the good of Rome!

(calling) Brutus, I hear knocking again. Should I see who it is?

No, do not bother, Portia. I will get it. Ah, Cassius, it is you.

Yes, Brutus. I have urgent matters to discuss with you. Is Portia here? I do not want her involved.

(calling) Is that you I hear, Cassius?

It is, Portia, but I must speak to Brutus alone, if you do not mind.

I understand, Cassius. I hope that you can help Brutus with whatever is troubling him. I will leave you both alone now.



Brutus: I have made a decision, Cassius. Although it makes me sick to harm Caesar, I will join the cause. I will do whatever it takes to keep Rome from becoming a dictatorship. I do not want to lose the people of Rome to lose their voice.

Cassius: I am greatly relieved to hear this, Brutus. Throughout the night, I have gathered many others who think as we do. They are waiting in your garden now, and we must meet away and plan our course of action with them.

Brutus: All right, let us go. What have your men done thus far?

Cassius: We must lure Caesar from his house and kill him, but I think we have another problem to solve as well. We must rid ourselves of Marc Antony for he is faithful to Caesar and will try to stop us. I am certain that he is a great danger to Rome.

Brutus: No, Cassius, I disagree. We cannot do anything ourselves in the blood of others. Marc Antony has done no harm to us or Rome.



But, Brutus, I am afraid that you are not thinking clearly. Marc Antony is a loyal follower of Caesar, and if we do not get rid of him, we may not be able to carry out our plans.

No, Cassius, I will never agree to this! We are here only to purge Caesar from our city, and nobody else. We cannot simply murder people we do not like. We are acting for the good of Rome and not merely for ourselves.

Have you not noticed the violent weather this evening? These winds! The thunder and lightning! These are signs that Caesar is gaining too much power and must be stopped!

Look, Portia is approaching now. You must leave immediately, for I do not want her to worry.

It is so late, my husband. Why are you standing here in the garden, cold and alone? There is a terrible storm brewing. Please come inside.

In a moment, dear. You should not be out in this chilly air with your failing health. Please go inside and rest now.



Portia: What has come over you, my love? We never been secretive with each other. Please tell me what is bothering you.

Brutus: I am feeling somewhat poorly, my dear. But, that is actually of little concern, e

Portia: Brutus, I cannot stop thinking about that that seems to be consuming you right my eyes. I beg you, please tell me wh

Brutus: Portia, please, go to bed.

Portia: I am your wife. I have stood by you ir have done. Please do not leave me in

Brutus: You are a good wife, Portia. But you i inside and rest now. I need time to thi promise that I will reveal all to you lat



Act II, Scene I

A few days later at the home of Caesar

ny: Caesar, I have not seen you these last few days, so I have come to visit you at your home. Have you thought over my offer? It will be the fifteenth of March tomorrow, and all of Rome eagerly awaits your decision. We all want to celebrate your coronation tomorrow.

ar: Yes, Marc Antony. I have decided to take you up on your offer to be king.

ny: That is wonderful news! I am glad to hear it!

ar: But something here at my home is greatly disturbing me.

ny: What is it, Caesar?

ar: When I told my wife, Calpurnia, about going tomorrow, she begged me not to. She was shrieking when she described her recent nightmares.

ny: And what exactly were these nightmares about?



Julius Caesar: In them, she had a vision of my statue with blood. Then she described men s bathing their hands in it. She cried an to stay home with her.

Marc Antony: Caesar, it was nothing more than a frij dream. Do not let this trouble you.

Julius Caesar: If Brutus had not come to my home to me that Calpurnia was misinterpreting dreams, I would not go tomorrow. But the dream was a good omen. He believ dream meant that my blood will reviv

Marc Antony: I agree! So, we shall see you tomorrow

Julius Caesar: Yes, I will be at the Senate tomorrow.

Act II, Scene II

The next day in Caesar's home and on the way to t

Julius Caesar: I still have an uneasy feeling about thi if Calpurnia is right and something ha I hear knocking.

Brutus: Caesar, my friend. I am here to accom to the Senate.



Caesar: Brutus, I am still not sure I should go. Something is gnawing at me. I have a deep fear in my soul.

What is it, my friend?

Brutus: I am disturbed by the frantic pleadings of my wife. I am also worried about the soothsayer's warning. Perhaps you should go to the Senate alone. You can tell them that I am ill.

Nonsense, Caesar, do not be troubled by such insignificant things. Everything will happen as it should, as you soon shall see.

Caesar: You are right, Brutus. My fears are unfounded. I will go to the Senate. I am ready to rule Rome.

I hope this journey is not making you tired, Caesar. We are almost there.

Brutus: Brutus, this journey seems longer today than ever before. Do you see all of those in the streets who seem desperate to speak to me? Maybe I should stop and see what they want.

No, Caesar, there is no time. Do not give a thought to these men. Think only of Rome.

Julius Caesar: Wait, I recognize that man. What? You letter for me? Let me see it. Look, Brutus, the letter says that there is a conspiracy against me. Could it be true?

Brutus: I have not heard of any conspiracy. We must hurry, Caesar, for we do not want to be late.

Julius Caesar: And look, Brutus, that soothsayer is still here. He gave me his warning, "Beware the Ides of March."

Brutus: Caesar, stop your worrying. Take joy in the fact that you thought that you will soon be king of Rome.

Julius Caesar: You are right, Brutus. I must think of my personal concerns must be my last priority.

Act II, Scene III

At the Senate

Cassius: Ah, look who has arrived. I bow to you, Caesar.

Julius Caesar: That is unnecessary, Cassius. You do not need to bow before me.

Cassius: Oh, I do, and I have something for you: a sword!



ar: Ah! Why are you doing this? Ah, I can hardly breathe. I will not let you get away with this!

Stop struggling!

I have a sword for you, too, Caesar.

ar: (*gasping*) Et tu, Brute? If you, who I thought was my trusted friend, is so against me, then I give up my struggle to live.

Oh, happy day. Let us rejoice! Liberty and freedom are now here!

We have done Caesar a favor. He will no longer fear death. Let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood.

Look, here comes Marc Antony, and I am afraid he will be greatly disturbed by Caesar's death.

ny: Oh, mighty Caesar, do you lie so low? Are all of your conquests, glories, triumphs, and spoils shrunk to this tiny measure? Brutus, I only ask that if you intend to murder me as well, do it quickly and get it over with.



Brutus: Oh, Antony! Do not beg us to kill you may appear bloody and cruel, but our were for the good of Rome. We have against you. We receive you with love

Marc Antony: I will shake your bloody hands then, b I ask a simple favor? May I speak at (funeral?

Brutus: You may, Marc Antony.

Cassius: No, Brutus! Do not let him do it, for I convince the people of Rome that we something wrong.

Marc Antony: I will speak only of Caesar's greatness certainly temper my speech to ensure listening that his passing is best for us

Brutus: Marc Antony, at this moment I must s the crowds of people who have gather Tomorrow, we will both speak at Caes funeral.

Song: Sonnet 90



Act III, Scene I

Caesar's funeral at the Forum

My good people, I know that the death of Caesar has been a great shock to you. But you must understand that his ambitions were to overtake us, to force us to live his way, and to stomp our will into the ground. If you were to ask me why I rose up violently against Caesar, I would simply state, it is not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more. Now, stay and listen to the words of Marc Antony.

Antony: Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears. I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. The evil that men do lives after them; the good is often buried with their bones. I do not come to disprove what Brutus has said. If Caesar was overly ambitious, he has certainly paid for it now, but was he so ambitious? We all know that I offered him the crown and that he took time to think. He wanted to consider what was best for us, not just for himself.

(whispering) What is he doing?

(whispering) I told you that it was not a good idea to let him speak to the people of Rome.

Marc Antony:

Brutus would have you believe that I wanted the crown only to bestow riches on myself, but I have here in my possession the last will and testament. Caesar brought wealth and glory to Rome, and in his will and testament, he gave a sum of money to every Roman citizen; and furthermore, he ordered that his private gardens be made public.

Brutus:

(whispering) Cassius, you are right. Help the crowd with his words.

Cassius:

(whispering) What should we do?

Marc Antony:

But I do not want to say too much, for I want you to think I am speaking ill of Cassius, the honorable man who brought glory to Caesar to death.

Brutus:

(whispering) Look, the crowd has turned on us, Cassius. I fear we will not live long.

Cassius:

(whispering) There is no time to waste. We must flee the city as quickly as possible!



Act IV, Scene I

The outskirts of Rome

Cassius, you deceived me in your plot against Caesar. I was persuaded by your words that all of Rome wished his death. That was a lie! And now, we are exiled from the city and have to fight for our lives.

Do not blame me alone, Brutus, for you chose to believe me and to act as you did.

You wanted Caesar dead because of jealousy. You endangered us all to get what you wanted. I murdered Caesar with the honest intention of saving the Rome I love!

You rant and rave for nothing, for what is done is done! Now we must either agree to fight together against the tyranny of Marc Antony and Octavius or to part, here and now.

I suppose you are right, Cassius. There is no use looking back now. Give me your hand for we must fight together to the end. I will use this battle to release my anger and grief over what happened to my wife, Portia.

Cassius: Why? What has happened to her?

Brutus: She is dead. I revealed our plan to her; everything went wrong and Marc Antony hated against us, she took us for lost; herself.

Cassius: I am sorry for your loss, Brutus, but we some much needed sleep now.

Brutus: I am tired but cannot sleep. Wait, what hear? Cassius, do you hear that? Cassius has already fallen asleep. Oh no, I care my eyes, for it is the ghost of Caesar! you want? Speak to me, Ghost!

Julius Caesar: Brutus, you are an evil spirit!

Brutus: Why have you come here?

Julius Caesar: To warn you. Brutus, you will see me sooner than you would like. You will again when you battle at Philippi.

Brutus: What does this mean? Where are you Cassius! Awake! I have something to



Act V, Scene I

Before the Battle of Philippi

Octavius: Thank you for coming so quickly to help fight the battle against the conspirators.

I am ready to take command, Marc Antony.

Brutus: Good. Now, you will lead your army to the left side of the field, and I will ...

No, *you* will lead *your* army to the left side of the field; I will go to the right side.

Octavius: I see you are already asserting your authority, as is your right, Octavius.

I know how to command a battle, Marc Antony. Remember that I will soon take Caesar's place as heir to the throne.

Brutus: Look, I see Brutus and Cassius and their armies in the distance. They are approaching.

Shall we give the sign of battle?

Octavius: No, we will answer on their charge.



Octavius: Men, stir not until the signal is given!

Brutus: Words before blows, countrymen?

Octavius: We know you love hitting before thine Brutus.

Brutus: Good words are better than bad strokes.

Marc Antony: In your bad strokes, Brutus, you give good words. Remember the hole you made in your heart while you cried, "Long live, Caesar, Caesar!"

Cassius: Marc Antony, your words are as sweet as honey.

Marc Antony: And you are the same old Cassius.

Octavius: Enough! Look, I draw my sword against the conspirators, and I will not put it away until I have slaughtered all traitors or have died myself.

Brutus: The only way you will die by a traitor's sword is if you kill yourself.

Octavius: I hope you are right, because I was no traitor. I will die on my sword.



Is that so, Octavius?

Come, Marc Antony! If you dare to fight today, Brutus and Cassius, then come to the field, and if not, then come when you have the stomachs!

Act V, Scene II

The Battle of Philippi

The battle is not going well. Many of my men are being killed, and others are quickly fleeing. Brutus's men are not performing well, either. All is lost, I fear, and there is nothing for me to do but have my faithful servant plunge this sword into my body. Here, servant, go ahead. Caesar, you win even from the grave, as I am now being killed by the same sword that I thrust into you.

Marc Antony, the battle is going well. I hear that Cassius was so despaired that he asked his own servant to kill him.

Antony: I have heard the same, Octavius.

Have you any news of Brutus?

Antony: No. Let us see if we can find him!



Brutus: Where can Cassius possibly be? Oh no, I am dead! I should have known when I saw the ghost last night that he wanted to thwart my battle. I know my hour has come, and I must have the courage to face my death and not leave another hand to commit the act. I think I will find a better peace in losing on this day than I will find in winning. Caesar, you will find me peacefully and satisfied, as I will now.

Octavius: Look, I see Brutus lying on the ground in the distance! We must go over there and see if he is still breathing.

Marc Antony: He is dead. Brutus is dead, and I feel that I am the only one of all those who conspired against Caesar who remains the most honorable, for while the others were overcome by malice and jealousy, Brutus followed me. He wanted only what he thought was best for Rome, and his death is a great loss to the world.

Octavius: Then we will let Brutus have an honorable funeral. We will honor his death in Rome. No more wars, field to rest, and let's away, to part the world and have this happy day.



Sonnet 146

William Shakespeare

Oh, the centre of my sinful earth,
My earth these rebel powers array,
That dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?
How can it be that thou shouldst so large a lease,
Or short a time, hold on that mansion spend?
O thou, inheritor of this excess,
Why dost thou charge? Is this thy body's end?
No longer live thou upon thy servant's loss,
Nor hope to pine and aggrivate thy store;
To be fed, without be rich no more:
To shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,
And Death once dead, there's no more dying then.



Sonnet 90

William Shakespeare



Then hate me when thou wilt, if ever, now,
Now while the world is bent my deeds to censure,
Join with the spite of fortune, make me bored,
And do not drop in for an after-loss.
Ah, do not, when my heart hath scaped this
Come in the rearward of a conquer'd woe;
Give not a windy night a rainy morrow,
To linger out a purposed overthrow.
If thou wilt leave me, do not leave me last,
When other petty griefs have done their spite,
But in the onset come, so shall I taste
At first the very worst of fortune's might;
And other strains of woe, which now
Compared with loss of thee will not seem



Glossary

archrivals—the main people competing for the same object or goal as another

array—regular order or arrangement

brewing—forming

conspirators—people who agree to act together to do an unlawful act

coronation—the act or ceremony of crowning a king or queen

dictatorship—a government or country in which total power is held by a one person, a dictator

dross—waste or foreign matter

Ides—the fifteenth of March, May, July, or October or the thirteenth day of any other month in the ancient Roman calendar

inheritors—people who come in to or receive property, powers, or duties as an heir

purge—to make clean

reluctant—unwilling; struggling in opposition

republic—a government having a chief of state who is not a monarch

soothsayer—a person who claims to foretell events

spoils—stolen goods

thwart—to stand in the way of

Characters

Marc Antony: a friend of Caesar's

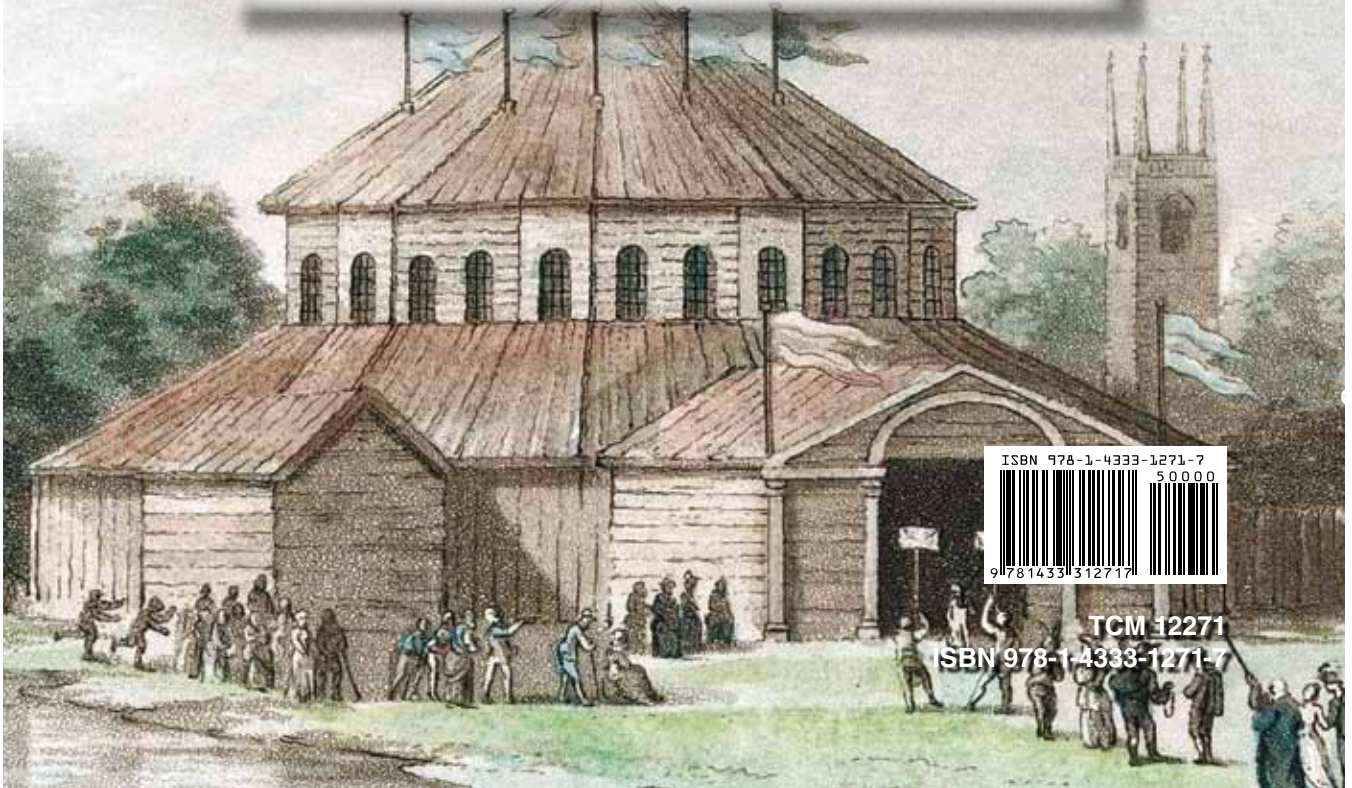
Julius Caesar: a Roman general and senator

Cassius: a Roman general

Brutus: a noble Roman

Portia: the wife of Brutus

Octavius: the adopted son of Julius Caesar



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