

JULIUS CAESAR

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DIRECTOR SCOTT WENTWORTH

GRADE RECOMMENDATION

Suitable for Grades 7–12

CONTENT ADVISORY FOR STUDENTS

Contains some violence and mature themes

STUDENT MATINÉE DATES

September 12, 26; October 10, 16

ABOUT THE PLAY

Believed to have been written in 1598-1599, *Julius Caesar* reflects the general anxiety of Elizabethan England at that time. As Queen Elizabeth I had not named her successor to the throne, people worried that a civil war would break out upon her death, as it did in ancient Rome after Caesar's assassination. This is one of Shakespeare's three "Plutarchian plays," which also include *Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

SYNOPSIS

Having defeated the sons of his late political rival, Pompey, the great general and statesman Julius Caesar has returned in triumph to Rome. His evident popularity with the common people and the actions of his friend and comrade Mark Antony in publicly offering him a crown are of great concern to a cadre of senators, including Cassius and Marcus Brutus, who fear that Caesar indeed plans to assume the powers of a king and overthrow the Roman republic.

Brutus is torn between his feelings of friendship for Caesar and his concern for Rome; eventually, however, he is persuaded to join in a conspiracy to assassinate Caesar on the Ides of March. When that day dawns, despite the warnings of a soothsayer and the pleas of his wife, Calphurnia (who has dreamed that she saw her husband's statue running with blood), Caesar resolves to go to the Capitol as planned. There the conspirators stab him to death.

Brutus then addresses the crowd, assuring them that Caesar's ambition made the assassination necessary; Mark Antony, however, counters with an inspired piece of rhetoric that succeeds in provoking a riot against the conspirators. Fleeing the city, Brutus and Cassius raise an army, while Antony and



SEANA MCKENNA

Octavius, Caesar's heir, take control of Rome. The opposing forces meet at Philippi, where the fate of the republic is decided in a climactic battle.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

1. **All grades:** Language/English (listening to understand, speaking to communicate, reading for meaning)
2. **All grades:** Drama, Music, Visual Art
3. **Grades 7–12:** Health and PE (interpersonal skills, conflict resolution harassment, violence and abuse, leadership)
4. **Grade 10:** Civics [Politics] (civic awareness, civic engagement and action)
5. **Grade 11:** Introduction to Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology (explaining human behaviour and culture, socialization)
6. **Grade 11:** World History to the End of the Fifteenth Century (cradles of civilization, cooperation, conflict, rising civilizations, civilizations in decline)
7. **Grade 11:** Politics in Action: Making Change (foundations of political engagement, policy, politics and democratic change)
8. **Grades 11–12:** Philosophy (metaphysics, ethics, epistemology, aesthetics)
9. **Grade 12:** World Cultures (contributions and influences, power relations)

10. Grade 12: World History Since the Fifteenth Century (conflict, cooperation, citizenship)

11. Grade 12: Adventures in World History (society and community, politics and conflict)

12. Grade 12: Canadian and International Politics (political foundations, civic awareness and responsibility)

TOPICS

Shakespeare

- Who he was, body of work, significance in English drama/literature
- Dramatists of the Renaissance
- Early modern drama

Elizabethan/Jacobean England

- Social and economic structure (class systems, playhouses, plays and players)
- Values and beliefs (four humours, Chain of Being, etc.)
- Conventions of early English drama (tragedy, five-act structure)

Language

- Imagery, blank verse, rhetoric

THEMES AND MOTIFS

- Honour and loyalty
- Arrogance and ambition
- State vs. absolute rule
- Nemesis
- Truth and justice
- Revenge
- Leadership
- Gender
- Pride
- Principles
- Sickness and disease
- Theatre and politics
- Fate vs. free will
- Public vs. private
- Misinterpretations and misreadings
- Compromise vs. inflexibility
- Rhetoric and persuasion
- Omens and portents
- Letters
- Love and friendship
- Death

CLASSROOM WARM-UP

Define *rhetoric* (the art of persuasive speaking and writing). Write out on the board the characteristics of rhetoric as it seeks to appeal to (a) one's character or reputation, (b) one's emotions and (c) reason. Rhetoric also uses persuasive language devices such as repetition, lists, rhythm, antithesis and questions.

Mark Antony intends to turn the Romans against Brutus and his fellow conspirators who killed Caesar. Have the students work in groups of four or five and look at Mark Antony's speech (Act III, scene 2) "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears!...And I must pause till it come back to me." Each student will take it in turns to read aloud a sentence to the rest of the group. (Note: The sentences vary from one line to several lines.) The group will decide and list the types of rhetorical devices Mark Antony has used to persuade his audience. At the end of this first speech, each group will compare notes and discuss their findings with the rest of the class. Were there any surprises? How would the students stage this speech to capture the audience's attention?

ENRICHMENT

Study guide available at stratfordfestival.ca/studyguides.

Prologues (interactive presentations on stage) at 11 a.m. before every student matinée.

Workshops and post-show chats may be arranged by calling the Education Department at 519.271.4040, ext. 2354.

Festival Theatre and Costume Warehouse tours may be arranged by calling the Box Office at 1.800.567.1600.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Online

You can order your group tickets online at any time right from your desk. You can even select your seats! To start planning your trip, go to stratfordfestival.ca/schools.

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