

JULIUS CAESAR:

THE STORY IN

TWENTY MINUTES

**THIS IS A STORY OF AMBITION AND MURDER
SET IN ANCIENT ROME**

1

The people of Rome are celebrating Caesar's victory against Pompey. It is the festival of Lupercal. They are eating and drinking and dancing. But two Tribunes called **Flavius** and **Marullus** try to stop the celebrations:

Flavius Hence! Home, you idle creatures! Get you home.

Marullus You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things.

2

Caesar arrives in triumph to great cheers and applause from the people. With him are his wife **Calphurnia** and **Mark Antony**, his favourite. They are interrupted by a **Soothsayer**, who shouts from the crowd,

Soothsayer Beware the Ides of March!

Caesar is shaken and Calphurnia is horrified that there may be danger to her husband on 15 March, but Caesar dismisses it saying:

Caesar He is a dreamer, let us leave him.

And they go on to the festival.

3

Watching all of this are senators **Brutus** and **Cassius**. They like Rome the way it is, a Republic. Cassius whispers in Brutus's ear that some of the **senators** are plotting: there is a conspiracy to kill Caesar for his ambition. Brutus is wary:

Brutus Into what dangers would you lead me Cassius?

Just then a great cheer comes from the crowd in the distance. Brutus is worried:

Brutus What means this shouting? I fear the people choose Caesar for their King.

Another cheer comes from the crowd, and Cassius realises that Brutus is hooked. But before Cassius can reveal his murder plan, in comes Caesar with Mark Antony, and he is suspicious. He says to Mark Antony:

Caesar Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look.



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4

Brutus and **Cassius** are still wondering what all the shouting was about, when along comes a senator called **Casca**. He reports that the crowd have offered Caesar an Emperor's crown:

Casca There was a crown offered him, he put it by. They offered it to him again, he put it by again. And then a third time and still he refused it.

He tells them that Caesar then fell down in a fit. The three of them shake their heads in despair, and Cassius, spotting a likely ally in the conspiracy invites Casca to dinner.



5

A great storm blows over Rome. There's murder and lightning and in the midst of it, **Casca** is frantic with worry when he meets **Cicero**, a respected old politician. Above the noise of the storm Casca cries:

Casca Never till now, did I go through a tempest dropping fire.

He believes that all the weird and strange things that have happened during the storm are an omen of something really bad about to happen to Rome. Cicero reassures him and struggles on home through the storm, and in comes **Cassius** who listens sympathetically as Casca pours out all of his fears, when Casca says:

Casca Hold my hand

They shake hands. A bargain is struck. Casca's fear draws him into the conspiracy.



DEFINITION

The Ides of March: The Roman calendar did not use dates like ours does, but had certain fixed days in each month. 15 March was known as the Ides of March and was also a day of celebration.

6

Meanwhile, the night before the **Ides of March Brutus** is at home, pacing up and down, worrying about Caesar's growing ambition. He says:

Brutus Think of him as a serpent's egg, which hatched, would as his kind, grow mischievous.

There is a knock on the door, and in sneaks **Cassius** followed by **Casca** and the rest of the **conspirators**. Brutus says:

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

And they all shake hands. It is settled. They will murder Caesar. Cassius offers a further idea:

Cassius Let Mark Antony and Caesar fall together!

But Brutus does not want to see mass bloodshed, so he steps in and says:

Brutus Let us be sacrificers, not butchers.

And they agree that Caesar shall be the only one to die.

7

Brutus is left alone with his wife **Portia**. Portia tries to comfort him, but he pushes her away. She shows him a self-inflicted wound which proves her strength and cries:

Portia I have made proof of my constancy, giving myself a wound in the thigh. Can I bear that and not my husband's secrets?

Brutus is overwhelmed by her nobility, but just then, more **conspirators** knock at the door and Brutus is busy again.



Shakespeare Lives additional resources

8

In Caesar's palace, **Caesar** and his wife **Calphurnia** cannot sleep. The storm still rages outside and Calphurnia has had a dreadful nightmare that her husband will die. She begs and pleads with Caesar not to go out on the Ides of March. Just then, as dawn breaks, in comes **Decius Brutus**, one of the conspirators. Caesar explains that he will not go to the senate because of his wife's dream. He says:

Caesar She dreamt she saw my statue like a fountain with a hundred spouts, did run pure blood:

But Decius scoffs and replies:

Decius Your statue spouting blood signifies that from you Rome shall suck reviving blood.

And, flattered, Caesar put on his cloak and goes off with Decius to the Senate, leaving Calphurnia distraught.

On the way to the Senate, **Artemidorus**, a faithful old senator tries to warn Caesar, but Caesar arrogantly brushes him aside.

9

Brutus, Cassius and the rest of the **conspirators** are waiting at the Senate when **Caesar** arrives with **Decius**. They surround him, raise their weapons and strike. As he falls, Caesar turns to Brutus and with his dying breath says:

Caesar Et tu Bruté!

Then all the conspirators cry:

Conspirators Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead!

And they wash their hands right up to their elbows in Caesar's blood. Just then, in comes **Mark Antony**, Caesar's favourite, and catches them red handed. He is horrified and deeply upset, but he shakes the conspirators' hands. He kneels and begs permission to speak at Caesar's funeral, to which Brutus agrees.

10

The conspirators depart to tell the people what has happened, and **Mark Antony** is left alone with **Caesar's** body. His grief pours out:

Mark Antony Oh pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth, that I am meek and gentle with these butchers!

And then his anger:

Mark Antony Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war!

And he vows revenge.



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11

Outside the Senate, a great angry **crowd** has gathered. They are jeering and stamping their feet. The body of **Caesar** lies before them. Brutus comes to calm them down:

Brutus Romans, countrymen, hear me. Had you rather Caesar living and die all slaves, or Caesar dead and live as free men?

The crowd likes what he says. They cheer and cry:

Crowd Live Brutus, Live!

Confident that the people are on his side, Brutus steps down to make way for **Mark Antony** and leaves him to speak to the crowd. Once again, the crowd jeer and stamp, but in a mighty voice, Mark Antony cries:

Mark Antony Friends, Roman, countrymen, lead me your ears. I come to bury Caesar not to praise him.

And he goes on to tell them that Brutus is an honourable man. But, all persuasion and smiles, Mark Antony holds up Caesar's will which leaves every citizen some gold. That makes them listen. Then, Mark Antony uncovers the stab wounds all over Caesar's body. The crowd begin to turn against Brutus and the conspirators.



12

Mark Antony's speech has turned the crowd into a mob baying for conspirators' blood! In the back streets of Rome, **Cinna** the poet is on his way to Caesar's funeral, when he meets an angry **mob** who grab him because he is called Cinna; the name of one of the conspirators. He cries:

Cinna I am Cinna the poet, not Cinna the conspirator!

But the mob chant:

Mob Tear him for his bad verses!

And they murder him.

13

Outside the city, in Philippi, **Brutus** and **Cassius** are making their plans to fight against Mark Antony and his ally, Octavius Caesar, but things have become strained between them. They argue over money. Cassius complains:

Cassius You wrong me every way; you wrong me Brutus. But Brutus shakes his head and confesses why he is so ill-tempered. Portia, his wife, has committed suicide. Nevertheless, despite his personal grief, he is determined to fight in order to restore order to his beloved Rome.

He says:

Brutus There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken on the flood, leads on to fortune;

Cassius leaves Brutus alone to prepare, and Brutus is settling down when suddenly **the ghost of Julius Caesar** appears before him. Brutus is petrified. The ghost points an accusing finger and moans:

Ghost Thou shalt see me at Philippi.



14

The morning of battle dawns. **Octavius Caesar** and **Mark Antony** and their soldiers face **Brutus** and **Cassius** and their soldiers. **Pindarus**, Cassius's slave is at his side. The leaders send the soldiers in to fight, and there is a long and bloody battle, but eventually it is obvious that Mark Antony's men are going to win. So Cassius turns to his slave Pindarus, draws his sword, and Pindarus holds it whilst Cassius falls onto it and dies. Then, in runs **Strato** from the battlefield, a soldier fiercely loyal to Brutus. Brutus draws his sword, and Strato holds it for him whilst Brutus, too, falls on his sword. And so, Cassius and Brutus are dead. Mark Antony and Octavius Caesar stop the fighting, with their victory secure, and come to pay their respects. Mark Antony stands over Brutus' body and declares:

Mark Antony He was the noblest Roman of them all.

THE END



CHARACTER PROFILES

FOR SCULPTING

The list below list covers the majority of the main characters in **Julius Caesar**. Other characters could be added for a more thorough exploration of all the relationships.



NOTES

Character lists are useful to use when studying any of Shakespeare's plays. Create them yourself for the play you are studying, or search for them online.

JULIUS CAESAR

Ruler of the Roman Government. Caesar is not King and refuses to take a crown even when the people seem to want him to, but he does seem to see himself as better than others.

**...I am constant as the northern star,
Of whose true fixed and resting quality
There is no fellow in the firmament.**

CALPHURNIA

Caesar's wife. She has a dream before Caesar's assassination, predicting his death and she begs him to stay at home.

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

PORTIA

Brutus's wife. She seems very devoted to Marcus Brutus but does not like him keeping secrets from her.

**I grant I am a woman; but withal
A woman well-reputed, Cato's daughter**

MARCUS BRUTUS

A respected and important politician – he wants to do good for the people of Rome and becomes a conspirator in the plot to kill Caesar.

**Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream**

CASSIUS

The main organiser of the plot against Caesar. He feels that Caesar has gained too much power and does not want him to become King, convincing others they should fight back.

**The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings**



CASCA

The first to strike Caesar. He is a conspirator in the plot to kill Caesar and describes how Caesar plays to the crowd at the start of the play, refusing to take the crown three times.

And then 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

DECIUS BRUTUS

He is a conspirator in the plot to kill Caesar. Persuades Caesar to come to the Senate House, where he will be killed.

But when I tell him (Caesar) he hates flatterers, He says he does, being then most flattered. Let me work; For I can give his humour the true bent, And I will bring him to the Capitol.

CINNA

He is a conspirator in the plot to kill Caesar. The first to celebrate when Caesar is dead. A crowd confuses Cinna the Poet for Cinna, and kills the wrong man.

Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead! Run hence, proclaim, cry it about the streets.

CAIUS LIGARIUS

Supporter of Pompey, whom Caesar has just defeated. Joins the conspiracy to kill Caesar because he thinks Brutus is honourable.

Brave son, derived from honourable loins! Thou, like an exorcist, hast conjured up My mortified spirit. Now bid me run, And I will strive with things impossible;

CICERO

A Roman Senator well-known for his skill at speaking, he is later killed by Mark Antony, Octavius and Lepidus' purge after Caesar's assassination.

Indeed, it is a strange-disposed time: But men may construe things after their fashion, Clean from the purpose of the things themselves.

MARK ANTONY

Politician, General and loyal friend to Caesar. Mark Antony is a very strong public speaker and does not understand the arguments of the conspirators that murder of Caesar is the right course.

O mighty Caesar! dost thou lie so low? Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils, Shrunk to this little measure? Fare thee well.

OCTAVIUS CAESAR

Julius Caesar's adopted son (Calphurnia can't have children). He is absent through most of the play, travelling, but returns and allies with Mark Antony after the conspiracy. However, there is a struggle for power between Octavius and Mark Antony.

Mark Antony: Octavius, lead your battle softly on Upon the left hand of the even field.

Octavius: Upon the right hand, I; keep thou the left.



CASSIUS'S SPEECH

Act 1 Scene 2 Extract

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



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GLOSSARY

mettle: spirit, disposition (puns on 'metal')

wrought: manipulated

that...disposed: its usual inclination/its natural disposition

meet: right or fitting

their likes: those like them

who: who is

bear me hard: tolerate me grudgingly, dislike me

he...me: Brutus would not be able to sway my views (as I do his) / Caesar would still not be able to entice me

several hands: different styles of handwriting

tending to: concerning

obscurely: covertly, subtly

glanced: hinted

seat him sure: seat himself more securely (in the chair of power), i.e. 'take great care'



PORTIA AND BRUTUS

SCENE STUDY

Act 2 Scene 1

Edited by RSC Education

Portia Brutus, my lord.

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

Portia You suddenly arose and walked about, musing
And sighing with your **arms a-cross**.
Make me acquainted with your cause of grief.

Brutus I am not well and that is all.

Portia Is Brutus sick? No: You have some sick offence
Within your mind.

Brutus You are a true and honourable wife, that visits
My sad heart.

Portia If this were true, then should I know this
Secret. Tell me your counsels, I will not
Disclose them.

Brutus Oh ye gods, make me worthy of this noble
Wife! Go in awhile and **by and by**, all the
Characters of my sad brows, I will **construe**
To thee.

Portia Thou has some suit to Caesar hast thou not?

Brutus That I have, if it will please Caesar to hear me.

Portia O Brutus! The heavens speed thee in thy
Enterprise.

GLOSSARY

mean you: are you doing

arms a-cross: conventional gesture
of melancholy or introspection

ruddy drops: blood

by and by: imminently

construe: explain

ASSASSINATION MOTIVES

'They are the Faction. O Conspiracy...'

Among the conspirators there are different reasons for their involvement.

CASSIUS HIS MOTIVATION:

'...this man (Caesar)

Is now become a god, and Cassius is
A wretched creature and must bend his body,
If Caesar carelessly but nod on him.'

BRUTUS HIS MOTIVATION:

(Last to stab Caesar)

'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,
And not dismember Caesar!'

CASCA HIS MOTIVATION:

(First to stab Caesar)

'Indeed, they say the senators tomorrow
Mean to establish Caesar as a King;

...
I will set this foot of mine as far
As who goes farthest.'

LIGARIUS HIS MOTIVATION:

'I am not sick, if Brutus have in hand
Any exploit worthy the name of honour.'



MARK ANTONY'S SPEECH

Act 3 Scene 2

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 oft **interred** with their bones.
 So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
 Hath told you Caesar was ambitious;
 If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
 And grievously hath Caesar **answered** it.
 Here, under **leave** of Brutus and the rest
 (For Brutus is an honourable man;
 So are they all, all honourable men),
 Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
 He was my friend, faithful and just to me,
 But Brutus says he was ambitious,
 And Brutus is an honourable man.
 He hath brought many captives home to Rome,
 Whose ransoms did the **general coffers** fill.
 Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
 When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:
 Ambition should be made of sterner stuff.
 Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,
 And Brutus is an honourable man.
 You all did see that on the Lupercal
 I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
 Which he did thrice refuse. Was this ambition?
 Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,
 And sure he is an honourable man.
 I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
 But here I am to speak what I do know.
 You all did love him once, not without cause.
 What cause withholds you, then, to mourn for him?
 O judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts,
 And men have lost their reason! Bear with me;
 My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
 And I must pause till it come back to me.



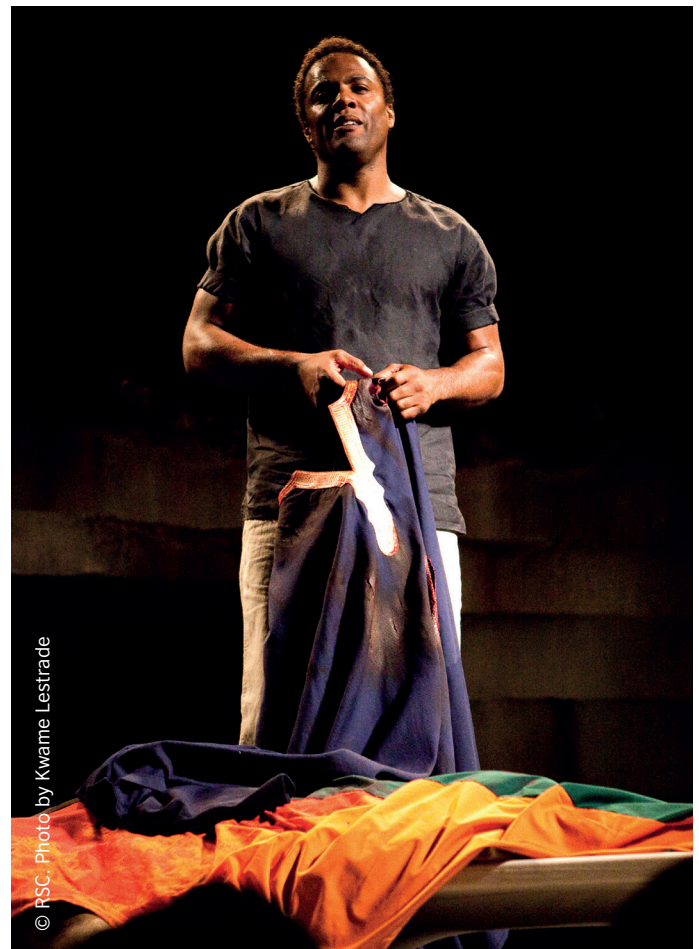
GLOSSARY

interred: buried

answered: paid for

leave: permission

general coffers: public treasury



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BRUTUS'S SPEECH

Act 3 Scene 2

Romans, countrymen, and **lovers**, hear me for my **cause**, and be silent that you may hear. Believe me **for** mine honour, and have respect to mine honour that you may believe. **Censure** me in your wisdom, and awake your **senses** that you may the better judge. If there be any in this assembly, any dear friend of Caesar's, to him I say that Brutus' love to Caesar was no less than his. If then that friend demand why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my answer: not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more. Had you rather Caesar were living, and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all freemen? As Caesar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honour him; but, as he was ambitious, I slew him. There is tears for his love, joy for his fortune, honour for his valour, and death for his ambition. Who is here so base that would be a bondman? If any, speak, for him have I offended. Who is here so **rude** that would not be a Roman? If any, speak, for him have I offended. Who is here so **vile** that will not love his country? If any, speak, for him have I offended. I pause for a reply.



GLOSSARY

lovers: friends

cause: grounds for action/explanation

for: because of

censure: judge

senses: minds, wits

rude: uncivilized

vile: lowly, contemptible



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TRIAL SET UP

SPEECH TWENTY

TO HELP YOU INTRODUCE THE TRIAL OF JULIUS CAESAR'S CONSPIRATORS WHEN WORKING THROUGH THE ACTIVITY.

'People of Rome, we are here to debate the issue of the assassination of Julius Caesar on the Ides of March. In 44 B.C. senators of Rome stabbed Gaius Julius Caesar 60 times, beside a statue of his former co-leader Pompey. The title of Rex (King), had been offered by the people to Julius Caesar. He rejected it. However, grave doubts about his sincerity have been expressed by certain

senators. Caesar had put his own likeness on our coins, and enjoyed parading his victories through the streets of our city. Certain senators believed that Caesar's intention was to destroy the Republic and Rome and seize power for himself, as King of Rome. These same senators conspired to murder him. The question before us is 'Was the assassination of Julius Caesar justified?'

