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.

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.

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.
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.

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.

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.
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.

**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.

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.
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.

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 shall see me at Philippi.

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.

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

**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*
**Deicius 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.*

**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*

**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.*

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*Shakespeare Lives additional resources*
Act 1 Scene 2
Extract

Edited by RSC Education
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.

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’
Act 2 Scene I

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 they Enterprise.

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.’

GLOSSARY

mean you: are you doing
arms a-cross: conventional gesture of melancholy or introspection
ruddy drops: blood
by and by: imminently
construe: explain
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
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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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?’