

Julius Caesar Book Notes

Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare

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Contents

Julius Caesar Book Notes.....	1
Contents.....	2
Author/Context.....	4
Plot Summary.....	6
Major Characters.....	8
Objects/Places.....	10
Quotes.....	11
Topic Tracking: Dedication.....	14
Topic Tracking: Excess.....	16
Topic Tracking: Rush to Judgement.....	18
Act I, Scene I.....	19
Act I, Scene II.....	20
Act I, Scene III.....	21
Act II, Scene I.....	22
Act II, Scene II.....	24
Act II, Scene III.....	25
Act II, Scene IV.....	26
Act III, Scene I.....	27
Act III, Scene II.....	29
Act III, Scene III.....	30
Act IV, Scene I.....	31
Act IV, Scene II.....	32
Act IV, Scene III.....	33
Act V, Scene I.....	34
Act V, Scene II.....	35



Act V, Scene III..... 36

Act V, Scene IV..... 37

Act V, Scene V..... 38



Author/Context

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-on-Avon, England, around April 23, 1564. His parents, John Shakespeare and Mary (nee Arden) Shakespeare, had inherited a modest but significant sum of money and land from Mary's father, which apparently increased John's standing in the community. Formerly a tradesman, he was subsequently elected to town office, most notable as High Bailiff in 1568. Neither John nor Mary was literate, but they somehow secured an education for both of their sons, who were admitted to the Free School around the age of seven. The family had a daughter in 1569, named Jane, followed by another daughter Anne, and a third son, Richard. William left school around the age of thirteen to help his father, whose finances were failing. William stayed in school, and went on to become a successful businessman in London. William was apprenticed to his father, and possibly a butcher, but may also have helped his father, who sold wool and various leather goods. John fell onto very hard times, and the family lost Anne around the same time. Although they stood to inherit money from Mary's stepmother, they got little, and continued to have troubles. Shakespeare was married at the age of 19 - in November of 1582 - to Anne Hathaway, probably before his indenture to the butcher was over. They had their first child, Susanna, on May 26, 1583. Anne was pregnant prior to the marriage - by whom it is not clear - but it seemed to have mattered little to either her or William.

After the documentation of his marriage, literally nothing is known about his life until he is mentioned as an upstart by a theater critic in London in 1592. At that point, it is clear from the documentation that a number of his plays had been produced on London stages to positive acclaim, and that he was a respected and well-known actor as well. By then he had already written a number of works, including *Henry VI* and the poem *Venus and Adonis*. It is relatively clear that Shakespeare spent the majority of his time during this period in London, but there is no evidence that Anne and the children (now including Susanna and twins, Hamnet and Judith - named after a couple with whom they were friendly) ever left Stratford.

Shakespeare continued to write and perform, falling into favor with the Lord Chamberlain, to whom he may have dedicated a poem. Shakespeare's acting troupe was sponsored by the Lord, and hence called the Lord Chamberlain's Men. They performed primarily at Court, as well as in other theaters around London. Beginning around 1597, his troupe became the King's Men, and they subsequently were able to perform at Blackfriars, and later at the Globe, in whose profits Shakespeare, along with other actors, had a share. This period of favor in the Court, as well as his business deals and luck, made Shakespeare a relatively wealthy man.

This is approximately the period during which *Julius Caesar* was written. It begins a series of tragedies produced by Shakespeare over the next couple of years. It is unclear when exactly *Julius Caesar* was written, but some accounts place its performance around 1599, about eight months after the completion of the Globe theater in January or February of 1599. In any case, it was a familiarly used reference in poems and other written accounts by 1600-01. *Julius Caesar* is most clearly an adaptation of the account



written by the Greek scholar Plutarch, and translated by Sir Thomas North, principally of the lives of Marcus Brutus, Julius Caesar, and Marcus Antonius. In addition to the very clear language linking these two texts, there is evidence that Shakespeare drew heavily from a contemporary paper called *A Mirror For Magistrates*, which gave an account of the story of Caesar's death.

Around this period, Shakespeare's father passed away. In addition, his son Hamnet had died a few years earlier at the age of 11. Shakespeare's acting troupe was forced to move (literally) across the river to the Globe Theater because the landlord closed their original theater. The troupe and its producers dismantled the former theater, moved its timbers across the river, and used them to build the Globe, which was then the most elaborate and largest theater ever built in London. It was a time of change.

Very little is known about Shakespeare's life, especially regarding his education, family life, and rise to fame in London. Over the years, a number of questions have surfaced regarding the validity of his authorship, especially in light of his limited education. Is it possible that a man who was brought up by illiterate parents would be able to write in such impeccable and moving verse? It's very hard to tell. The academic community, while largely united behind Shakespearean authorship, does remain divided on this issue. There is some evidence that at least one of the plays thought to be written by Shakespeare was actually penned by someone else, but the evidence is difficult to trace to a reliable source. Whatever the case, the plays and sonnets remain a testament to talent somewhere in late-sixteenth century England.

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Plot Summary

Julius Caesar returns to Rome, victorious from battle. The crowd in Rome is ecstatic, and they attempt to crown him King three times. A group of generals in his army become concerned about Caesar's power and his penchant for extreme and tyrannical actions. That night, huge storms surround Rome, and strange, supernatural things happen all over the city. Cassius, Cinna, and Casca meet during the night and discuss their desire to overthrow Caesar from the throne. They believe they should kill him. The three involve Decius Brutus, Trebonius, Ligarius, and Metellus Cimber in the growing conspiracy. They all, except for Casca, go to Marcus Brutus' house and convince him to join. The group hatches a plan to kill Caesar at the Senate the next day, each man drawing his sword on Caesar at the same time. Cassius pushes the group to kill Mark Antony, Caesar's constant companion and ally, as well. Marcus Brutus argues against this action, saying that the bloodshed should be kept to a minimum, and vengeful actions should be avoided by the group.

Later in the same scene, after an impassioned speech in which Brutus' wife Portia reveals that she has gashed her thigh to prove that her strength is equal to that of her husband, Brutus is compelled by his love and respect for her to tell her what is troubling him. He promises to tell her what is going on after he meets with his co-conspirators.

The next morning, Calphurnia, Caesar's wife, initially convinces Caesar to stay home because she had nightmares about what his fate would be today. Caesar remains proud, though, and one of the conspirators, Decius Brutus, comes to his house and reinterprets Calphurnia's dream and convinces Caesar to go to the Capitol and Senate after all. Before Caesar makes his way to the Senate, a sophist named Artemidorus reads aloud a warning that he will attempt to pass off to Caesar before he enters the Senate, but he is never able to present the scroll to Caesar. The document names all of the conspirators and warns Caesar to stay away from them today.

When he arrives at the Senate, Caesar sees a soothsayer who had warned him the day before to beware of the ides of March, and says to him, "the ides of March are come," but the soothsayer responds ominously, "Ay, Caesar, but not gone." As Caesar goes to the front of the Senate, the conspirators follow him and begin to argue for a pardon for Metellus Cimber's banished brother. This way, they are able to get close to Caesar, who arrogantly refuses to consider the request. At this, Casca begins by stabbing Caesar in the back of the neck, followed by the rest of the group, and, finally, by Marcus Brutus, who stabs him in the heart.

Meanwhile, Trebonius has taken Antony aside so he cannot protect Caesar. The crowd in the Senate panics. Antony re-enters as the conspirators are standing over Caesar's body, and expresses his grief to Caesar before approaching the conspirators to pledge his allegiance to them, the new leaders of Rome. Antony makes a simple request: that he be allowed to bear Caesar's body to the center of Rome and make a eulogy for Caesar before the crowd. When Brutus agrees to this concession, Cassius takes him aside and expresses his worry that Antony may still do something to hurt the



conspirators. Brutus brushes these concerns aside, saying that he will speak to the crowd first, saying that he killed Caesar out of concern for the citizens of Rome.

After Brutus' speech, Antony proceeds to incite the crowd against Brutus and his co-conspirators with irony and mockery.

In the next scene, the poet Cinna is accosted by the crowd that was incited by Antony's speech just because he shares a name with the conspirator. After this, the Triumvir that was supposed to include Caesar, but now includes Mark Antony, Octavius and Lepidus plan their revenge on Marcus Brutus and his group of conspirators, in order to regain control of Rome, which they had planned to rule together.

They plan to meet Brutus and Cassius, who are camped with Brutus' army outside of Sardis. In the next scene, Brutus is waiting to greet Cassius, who has just arrived with his army. We find out that Cassius is insulted by Brutus' condemnation of Lucius Pella for taking bribes. Cassius had pleaded for clemency for Pella. It turns out that the argument is a misunderstanding, partly caused by the pain Brutus suffers when he hears that his wife, Portia, has killed herself by swallowing hot coals. After this argument, the two men decide to advance to Philippi before battling Antony and Octavius, hoping to catch them when they are at their weakest. That night, while reading, Brutus is distracted by a ghost who appears in his tent. The others remain asleep while Caesar's ghost warns Brutus that they will meet again tomorrow at the plains of Philippi.

The next day, Brutus and Cassius go to speak with Antony and Octavius before they go into battle. After they leave, Cassius and Brutus speak one last time before the battle, and Brutus states that he will never be led through the streets of Rome as a captive; he will kill himself instead. In the next scene, Brutus commands Messala to give the message to charge to Cassius and his troops, because he fears that Octavius has approached too quickly. Cassius is worried by this rash move, and Cassius and his servant Pindarus retreat to a high hill while Pindarus narrates the action below and Cassius hides. When Pindarus misinterprets what he sees below, and tells Cassius that Titinius has been captured, Cassius despairs and commands Pindarus to kill him. Afterward, Titinius returns to claim victory, and expresses grief over Cassius' death, and kills himself with the same sword. Brutus enters with his officers, including Messala, Young Cato, Strato, Voluminus and Lucilius. Brutus sees the two men dead and proclaims that Caesar is still mighty because of what has resulted from his death.

The soldiers leave and return to battle, but Brutus goes off to the side with some close friends. After most of them have been persuaded to go back into battle, Strato, who Brutus has asked to stay, shakes Brutus' hand out of respect, and holds his sword as Brutus stabs himself with it. Octavius and Antony find Brutus' body, and both proceed to complement Brutus and recognize his pure motives for killing Caesar.



Major Characters

Julius Caesar: Leader of Rome, who is about to be crowned by the Senate, and is killed by a conspiracy for fear he will become a tyrant.

Cassius: Architect of the conspiracy to kill Caesar, and the man who convinces Brutus to join the conspiracy, and then leads them in ruling Rome.

Marcus Brutus: A powerful general and senator in the Roman army who is asked to lead a conspiracy against Caesar, and later fights against Marcus Antonius and Octavius Caesar to maintain control of Rome.

Casca: A member of the conspiracy, and co-architect of the plan with Cassius.

Cinna: A member of the conspiracy.

Decius Brutus: A member of the conspiracy who goes to Caesar's house and convinces him to come to the Senate even though he has been warned not to.

Trebonius: A member of the conspiracy. The man who takes Mark Antony away to distract him when Caesar is attacked.

Ligarius: Also a member of the conspiracy.

Metellus Cimber: The member of the conspiracy who approaches Caesar with his plea for a pardon for his brother, Publius Cimber, in order to get the conspirators close enough to Caesar to kill him.

Marcus Antonius (Mark Antony): Caesar's loyal aide and right hand man. Later, a member of the Triumvir that fights against Marcus Brutus and Cassius to regain power over Rome.

Portia: Brutus' Wife.

Calphurnia: Caesar's Wife.

Artemidorus: A sophist and loyal subject of Caesar who tries to warn him of the plot with a scroll he prepares.

Octavius Caesar: A member of the Triumvir that is planning to rule Rome and the surrounding areas. He is sent for by Caesar and arrives the day Caesar is killed. He then goes into battle with Antony against Brutus and Cassius for control of Rome.

Minor Characters

A Soothsayer: Warns Caesar--unheeded--to be aware of the ides of March.



M. Aemilius Lepidus: The third member of the Triumvir, who is condescended upon by Octavius and Antony, who believe he is dumb.

Cicero: A friend of Casca's who is not included in the conspiracy because he is not trusted, but who nonetheless is aware of the sentiments which spurred it on.

Publius: An elderly senator who cannot run from the Senate after Caesar is killed and is therefore asked by Brutus to calm the crowds.

Flavius and Marullus: Two Tribunes who begin the play by stating their fear of Caesar's power as they watch the Roman commoners prepare in a frenzy for his return.

Cinna: A poet who is chased by Roman plebeians because he has the same name as the conspirator.

Lucilius, Titinius, Messala, Young Cato, and Volumnius: Friends of Brutus and Cassius who fight with them at Philippi.

Clitus, Claudius, Strato, and Dardanius: Officers and servants in Brutus' army.

Lucius: Brutus' young, loyal servant who is particularly well liked by Brutus. He tries to help Portia when she gets worried about Brutus while he is at the Senate.

Pindarus: A servant to Cassius who has become very loyal to him over the years.

An elderly poet: A man who tries to speak to Cassius and Brutus while they are fighting, but is snapped at by Brutus, who is in very bad humor because he has just found out that his wife has committed suicide.



Objects/Places

Rome: The city of which Caesar is about to be crowned King, the residence of all the characters in Julius Caesar, and the future center of the Roman empire that Octavius Caesar, Marcus Antonius, and M. Aemilius Lepidus plan to lead as Triumvirs.

Senate (Capitol): The location of the gathering of the Roman Senators, and the site where the members of the conspiracy murder Caesar.

Sardis: The site of Brutus' army encampment prior to the battle with Antony and Octavius.

Philippi: The site of the final battle between Brutus and Cassius' army and Antony and Octavius' army.

Quotes

Quote 1: Casca: "But those that understood him smil'd at one another, and shook their heads; but for mine own part, it was Greek to me." Act I, Scene II, Line 279

Quote 2: Cassius: "...Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius: Therein, ye gods, you make the weak most strong; Therein, ye gods, you tyrants do defeat: Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass, nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron, can be retentive to the strength of spirit; but life, being weary of these worldly bars, never lacks power to dismiss itself." Act I, Scene III, Line 90

Quote 3: Brutus: "Th' abuse of greatness is when it disjoins remorse from power; and, to speak truth of Caesar, I have not known when his affections sway'd more than his reason. But 'tis a common proof, that lowliness is young ambition's ladder, whereto the climber-upward turns his face; but when he once attains the upmost round, he then unto the ladder turns his back, looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees by which he did ascend. So Caesar may; then lest he may, prevent." Act II, Scene I, Line 18

Quote 4: "Brutus, thou sleep'st; awake, and see thyself. Shall Rome, etc. Speak, strike, redress!" Act II, Scene I, Line 46

Quote 5: Brutus: "Swear priests and cowards, and men cautelous, old feeble carrions, and such suffering souls that welcome wrongs; unto bad causes swear such creatures as men doubt; but do not stain the even virtue of our enterprise, nor th'insuppressive mettle of our spirits, to think that or our cause or our performance did need an oath; when every drop of blood that every Roman bears, and nobly bears, is guilty of a several bastardy, if he do break the smallest particle of any promise that hath pass'd from him." Act II, Scene I, Line 129

Quote 6: Portia: "I grant I am a woman; but withal a woman that Lord Brutus took to wife; I grant I am a woman; but withal a woman well reputed, Cato's daughter. Think you I am no stronger than my sex, being so father'd, and so husbanded? Tell me your counsels, I will not disclose'em. I have made a strong proof of my constancy, giving myself a voluntary wound here, in the thigh: can I bear that with patience, and not my husband's secrets?" Act II, Scene I, Line 292

Quote 7: Artemidorus: "Caesar, beware of Brutus; take heed of Cassius; come not near Casca; have an eye to Cinna; trust not Trebonius; mark well Metellus Cimber; Decius Brutus loves thee not; thou hast wrong'd Caius Ligarius. There is but one mind in all these men, and it is bent against Caesar. If thou beest not immortal, look about you: security gives way to conspiracy. The mighty gods defend thee!" Act. II, Scene III, Line 1

Quote 8: Caesar: "the ides of March are come."
Soothsayer: "Ay, Caesar, but not gone." Act III, Scene I, Line 1



Quote 9: Caesar: "So in the world: 'tis furnish'd well with men, And men are flesh and blood, and apprehensive; yet in the number I do know but one that unassailable holds on his rank, unshak'd of motion; and that I am he, let me a little show it, even in this, that I was constant Cimber should be banish'd, and constant do remain to keep him so." Act III, Scene I, Line 66

Quote 10: Caesar: "Et tu, Brute? - Then fall Caesar!" Act III, Scene I, Line 77

Quote 11: Brutus: "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." Act III, Scene II, Line 18

Quote 12: Antony: "The noble Brutus hath told you Caesar was ambitious. If it were so, it was a grievous fault, and grievously hath Caesar answer'd it. Here under leave of Brutus and the rest (for Brutus is an honorable man, so are they all, all honorable 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 honorable 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 sure he is an honorable man....I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke, but here I am to speak what I do know." Act III, Scene II, Line 79

Quote 13: Antony: "O Masters! if I were dispos'd to stir your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage, I should do Brutus wrong, and Cassius wrong, who, you all know, are honorable men. I will not do them wrong..." Act III, Scene II, Line 123

Quote 14: Antony: "They that have done this deed are honourable. What private griefs they have, alas, I know not, that made them do it. They are wise and honourable, and will, no doubt, with reasons answer you. I come not, friends, to steal away your hearts. I am no orator, as Brutus is, but (as you know me all) a plain blunt man, that love my friend; and that they know full well that gave me public leave to speak of him." Act III, Scene II, Line 214

Quote 15: Brutus: "We, at the height, are ready to decline. There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and miseries. On such a full sea are we now afloat, and we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures." Act IV, Scene III, Line 216

Quote 16: Brutus: "Words before blows: is it so, countrymen?"

Octavius: "Not that we love words better, as you do."

Brutus: "Good words are better than bad strokes, Octavius."

Antony: "In your bad strokes, Brutus, you give good words; Witness the hole you made in Caesar's heart, crying, 'Long live! hail, Caesar!'" Act V, Scene I, Line 27

Quote 17: Brutus: "No, Cassius, no: think not, thou noble Roman, that ever Brutus will go bound to Rome; he bears too great a mind. But this same day must end that work



the ides of March begun; and whether we shall meet again I know not. Therefore our everlasting farewell take. For ever, and for ever, farewell, Cassius. If we do meet again, why, we shall smile; if not, why then this parting was well made." Act V, Scene I, Line 111



Topic Tracking: Dedication

Act I, Scene II

Dedication 1: Antonius states that when Caesar commands something, it is as good as done. This shows that Caesar holds a great deal of power over Antonius

Act II, Scene I

Dedication 2: Brutus recognizes that his servant, Lucius, is ready to get Brutus a lit candle at a moment's notice, even though he was just woken up by Brutus in the middle of the night. Lucius is visibly tired, and Brutus is moved by Lucius' dedication to his job and his master.

Dedication 3: Brutus demonstrates his dedication and love to his servant boy Lucius, who is fast asleep and does not hear Brutus call to him, again in the middle of the night. Brutus lets him continue to sleep this time, saying that Lucius is a good boy, and deserves his rest, despite the fact that Brutus needs his help.

Dedication 4: Portia convinces her husband to tell her what he is worried about by giving herself a gash in the thigh. By showing her dedication to Brutus, and her ability to withstand great pain so that she may speak truthfully to him, she wins his renewed respect.

Dedication 5: Caius Ligarius comes to Brutus' house during the night, as he has been summoned. He states that if Brutus requires his help, he will help no matter how sick he is. Caius is clothed with a kerchief, which signifies that he is not well. Despite this, Caius agrees to become part of the conspiracy.

Act II, Scene II

Dedication 6: Calphurnia goes down on her knees to beg Caesar to stay at home today, and offers to be blamed for Caesar's decision to stay home, so that Caesar will not be ashamed. Calphurnia is willing to take on this shame because she is so worried about her husband's safety. In her dream she had a vision of Caesar dripping in blood.

Act II, Scene IV

Dedication 7: Portia, worried about what will happen to Brutus, asks her servant Lucius to see what is happening at the Senate, and, in her state of fear for her husband, imagines ominous sounds coming from the Senate. She wishes to warn him in some way about her sense of foreboding, however she doesn't want to worry Brutus, and so asks Lucius to tell him she is happy.

Act III, Scene I



Dedication 8: Antony's servant sends a message of false dedication to the conspirators from Antony, intended to allow Antony at least a temporary measure of safety. After Caesar's death, Antony had escaped to his house, and sent his servant ahead of him bearing this false gesture in order to keep himself safe from what he fears will be further violence.

Dedication 9: Upon seeing Caesar's body laid out beside the conspirators, Antony expresses his true dedication to the slain leader, before covering it up with the excuse of grief while talking to Brutus and Cassius.

Dedication 10: Brutus declares to Antony and Cassius that he killed Caesar only because he loved him immensely, and is therefore willing to give him an honorable funeral. Part of this dedication to an honorable funeral is allowing Antony to speak at the funeral.

Act IV, Scene III

Dedication 11: Brutus tells Cassius that he has received word of Portia's death. Portia was distraught over what she feared would be Brutus' fate, and so she swallowed coals to kill herself. Her dedication to her husband's well-being and success overwhelms her entirely.

Act V, Scene III

Dedication 12: Pindarus, after killing Cassius, is so saddened that he runs away and banishes himself from Rome. Cassius had kept Pindarus as a slave for many years, and had kept him nearby, knowing that he might need someone to kill him. Pindarus had become very loyal to his master during this time, and is full of grief when he must kill Cassius.

Dedication 13: Titinius, after realizing that Pindarus and Cassius misunderstood what happened to him in the field below (he was greeted by friendly and exuberant soldiers), kills himself with Cassius' sword. Pindarus had seen Titinius dismount in the field below, and told Cassius that Titinius had been taken. In fact, Titinius had greeted some friendly soldiers, and Pindarus was mistaken. Unfortunately, Cassius believed Pindarus, and thought that defeat was imminent, so he had Pindarus kill him.



Topic Tracking: Excess

Act I, Scene I

Excess 1: Caesar is accused by Flavius of being excessively proud and desirous of power. Flavius is a scribe who mocks the commoners as they prepare excitedly for Caesar's return from battle.

Act I, Scene II

Excess 2: Cassius describes Caesar as excessively large in relationship to his followers (including Cassias). He says that Caesar's followers and close associates make themselves excessively and unnecessarily small and meek in their actions when they are around Caesar. He says that this way of acting is unnecessary and probably dangerous because it allows Caesar too much room to act like a king.

Excess 3: Caesar asks to be surrounded by excessively fat men, and is scared by Cassius because he is so thin.

Act I, Scene III

Excess 4: Cassius declares that the terrifying and supernatural events of the night are merely signs of something to come that Casca should look forward to and not be afraid of. He enumerates a number of fantastic things that have happened over the course of the night. The magic events, like a man's hand that is on fire but never burns, keep happening, and many people are very scared by them.

Act II, Scene I

Excess 5: Portia must resort to gashing her thigh in order to get her husband's attention and make him tell her the truth about his plans. She reveals this to him during a speech where she makes every plea possible that will convince Brutus that she is smart, reliable, and from a strong lineage.

Act III, Scene I

Excess 6: Caesar declares himself superior to all those around him - in this case, the conspirators - in every way. Metellus Cimber has decided to ask for a pardon for his brother as a means of getting close to Caesar. Caesar scorns the request, instead making a speech about how he must be morally superior to those around him, and so will not go back on his word. The pardon is insignificant, and so highlights his excessive pride.

Act III, Scene II



Excess 7: After reading Caesar's will, Antony takes the clothes off Caesar's body so that the Roman populous to whom he is speaking can see Caesar's wounds, thus inflaming the public opinion against Brutus even more.

Act V, Scene I

Excess 8: Octavius declares that he intends to avenge every single one of Caesar's 31 fatal wounds during the battle.

Act V, Scene V

Excess 9: Antony, upon finding Marcus Brutus dead, states that Brutus was the only one of the conspirators to have done his deed without any pride. Brutus was pure in intent, and without any excess of pride or envy at all.



Topic Tracking: Rush to Judgement

Act I, Scene II

Rush 1: Caesar declares that the soothsayer who warns him about the Ides of March is a "dreamer," and pays no heed to his warning. The soothsayer had warned him to beware of and be careful on the Ides of March--the next day.

Act II, Scene II

Rush 2: Caesar twice ignores Calphurnia's warnings about her nightmare, and declares that he will go to the senate this morning. Calphurnia has a nightmare where she sees Caesar bleeding from the neck as he stands before the Senate.

Act III, Scene I

Rush 3: Caesar immediately denies Metellus Cimber's brother a pardon, declaring himself morally superior (with this small case as proof), and therefore provides Metellus Cimber with a reason to become angry. Metellus Cimber then jumps on Caesar and the assassination plan is completed.

Rush 4: Brutus grants Antony's request that he be allowed to speak at Caesar's funeral, despite Cassius' protests that this is a dangerous and foolish decision. Antony then proceeds to subtly slander Brutus.

Act III, Scene III

Rush 5: The Plebeians encounter Cinna the poet on the street, and, though he tries to tell them his is not Cinna the conspirator, they all chase after him anyhow, ready to kill him.

Act IV, Scene III

Rush 6: Brutus insults his good friend Cassius as they approach each other on the battle field because Brutus assumes that Cassius has denied Brutus monetary support for the battle, even though that is not the case. Cassius responds in the same way during this exchange.

Act I, Scene I

Julius Caesar returns to Rome from battle. As he approaches, Flavius and Marullus, two writers, strike up conversation with some commoners who are out to welcome Caesar home. The two writers express their fear of Caesar's potential to become a tyrant. They encounter a number of Roman tradesmen who are off to the capitol to greet Caesar with great excitement.

Topic Tracking: Excess 1



Act I, Scene II

Meanwhile, the crowd in Rome is ecstatic, and they attempt to crown Caesar as king three times. All three times he refuses the crown, though each time with less force. He seems to swoon, and someone watching him reports famously, "But those that understood him smil'd at one another, and shook their heads; but for mine own part, it was Greek to me." Act I, Scene II, Line 279 A soothsayer approaches Caesar as he enters Rome, saying, "Beware the ides of March." Caesar brushes this comment off, saying that he is not a superstitious man. A group of generals in his army becomes concerned about Caesar's power, and his penchant for extreme and tyrannical actions. Cassius and Marcus Brutus hang back from Caesar's crowd, and Cassius presses Brutus for the meaning of his recent gloomy countenance. Brutus evades Cassius' questions until at last he finally admits that he does not feel Caesar will be a good leader of Rome. The conversation progresses, and Cassius and Casca begin a conversation about removing Caesar from power.

Topic Tracking: Excess 2

Topic Tracking: Dedication 1

Topic Tracking: Rush to Judgement 1



Act I, Scene III

That night, huge storms surround Rome, and strange, supernatural things happen all over the city: a slave holds up his burning hand, but remains untouched by the flame, and men are seen walking through the streets afire. Casca and Cicero converse in fear during the storm about their plan to kill Caesar, and worry about Marcus Brutus' willingness to be a part of the plan, and lead the Romans after Caesar's death. Cassius joins them, and decries their inaction, saying, "...Cassius from bondage will deliver
Cassius: Therein, ye gods, you make the weak most strong; Therein, ye gods, you tyrants do defeat: Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass, nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron, can be retentive to the strength of spirit; but life, being weary of these worldly bars, never lacks power to dismiss itself." Act I, Scene III, Line 90 Cinna encounters these three and joins in the planning of an attack on Caesar. He names Decius Brutus, Trebonius, Ligarius, and Metellus Cimber as four other men involved in the growing conspiracy.

Topic Tracking: Excess 4



Act II, Scene I

Meanwhile, Brutus is wide awake, anxiously pacing about his garden. He is trying to justify and understand Caesar's actions and personality: "Th' abuse of greatness is when it disjoins remorse from power; and, to speak truth of Caesar, I have not known when his affections sway'd more than his reason. But 'tis a common proof, that lowliness is young ambition's ladder, whereto the climber-upward turns his face; but when he once attains the upmost round, he then unto the ladder turns his back, looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees by which he did ascend. So Caesar may; then lest he may, prevent." Act II, Scene I, Line 18

His servant, Lucius, who Brutus asks to light a candle for him in his study, finds one of the notes Cassius has thrown into Brutus' house. These notes are written as if they come from Roman commoners, and imply that the Romans wish to have Brutus as their true leader. One of them says: "Brutus, thou sleep'st; awake, and see thyself. Shall Rome, etc. Speak, strike, redress!" Act II, Scene I, Line 46 After Brutus reads these, Cassius approaches Marcus Brutus to be his supporter, and invites his other conspirators to Brutus' house. Brutus remains skeptical of such a plot because he respects Caesar and does not wish to shed blood in any case, even to prevent tyranny. The group hatches a plan to kill Caesar at the Senate, or capitol, the next day, each man drawing his sword on Caesar at the same time. Cassius wishes to kill Mark Antony as well, because Antony is so loyal to Caesar, it is as if they are part of the same person. Marcus Brutus argues against this action, saying that the bloodshed should be kept to a minimum. In addition, he states that he is not taking part in this plan out of vengeance, but rather because Caesar is ambitious and therefore dangerous, in addition to being noble and able. Brutus says:

"Swear priests and cowards, and men cautelous, old feeble carrions, and such suffering souls that welcome wrongs; unto bad causes swear such creatures as men doubt; but do not stain the even virtue of our enterprise, nor th'insuppressive mettle of our spirits, to think that or our cause or our performance did need an oath; when every drop of blood that every Roman bears, and nobly bears, is guilty of a several bastardy, if he do break the smallest particle of any promise that hath pass'd from him." Act II, Scene I, Line 129

Just before the meeting, Brutus' wife Portia comes to him very worried about his state of mind. Brutus has been pacing around all night, looking worried and preoccupied. Brutus at first refuses Portia's request for information. After an impassioned speech in which Portia reveals that she has gashed her thigh to prove that she is strong enough to bear her husband's pain as an equal partner, Brutus is compelled by his love and respect for her to tell her what is troubling him. She says:

"I grant I am a woman; but withal a woman that Lord Brutus took to wife; I grant I am a woman; but withal a woman well reputed, Cato's daughter. Think you I am no stronger than my sex, being so father'd, and so husbanded? Tell me your counsels, I will not disclose'em. I have made a strong proof of my constancy, giving myself a voluntary



wound here, in the thigh: can I bear that with patience, and not my husband's secrets?"
Act II, Scene I, Line 292

He promises to tell her what is going on after he meets with his co-conspirators. Portia thanks him, but remains worried about his actions.

Topic Tracking: Excess 5

Topic Tracking: Dedication 2



Act II, Scene II

At the same time, Calphurnia, Caesar's wife, is wracked by horrible nightmares which she relates to Caesar in the morning in an attempt to keep him from the Senate. She dreams that she sees him bleeding to death at the foot of his statue in the Senate. Although Calphurnia initially convinces Caesar to stay home, one of the conspirators, Decius Brutus, comes to his house and reinterprets Calphurnia's dream to indicate that the blood she has seen is Caesar's generosity to the people of Rome. He also convinces the proud Caesar that to stay away from the Senate would indicate to the Romans that he did not deserve their respect or honor. Thus, Caesar decides to go the Senate after all.

Topic Tracking: Dedication 6

Topic Tracking: Rush to Judgement 2

Act II, Scene III

Before Caesar makes his way to the Senate, a sophist named Artemidorus reads aloud a warning that he will attempt to pass off to Caesar before he enters the Senate. The note says:

"Caesar, beware of Brutus; take heed of Cassius; come not near Casca; have an eye to Cinna; trust not Trebonius; mark well Metellus Cimber; Decius Brutus loves thee not; thou hast wrong'd Caius Ligarius. There is but one mind in all these men, and it is bent against Caesar. If thou beest not immortal, look about you: security gives way to conspiracy. The mighty gods defend thee!" Act. II, Scene III, Line 1

The note names all of the conspirators.

Act II, Scene IV

Meanwhile, Portia waits nervously at home, wondering when Marcus Brutus will return. She speaks with Lucius, her husband's trusted servant, and asks him if he hears strange sounds coming from the Senate. He does not, although Portia continues to worry, as if aware of what is about to happen. The soothsayer passes by the front of the house, and Portia questions him as well on the status of the proceedings. The soothsayer simply comments that he is hoping to catch Caesar and warn him again about the ides of March.

Topic Tracking: Dedication 7



Act III, Scene I

Along the way to the Senate Caesar is pressed by members of the conspiracy, as well as by Mark Antony, to give priority to various cases during the morning session. It is the ides of March, March 15. When he arrives at the Senate, he sees the soothsayer again, and says to him, "the ides of March are come." Soothsayer: "Ay, Caesar, but not gone." Act III, Scene I, Line 1

Shortly after Caesar's exchange with the soothsayer, Metellus Cimber, a member of the conspiracy, bows before Caesar and asks him to pardon his brother, whom Caesar has banished from Rome. Meanwhile, Trebonius takes Antony away from the center of action, and other members of the conspiracy gather round Caesar, ostensibly to support Metellus Cimber in his request. Caesar refuses, describing himself as a strong, steady, and unmoving moral compass among men who sway back and forth according to what is popular: Caesar: "So in the world: 'tis furnish'd well with men, And men are flesh and blood, and apprehensive; yet in the number I do know but one that unassailable holds on his rank, unshak'd of motion; and that I am he, let me a little show it, even in this, that I was constant Cimber should be banish'd, and constant do remain to keep him so." Act III, Scene I, Line 66 This is all the incitement the conspirators need, and they move to slay Caesar. Casca begins by stabbing him in the back of the neck, followed by the rest of the group, and, finally, by Marcus Brutus, who stabs him in the heart. As Caesar is stabbed, he says to Brutus, "Et tu, Brute? - Then fall Caesar!" Act III, Scene I, Line 77

This is especially poignant because some people believe that Brutus was Caesar's child - a result of an affair he had with Brutus' mother. However, it could just be that Caesar is astonished that Brutus, a trusted friend and general of his, has betrayed him so completely. The crowd and Senate members, in response to all the blood, panic and run from the arena as Marcus Brutus tries to calm them.

He asks Publius, an elderly senator who did not flee with the rest, to help him calm the crowd, then announces that the bloodshed is over, and gathers the conspirators together around the body of Caesar. They each cover their arms with Caesar's blood to mark them as members of the conspiracy. As the group prepares to set out triumphantly through Rome, one of Mark Antony's servants appears with a message of loyalty from Mark Antony. Brutus believes this statement of loyalty, but Cassius remains skeptical that this is in fact the case. Antony enters then, and expresses grief over the body of Caesar before approaching the conspirators to pledge his allegiance to the new leaders of Rome. He makes only one request: that he be allowed to bear Caesar's body to the center of Rome and make a eulogy for Caesar before the crowd. When Brutus agrees to this concession, Cassius takes him aside and expresses his worry that Antony may still do something to hurt the conspirators. Brutus brushes these concerns aside, saying that he will speak to the crowd first, explaining to them that he killed Caesar not out of vengeance, but out of a concern for the welfare of the citizens of Rome. The conspirators exit, and Antony falls over Caesar to express his grief. Afterwards, a servant of Octavius Caesar's enters, bidding news of his arrival. The boy is grieved by Caesar's death, and stays with Antony to find out how his speech at Caesar's funeral



will go, and reports back to his master. Octavius is part of the Triumvir that was planning to rule all of the Roman Empire - Caesar was to be another member.

Topic Tracking: Excess 6

Topic Tracking: Dedication 8

Topic Tracking: Rush to Judgement 3



Act III, Scene II

Brutus gives his speech, with his reasons for killing Caesar: "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." Act III, Scene II, Line 18 He then leaves as Antony begins to speak. Antony proceeds to incite the crowd against Brutus and his co-conspirators with irony and mockery by saying, "The noble Brutus hath told you Caesar was ambitious. If it were so, it was a grievous fault, and grievously hath Caesar answer'd it. Here under leave of Brutus and the rest (for Brutus is an honorable man, so are they all, all honorable 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 honorable 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 sure he is an honorable man....I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke, but here I am to speak what I do know." Act III, Scene II, Line 79

Although Antony is speaking against Brutus and his group, he makes a point of pretending to honor them: "O Masters! If I were dispos'd to stir your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage, I should do Brutus wrong, and Cassius wrong, who, you all know, are honorable men. I will not do them wrong..." Act III, Scene II, Line 123 He even goes as far as to insult the co-conspirators, and claim that they killed Caesar out of jealousy: "They that have done this deed are honorable. What private griefs they have, alas, I know not, that made them do it. They are wise and honorable, and will, no doubt, with reasons answer you. I come not, friends, to steal away your hearts. I am no orator, as Brutus is, but (as you know me all) a plain blunt man, that love my friend; and that they know full well that gave me public leave to speak of him." Act III, Scene II, Line 214

In the end, he pulls out Caesar's Will, which bequeaths all of Caesar's private gardens and walkways to the people of Rome. This is the final straw against the conspirators because it proves to the commoners that Caesar would have been a just ruler, and not at all ambitious, which is exactly why Brutus said he killed him.

Topic Tracking: Excess 7

Act III, Scene III

The poet Cinna is accosted by the crowd that was incited by Antony's speech. Simply because he shares his name with Cinna the conspirator, he is chased by the angry crowd in fear for his life.

Topic Tracking: Rush to Judgement 5



Act IV, Scene I

Act IV begins with the Triumvir (Mark Antony, Octavius, and Lepidus) planning their revenge on Marcus Brutus and his group of conspirators. First, they begin a list of men who will be put to death for Treason against Rome. On the top of this list are Lepidus' brother, Lucius Aemilius Paullus, and Antony's nephew, Publius. Lepidus then leaves, after which Antony questions whether he deserves to be a part of the ruling Triumvir. Octavius responds that Lepidus will serve well as a fall guy - someone who will do the dirty parts necessary for running an empire.

Act IV, Scene II

Brutus, who is camped with his army outside of Sardis, greets Cassius, who has just arrived with his army. There is apparently a rift between the two old friends, and the greeting does not go well. Pindarus and Titinius, Cassius' servant and officer, respectively, come to Brutus first and warn him that Cassius seems less friendly than before. Brutus stands warned as Cassius approaches, and invites Cassius to his tent to air his grievances.



Act IV, Scene III

We find out that Cassius feels slighted by Brutus' condemnation of Lucius Pella for taking bribes. Cassius is friendly with the man, and tried to beg forgiveness from Brutus, who refuses, in the name of justice. Brutus says that, because Caesar was killed in the name of justice, justice should be honored at all times, and he feels that Cassius has forgotten this. In addition, Brutus heard apparently false word from a messenger that Cassius had refused to sponsor the upcoming battle against Mark Antony and Octavius, and is angry. The two men explode in anger, which subsides as Cassius expresses anguish at being so alone, without the support of a formerly close friend. Brutus then backs down, and adds humor to the situation by implying that the argument was only due to Cassius' "womanly" humor. The two spar a bit more, before settling down and allowing that their tempers got the best of them.

As the argument subsides, an elder poet attempts to forcibly gain entrance to Brutus' tent. Officers force him back, but not before he tries to dispense advice to Brutus and Cassius. Brutus, especially, has no patience for the man, and wishes not to hear it. He gets so worked up about this, it turns out, because he has just heard that his wife, Portia, has killed herself by swallowing hot coals. She remained in the distraught state she was in the day Caesar was killed, and could not be consoled. Brutus first reports this news to Cassius, and then hears it again from the entering Titinius and Messala, who also bring news that Antony and Octavius have put over 100 Senators to death in the capitol to instill terror, and have arrived at Philippi. They then decide to advance to Philippi before battling Antony and Octavius, hoping to prevent those men from amassing greater numbers of loyal followers during a march from Philippi to Sardis. Brutus and Cassius, already having marched that distance while asking for money and food to support their cause, are no longer popular among the people. Brutus predicts:

"We, at the height, are ready to decline. There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and miseries. On such a full sea are we now afloat, and we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures." Act IV, Scene III, Line 216

Afterwards, Brutus asks his servant Lucius for some music as the officers all drop off to sleep in Brutus' tent. As Lucius drops off to sleep, Brutus decides to read instead. While reading, he is distracted by a ghost who appears in the tent to speak to him. The others remain asleep while Caesar's ghost warns Brutus that they will meet again tomorrow at the plains of Philippi. Brutus is shaken, and wakes the others up to ask them if they have seen or heard anything amiss. They have not.

Topic Tracking: Dedication 11

Topic Tracking: Rush to Judgement 6



Act V, Scene I

A messenger approaches Octavius and Antony's camp announcing that Brutus and Cassius have arrived, flying their battle flag. Octavius understands Cassius and Brutus' move as an attempt to show their strength and bravado. Antony knows better, and realizes that Brutus and Cassius are trying to put on a show of being braver and more prepared than they really are. The two sides, before beginning to fight, approach each other to speak. Antony tries to provoke Brutus, and tells him that every single stroke that killed Caesar will be avenged on the battlefield:

Brutus: "Words before blows: is it so, countrymen?"

Octavius: "Not that we love words better, as you do."

Brutus: "Good words are better than bad strokes, Octavius."

Antony: "In your bad strokes, Brutus, you give good words; Witness the hole you made in Caesar's heart, crying, 'Long live! hail, Caesar!'" Act V, Scene I, Line 27

As Antony and Octavius exit, Cassius speaks a little with his officer Messala, and tells him of two eagles who yesterday were following his troops. Today the eagles are gone, and have been replaced by a legion of ravens and other scavenger birds. Cassius is worried by this sign. After Cassius tells Messala his worries, he approaches Brutus and gives a farewell. The two men discuss what they will do if they lose the battle; Brutus states that he will never be led through the streets of Rome as a captive, and so, this is either the last time the two shall ever meet, or they will see each other again and be able to smile. "No, Cassius, no: think not, thou noble Roman, that ever Brutus will go bound to Rome; he bears too great a mind. But this same day must end that work the ides of March begun; and whether we shall meet again I know not. Therefore our everlasting farewell take. For ever, and for ever, farewell, Cassius. If we do meet again, why, we shall smile; if not, why then this parting was well made." Act V, Scene I, Line 111 The two give solemn parting wishes, and exit.

Topic Tracking: Excess 8

Act V, Scene II

Brutus commands Messala to give the message to charge to Cassius and his troops, because he fears that Octavius has approached too quickly. The short scene ends.

Act V, Scene III

Cassius observes Brutus advancing, and predicts the defeat of his troops, because they are advancing unevenly and without support. Immediately after expressing this fear, Cassius' attendant Pindarus enters, expressing alarm at how close Mark Antony's men are to Cassius' camp. Pindarus' entrance strikes a chord with Cassius, who then commands Titinius to ride into the fray below and determine what has happened. Cassius and Pindarus retreat to a high hill and Pindarus narrates the action below to a hiding Cassius. When Pindarus misinterprets what he sees below, and tells Cassius that Titinius has been captured, Cassius despairs and commands Pindarus, a longtime slave, to kill him. Pindarus does so, and then runs from the battle in grief over his actions. Meanwhile, Titinius has dismounted below to greet friendly soldiers and has not been taken at all. As Pindarus exits, Titinius and Messala re-enter with a laurel from Brutus to Cassius, saying that Octavius has been overwhelmed by Brutus, just as Cassius has been overwhelmed by Antony. When they see Cassius lying dead on the ground, they realize that Cassius feared Titinius' death so much that he willingly misconstrued what happened below.

Messala goes off to notify Brutus' party of what has happened. Meanwhile, Titinius expresses grief over Cassius' death, and kills himself with the same sword. Brutus enters with his officers, including Messala, Young Cato, Strato, Voluminus, and Lucillius. Brutus sees the two men dead and proclaims that Caesar is still mighty because of the fallout from his death.

Topic Tracking: Dedication 12



Act V, Scene IV

Brutus' group goes back to the battle, and Brutus leaves with a rallying cry. Cato and Lucilius run into the battle, Lucilius attempting to shield Brutus from death by claiming he is Brutus. In the ensuing fight, Cato is killed, and Lucilius is taken by soldiers who think he is Brutus and do not kill him. Antony enters, hearing cries that Brutus is taken, and corrects the soldier's mistake, but commands that Lucilius be taken alive because he is potentially valuable as an ally.



Act V, Scene V

Brutus, Dardanius, Clitus, Strato, and Voluminus, all who are left of the officers, sit down overlooking the battle, and try to convince Brutus not to kill himself. Brutus has requested Clitus to do so, and the others cannot fathom it. Brutus maintains that the end is inevitable - he has seen Caesar's ghost too many times in the past two nights - and that he would rather go by his own hand than by that of his enemies. The others leave, and Brutus urges them on. After they are gone, Strato, who Brutus has asked to stay, shakes Brutus' hand out of respect, and holds his sword as Brutus stabs himself with it. Immediately afterward, Antony, Octavius, Messala, and Lucillius enter with the army. Messala and Lucillius have been captured. Strato is commended by Messala as having done a great service to Brutus, and is taken into service by Octavius. Octavius and Antony both proceed to complement Brutus and recognize his pure motives for killing Caesar. They understand that he was alone among the conspirators in feeling and acting so. They vow to give him a proper burial, and his body is taken into Octavius' tent for the night.

Topic Tracking: Excess 9