STUDY GUIDE

William Shakespeare’s

JULIUS CAESAR

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the professional theatre company in residence at the arsenal center for the arts
Why do we read Shakespeare?

Shakespeare’s works are over 400 years old. Since his time, so many other books and plays have been written that we may ask why we still care to read and perform his works.

There are many ways we can answer this question, depending on where we look. First, let’s consider what these plays are about. People often refer to Shakespeare’s work as timeless and universal because the issues and themes prevalent in his works apply to humans of all ages and backgrounds; themes of love, self-discovery, relationships, and political strife are relevant in any society, whether in 1600, 1850, or 2015. Through watching or reading Shakespeare, we can easily draw parallels to contemporary and historical issues.

Shakespeare’s plays are also very much driven by human psychology. His characters are so well developed that we do not merely view the wide range of human emotions and the changes that each character experiences, but we also identify with these characters and their personal struggles throughout each play.

Aside from the artistic importance of his works, Shakespeare also made many contributions to the English language. He coined thousands of new words and phrases that we still use today. For instance, the common phrase “all’s well that ends well” actually comes from the title of one of Shakespeare’s comedies! One might even say that Shakespeare’s plays were part of the birth of modern English due to his creative wordplay, clever imagery, and evocative, if sometimes crude, analogies.

So, why do we still want to read and watch Shakespeare today? We can learn so much about his culture and time and the issues that are still around today. We can enhance our vocabulary greatly by studying his use of and contributions to the English language.

In watching or reading Shakespeare’s plays, challenge yourself to try and find something that applies to you and your life. It could be a character, a specific line, one of the main themes, or even a relationship. Everyone can connect to and identify with these plays in some capacity, so find the reason or multiple reasons his plays apply to you.
Rhetoric: The Art of Persuasive Speaking or Writing

In Ancient Rome, the Forum was both a marketplace and a political epicenter. Roman politicians would deliver speeches to the masses, vying for the people’s support as a mode of gaining political power. As a result, public speaking was central to political life – words were wielded as weapons, often with deadly consequences. The final stage of Roman schooling, the rhetor, focused exclusively on using rhetoric to craft persuasive arguments, creating a class of effective orators. The following is a list of rhetorical devices and their definitions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apophasis</td>
<td>emphasizing a point by pretending to pass over it</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aposiopesis</td>
<td>a sudden breaking off in the middle of a sentence, as if unable or unwilling to continue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erotesis</td>
<td>a manner of phrasing that presupposes either a yes or no answer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pathos</td>
<td>an appeal to the audience’s emotions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Logos</td>
<td>an appeal to the audience’s logic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethos</td>
<td>an appeal to the audience meant to establish the speaker’s credibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metonymy</td>
<td>the use of an associated object to suggest something else; example: using the word “crown” when referring to royalty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Synechdoche</td>
<td>using one part of something to represent the whole; example: “get your face out of here”, where face represents the whole person</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parenthesis</td>
<td>the interruption of a thought to introduce a new thought, only to return to the original line</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apostrophe</td>
<td>a sudden appeal to someone or something that is not present</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rhetorical question</td>
<td>a question not meant to be answered, but used to make a point</td>
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<tr>
<td>Epinome</td>
<td>the repetition of a phrase, word, or question meant to drive a point home</td>
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Using this list, circle and label as many examples of rhetoric in Mark Antony’s speech as you can find. Think about what effect each device has on its audience.

Mark Antony – Act III, Scene ii

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 answer’d 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.
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.
Biographies

Julius Caesar (100 BCE – 44 BCE)

During his time in political office, Julius Caesar frequently appealed to the people, hosting lavish games and bestowing gifts to the citizens of Rome in order to secure their support. Like many Roman politicians, he recognized that with great power came the support of the mob. He formed an alliance with the two most powerful men in Rome, Pompey and Crassus, and together the three men exerted complete control over the senate. Caesar grew more and more powerful until the Senate, including Pompey, recognized him as a threat. They demanded that Caesar return from his military exploits, relieving him of his duty as General. Instead, Caesar crossed the Rubicon in an act of defiance, beginning a civil war that would result in Pompey's death and culminate in Caesar's appointment as dictator for life. Shakespeare's play opens with the celebration of Caesar's return on the heels of his victory over, and assassination of, Pompey.

Marcus Brutus (85 BCE – 42 BCE)

Marcus Brutus came from a long line of assassins – Lucius Junius Brutus, the founder of the Roman Republic, led the revolt against the final king before the establishment of the Roman Republic in 509 BCE and served as one of its first consuls. Marcus Brutus’ family name was well-known and inextricably linked to political revolution. Though he’d initially opposed Pompey’s rise to power, Brutus aligned himself with Pompey’s supporters after the crossing of the Rubicon and was captured, then released by Caesar after Pompey’s defeat. After his release, Caesar named him praetor, a position possessing executive and judicial powers.

Caius Cassius (~95 BCE – 42 BCE)

During the civil war between Pompey and Caesar, Caius Cassius initially fought on Pompey’s behalf, but after Pompey’s decisive defeat in Pharsalus, he reconciled with Caesar and was given the title of legate, similar to a governor. He was famously cantankerous, with the historian Plutarch referring to him as “a hot, chollerick, and cruell man that would oft tymes be carried away from justice for gayne.” Cassius was deeply offended when Caesar named Brutus praetor urbanus, a position slightly higher than Cassius’ own of praetor peregrinus. A chief conspirator against Caesar, Cassius took his own life when it became clear that Antony’s forces would overtake his own in Phillipi.

Mark Antony (83 BCE – 30 BCE)

Mark Antony was born to a politically powerful but ineffective family and participated very little in politics until after his military service in Egypt and Palestine. He joined the legions of Julius Caesar, his mother’s cousin, to serve Caesar in his conquest of Gaul, quickly rising to the position of Master of Horses, making him second in command of Caesar’s legions. When Caesar was elected to his last consulship before his reign as dictator, it was Antony who served by his side as co-consul. It was Antony too who would offer Caesar the crown three times at the Feast of the Lupercal, and who would, along with Octavius and Lepidus, form the Second Triumvirate, the group that would rule over the transition from Rome’s Republic to the Roman Empire, of which Octavius would become the first emperor.
Comparing Historical Sources

The story of Julius Caesar has resonated for millennia, and for good reason. The discussion over whether his assassination was justified has been debated since the day he died, with few conclusions. During Shakespeare’s time, his own nation was haunted by memories of its own civil war, the War of the Roses, waged for over three decades from 1455 to 1487. Two royal families, the Yorks and the Lancasters, each lay claim to the throne, and their bloody exploits served as the basis for Shakespeare’s history plays, which he had spent ten years writing prior to beginning Julius Caesar. Earlier plays are full of references to Caesar and the political deception of Brutus, and expand upon a truth that Shakespeare often used as the basis for his historical tragedies: political violence and assassination can only result in civil war and destabilization of power.

Here in the United States, Brutus has often been portrayed as the embodiment of the Republican spirit, the hero who stands up against a tyrant in the name of liberty. It is no surprise that on June 1, 1770, only 6 years before the start of the American Revolution, the play’s American debut was advertised as follows: “The noble struggles for liberty by that renowned patriot, Marcus Brutus.” American productions emphasized Brutus’ dignity and honor, seeing him as a Republican forefather to be looked at as a model of virtue for their own burgeoning republic.

On November 25, 1864, the Booths, a family of actors considered to be the finest Shakespearean performers in the United States, were asked to produce their own Julius Caesar at the renowned Winter Garden Theatre for a one-night-only engagement. John Wilkes Booth, who would assassinate President Abraham Lincoln only five months later, wished to portray Brutus, but the role was given to his brother Edwin, the better actor, and he was left with the part of Mark Antony. After he assassinated Lincoln on April 14, 1865, John Wilkes Booth wrote in his diary that he had shouted “Sic semper tyrannus,” or “thus always to tyrants,” a phrase often attributed to Marcus Brutus after the assassination of Julius Caesar.
LILY LINKE (Calpurnia) returns to New Repertory Theatre in Boston. Originally from New Jersey, Michael resides and studied at Stella Adler Studios in New York Intensive in Los Angeles with Ken Cheeseman, College, completed the Acting for the Reel World. Michael earned his BFA in Acting at Emerson and

LAURA DETWILER (Portia) makes her New Repertory Theatre debut. Recent credits include Romeo vs Juliet (Anthem Theatre Company) and Mrs. Packard and In The Next Room or the Vibrator Play (Boston University). Laura earned her BFA in Theatre Arts at Boston University, and studied at the National Theatre Institute at the Eugene O’Neill Center. Laura grew up abroad in Indonesia and now resides in Somerville.

MICHAEL KELLY (Octavius) makes his New Repertory Theatre debut. Boston credits include The Wakeville Stories (Davis Square Theatre), Whisper House: A Reading (ArtsEmerson), Couch Troll (Interim Writers), and Gunplay (directed by Benny Sato Ambush). New York credits include Waiting for Hermann Haber (Equity Library Theater Playwriting Festival) which won best play and best actor. Other recent credits include Mother Hicks, Fathers and Sons, The Learned Ladies, A Fable Regarding the Octopus, Waiting For Godot: A Clipping, Big Love, and The Grapes of Wrath (Emerson College).

Alexander has earned his BFA in Acting at Emerson College. Originally from Connecticut, he now resides in Cambridge.

KAI TSHIKOSI (Brutus) makes his New Repertory Theatre debut. Recent credits include Colossal (Company One), Macbeth, J.B., Cymbeline, and Cyclops: a Saytr Play (Emerson College). Kai earned his BA in Acting and Stage Combat at Emerson College and now resides in Roxbury.

GRACE KENNEDY WOODFORD (Antony) makes her New Repertory Theatre debut. Recent credits include Equal Writes (Boston Playwrights Theatre), and The Skin of Our Teeth, The Bagman, and Mrs. Packard (Boston University). Grace received her BFA in Theatre Arts at Boston University and studied at the Accademia dell’Arte in Arezzo, Italy. Born and raised in Massachusetts, Grace resides in Allston.

CLAY HOPPER (Director) returns to New Repertory Theatre after directing A Number and Classic Repertory Company’s 1984, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Macbeth, Of Mice and Men, Great Expectations, Romeo and Juliet, and To Kill A Mockingbird. In Washington D.C., he served as the Associate Artistic Director of Olney Theatre Center and Director of both the National Players and the Summer Shakespeare Festival. He now serves as lecturer in Directing and Theatre Arts at Boston University’s School of Theatre. Directing credits include Two Gentlemen of Verona, Twelfth Night, The Tempest, Othello, The Taming of the Shrew, Much Ado About Nothing, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Romeo and Juliet, Amadeus, Farragut North, Triumph of Love, and Call of the Wild (Olney Theatre). Other recent credits include On the Verge, or The Geography of Yearning (Contemporary American Theatre Festival). Off-off-Broadway credits include A Home Without and Different Zen (Third Eye Rep); Earthworms (The Working Group); and Triage and The Interrogation (The Miranda Theatre).
Pre-Show Questions

1. Why do you think, in a play entitled *Julius Caesar*, the title character is assassinated so early in the text? What effect does the early climax have on your reading experience?
   
   CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5

2. Look at Brutus, Cassius, and Mark Antony. How do these three men change over the course of the play? What prompts these changes, and how do they contribute to a larger theme?
   
   CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3

3. Describe one central theme in *Julius Caesar* and detail how that theme develops over the course of the play? Cite specific examples from the text.
   
   CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2

Post-Show Questions

1. Many have questioned whose “side” Shakespeare was on, Caesar’s or Brutus’s. After reading and watching *Julius Caesar*, what do you think Shakespeare’s point of view was? Was he taking a side? Does he have a different purpose?
   
   CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.6

2. Examine the way in which Shakespeare uses the word “honor” and its variants. How does its meaning change throughout the text? Why do you think Shakespeare uses this word so often in this specific play?
   
   CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4

3. Select one speech from the text that you found particularly engaging. What devices does Shakespeare use to make it so effective? What effect does figurative language have on its meaning as well as its appeal?
   
   CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4

4. Take another look at Antony’s speech in Act III, Scene ii. What are some sections in which what he says does not line up with what he really means? What reasons might he have for not being more forthright with his point of view?