



DISCOVERY GUIDE 2009



Directed by Robert Currier

**Costume Design - Claire Townsend
Lighting Design - Ellen Brooks
Stage Manager - Allison Ward**

**Set Design - Mark Robinson
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Producer - Lesley Currier**

**Discovery Guide written by Luis Araquistain
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Welcome to the Discovery Guide for *Julius Caesar*

Introduction

Marin Shakespeare Company is thrilled to present Shakespeare's riveting historical drama, *Julius Caesar*. As one of Shakespeare's most notable and often quoted plays ("Et tu, Brute?"), this show makes an intriguing introduction to 'the Bard' for students who are new to Shakespeare and an action-packed re-introduction for students already familiar with Shakespeare's plays. The story is both an exciting adventure, as well as a portrait of political greatness in action, with lessons to teach about ancient Rome and the world today.

This DISCOVERY GUIDE will provide you with some background on the play, explanations of characters and plot lines and pre- and post-show activities, exercises and discussion questions for further deepen your theatre-going experience!

Let us know if this DISCOVERY GUIDE is helpful (education@marinshakespeare.org)! Enjoy!

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A word from the Director

Robert Currier, MSC's Artistic Director and Director for *Julius Caesar*, speaks about this production:

Why Julius Caesar and why now? Mostly, because of my long association with Barry Kraft (the actor playing Caesar). I worked with him in 2006 when he played *King Lear*. Barry is one of the West Coast's great Shakespeare in performance scholars. He has served as a dramaturg -- a script consultant -- and an actor for many plays at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, and is exceptionally knowledgeable. That and the fact that this is an opportunity for MSC to do a play we have not done before are compelling reasons to work on this play with this group of actors.

What is your greatest challenge in this production? I would say it's how to make clear to the audience how palpable the character of Rome was to the Romans. Rome itself is one of the lead characters in the play. As a nation, there's no modern equivalent! Even in Shakespeare's day, Rome was celebrated by the British as a great nation whose influence was still widely felt. In fact, Caesar at one point conquered Britain. My other challenge is making sure the fake blood doesn't get all over the place.

What else are you excited about? We've got a great cast for this production, including Jay Karnes, Dutch from the TV show "The Shield" as Brutus and Bill Elsmann as Mark Antony. The production should be exciting and fun.

DISCOVER: the origins of the play...

Shakespeare's Sources

Julius Caesar is one of Shakespeare's most enduring plays. Like most of Shakespeare's dramatic works, it was not born solely out of the author's mind. The story of Caesar and the history of Rome were well known in Elizabethan England. Schoolboys read in Latin the great Roman historians. Britons felt their ancestry was tied to the ancient Roman republic, and many knew that parts of London itself (the London Tower, in particular) had indeed been constructed by Caesar. It's little surprise, then, that the story of Julius Caesar was already fresh in the minds of Londoners.

It's very likely that Shakespeare based this play almost entirely on what he had read from Plutarch's *Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans*. Translated into English by Thomas North in 1579, the text was popular and is filled with information on key historical personalities and made excellent source material for dramatic scripts. Although Shakespeare found use for much of Plutarch's material through his several Roman plays, for *Julius Caesar* he likely focused on Plutarch's lives of Julius Caesar and Marcus Brutus.

First publication and performance

William Shakespeare never published any of his plays and so none of the original manuscripts have survived. Eighteen unauthorized versions of his plays were, however, published during his lifetime in quarto editions by unscrupulous publishers (there were no copyright laws protecting Shakespeare and his works during the Elizabethan era.) A collection of his works did not appear until 1623 (a full seven years after Shakespeare's death on April 23, 1616) when two of his fellow actors, John Hemminges and Henry Condell, posthumously recorded his work and published 36 of William's plays in the First Folio. Some dates are therefore approximate other dates are substantiated by historical events, records of performances and the dates plays appeared in print.

Julius Caesar was first published in the Folio in 1623, but a performance was mentioned by Thomas Platter the Younger in his diary in September 1599. The play is not mentioned in the list of Shakespeare's plays published by Francis Meres in 1598. Based on these two points, as well as a number of contemporary allusions, and the belief that the play is similar to *Hamlet* in vocabulary, and to *Henry V* and *As You Like It* in meter (poetical structure) scholars have suggested 1599 as a probable date for a first performance.

Quarto? Folio? Huh?

Quarto: A quarto is sheet of printing paper folded twice to form eight separate pages for printing a book. The Quarto editions of Shakespeare's plays are generally considered 'unauthorized.'

Folio: A folio is a sheet of printing paper folded once to form four separate pages for printing a book. The Folio text is notable for its quality and consistency; scholars judge it to have been set into type from a theatrical prompt-book and, therefore, to be more accurate.

DISCOVER: the characters...

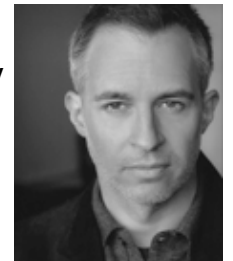
The Dictator

JULIUS CAESAR: The popular and victorious leader of Rome: because some fear he may become King and revoke the democratic privileges of other Roman citizen, Cassius, Brutus and their fellow conspirators surprise Caesar and kill him. [Actor: Barry Kraft at right]



The Conspirators

BRUTUS: Though Brutus is one of Caesar's assassins, he does not kill him for greed, envy or social standing like so many of the other conspirators. Brutus truly believes he is acting for the good of Rome. [Actor: Jay Karnes at right]



CASSIUS: One of the original conspirators against Caesar. Like the other conspirators he fears what life under King Caesar's rule could mean for him and the democratic privileges he enjoys. [Actor: Jack Powell at left]

CASCA: One of the conspirators against Caesar, he starts the actual assassination by stabbing first from behind. [Actor: Stephen Klum at right]



METELLUS: It is his petition or request to Caesar for his brother's banishment to be overturned that allows the conspirators to move close to Caesar, before they assassinate him with multiple stab wounds. [Actor: Barry Hubbard at left]

TREBONIUS: During the assassination Trebonius is the person who keeps Mark Antony outside the Senate while Caesar is being stabbed. [Actor: Gary Grossman at right]

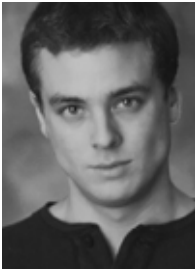


LIGARIUS: The sickly conspirator, Caius Ligarius, participates in the assassination even though he is seriously ill. [Actor: Brian Trybom at left]

DISCOVER: the characters...

The Triumvirs

MARK ANTONY: Following the assassination, Caesar's friend Antony quickly grasps that he must deal with Brutus and gain the support of the Roman citizenry, and he has the shrewdness to take advantage of Brutus's gullibility by pretending to accept the situation. During Caesar's funeral, however, he gives the famous speech which begins "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;" which turns Rome against the conspirators. [Actor: William Elsmar at right]



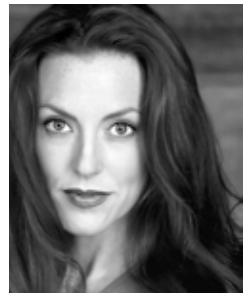
OCTAVIUS: Nephew and adopted son of Caesar. Octavius ultimately became ruler of the Roman Empire following his defeat of Mark Antony in Egypt (See Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra). In this play, Octavius with Mark Antony and Lepidus, form a Triumvirate and destroy the forces of Brutus and Cassius on the Plains of Philippi, which results in the death of both these conspirators. [Actor: Carl Holvick at left]

LEPIDUS: The last of the Triumvirs, this old man holds little real power and is used in Mark Antony's own words as a loyal, trusted man "Meet [fit] to be sent on errands:" [Actor: Tom Reilly at right]



The Wives

PORTIA: The much loved wife of Brutus, she tries to learn from Brutus about the conspiracy he is hiding from her. She later commits suicide by swallowing fire when she believes that Brutus and his co-conspirators will have her put to death. [Actor: Cat Thompson at right]



CALPURNIA: The wife of Caesar, she begs her husband not to go to the Senate on "the ides of March" (March 15) fearing the premonition she has seen in a dream. [Actor: Alexandra Matthew at left]

DISCOVER: the characters...

Other Important Characters

MARULLUS: A Tribune, is put to death after he admonishes the Roman citizens for forgetting Caesar's predecessor, Pompey (whom Caesar vanquished), and decorating Pompey's statues in honor of Caesar. He reminds us that the crowd is easily swayed and has a short memory. [Actor: Lucas McClure at right]



CINNA THE POET: After Mark Antony incites the people of Rome against Caesar's assassins, Cinna -- who shares the same name as one of the assassins -- is killed by the Citizens despite having nothing to do with the conspiracy. [Actor: also Lucas McClure at right]



CICERO: A well-known orator (public speaker) and Senator, Cicero is killed by the Triumvirs (Mark Antony, Octavius and Lepidus) following Caesar's assassination. [Actor: Tom Reilly at left]

DISCOVER: the story of the play...

For a recording of this story, go to www.marinshakespeare.org and look for the 'Listen to the Story of the Play' button.

The story begins in the streets of Rome in the year 44 BCE. The tribune Marullus, a government official, asks the commoners why they are loitering in the streets, and a cobbler plainly replies: "we make holiday to see Caesar and to rejoice in his triumph." Marullus mocks the mob for their fickle loyalties, since they used to be loyal to Caesar's enemy, Pompey, who Caesar has now vanquished. He sends the commoners home with: "Run to your houses, fall upon your knees, / Pray to the gods to intermit the plague / That needs must light on this ingratitude" and proceeds to tear down the decorations the commoners have hung in Caesar's honor. Alone, Marullus states his fear that Caesar has grown dangerously high in the esteem of the people.

But allow me to pause here, dear reader, to explain the underlying political state in Rome at the time (which will clarify several plot points as well.) You've already heard two names important to the background of the story: Caesar and Pompey. In 61 BCE, these two men, along with a third, Crassus, formed the First Triumvirate of Rome – three men chosen to rule equally, and for a limited time; the Triumvirate was solidified by inter-marrying amongst each other's families. However, human nature being what it is, each man soon began to act on behalf of his own personal ambitions for wealth and power. In 58 BCE, Caesar began his military campaigns, conquering, among others, Gaul (now Italy), and parts of Britain and France, all the while maintaining his power, in absentia, in the Roman political machine. In 53 BCE, Crassus died in a failed military invasion, eliminating him as a potential political threat to the remaining two leaders. During Caesar's absence from Rome for nearly 10 years, his daughter – who had become Pompey's wife – died, severing the tie between the remaining two members of the original Triumvirate. When Pompey was named the sole Consul of Rome, effectively cutting Caesar out, and married the daughter of Caesar's enemy, the Triumvirate dissolved and the two men became enemies. In 50 BCE, Pompey ordered Caesar to return to Rome and disband his armies. When Caesar refused, believing that Pompey intended to capture and prosecute him, Pompey had Caesar declared a traitor. As a result, in 49 BCE, Caesar crossed the Rubicon River into Italy and thrusting Rome into Civil War. A year later, Caesar defeated Pompey and it is here that Shakespeare's story begins.

DISCOVER: the story of the play...

It's interesting to note that Caesar actually lived for almost four years after the death of Pompey, when he met and fell in love with Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, all the while maintaining dictatorship of Rome. But that is another story, and Shakespeare didn't mind playing with time, and so condenses several years of history into this two and a half hour play. So let's get back to our story....

A flourish of trumpets announces the entrance of the victorious Caesar with a great crowd, celebrating the Lupercal, a fertility festival. Caesar encourages his wife Calpurnia to stand in the way of the virile Mark Antony, who is running in the Lupercal race; touching the runners brings fertility, and Caesar would like Calpurnia to provide him with an heir. As Caesar's party continues toward the Capitol, Artemidorus, a Soothsayer (prophet who can see the future) calls out to Caesar "Beware the Ides of March." Ides means the fifteenth day of the month. But Caesar ignores this warning and the procession continues.

As the crowd moves by, two Roman politicians remain behind – Cassius and Brutus, longtime friends of Caesar. Cassius accuses Brutus of being distant and withdrawn. Brutus admits he's afraid of Caesar's popularity, and says he loves honor more than life itself. Cassius confirms Brutus' fears saying that Caesar is a mere mortal – one whose life he saved once during a swimming contest – and yet now has come to be regarded as a god. Cassius reminds Brutus of Caesar's physical weakness (now considered to have been epilepsy) and they marvel that this fallible man has risen so high. "The fault, dear Brutus, is in not in our stars, / But in ourselves, that we are underlings," says Cassius. Men are not fated to serve Caesar, they merely allow themselves to be. Cassius fears that Caesar is being treated like a king; as free Romans they cannot abide the idea of kingly power being vested in one man, who would rule over them. Brutus promises to consider what should be done. When Caesar returns he tells Antony he doesn't trust Cassius who has "a lean and hungry look."

Brutus and Cassius get the attention of another noble Roman, Casca, who delivers news that during the celebrations, Mark Antony offered Caesar a crown three times, which Caesar refused each time, despite the cheering of the crowd. Then Caesar fell to the ground foaming at the mouth. The men fear Caesar only refused the crown as a political ploy, but really intends to become dictator of Rome. Casca also tells that the Tribune Marullus, who we met at the beginning of the play, has been put to death for removing Caesar's victory decorations. The men plan to meet again later and Cassius schemes to sway Brutus to join the plot he is hatching to unseat Caesar.

That night, while storms and ill omens plague Rome, Cassius and Casca agree to conspire to rid Rome of Caesar. Cassius and his friend Cinna go to gather more plotters, and to leave anti-Caesar papers where Brutus will find them, hoping to convince Brutus of the public outrage against Caesar.

At Brutus' home, his internal battle continues, when his servant Lucius brings him a letter, seemingly written by the citizens of Rome (but in fact it forged by Cassius) begging Brutus to strike against Caesar and tyranny. By the time Cassius arrives at Brutus' home with several other conspirators – Casca, Cinna, Metellus Cimber and Trebonius --, they find Brutus has decided to participate in their plot. When the men want to swear an oath, Brutus tells them oaths are not necessary when the justness of their cause spurs them as strongly as it now does. Cassius wants to kill Antony too, fearing he is as dangerous as Caesar, but Brutus disagrees. There is just cause to kill Caesar. "Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully." Too many unnecessary deaths will dishonor the cause, and the conspirators resolve – only Caesar dies.

When the men leave, Brutus' wife Portia, begs him to tell her what has been on his mind, as she knows he has been distracted lately. Despite her eloquence and devotion, Brutus rebuffs her, saying "O ye gods, / Render me worthy of this noble wife." One last conspirator, a sick Ligarius, comes to join the cause, "A piece of work that will make sick men whole."

As thunder continues to rock Rome the next morning, the 15th of March, Caesar's wife Calpurnia, insists Caesar should not leave the house. She reveals she has had nightmares in which she saw a statue of Caesar bleed, and watched as smiling men dipped their hands in the blood. Caesar, does not

DISCOVER: the story of the play...

want to appear cowardly but eventually agrees to stay home. But Metellus Cimber arrives and cleverly spins Calpurnia's dreams to appear as good omens of Caesar's rise to power, so Caesar changes his mind – he will go to the Capitol. With Cassius, Brutus, Antony, and others they leave for the Senate.

On another street, the citizen Artemidorus stands, with a petition begging Caesar against going to the Capitol and naming the conspirators. Portia tries to send Lucius to bring back news from the Capitol, but she is so worried and inarticulate that her commands are unintelligible.

The mob again fills the streets of Rome as Caesar, in the company of the conspirators, enters on his way to the capitol. Artemidorus tries to give Caesar his petition, but Caesar refuses to read it when he's told it is for his own benefit, choosing instead to give his attention to a matter of someone else's need. When Metellus Cimber tries to kneel to Caesar, Caesar will not let him abase himself. Yet Caesar refuses to revoke the banishment of Metellus' brother Publius Cimber, saying the banishment was just and it is right for him to stay constant to that decision. At a word from Casca – "Speak hands for me" – the conspirators fall upon Caesar, stabbing him 23 times, crying "Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead!" A dying Caesar looks up at his friend, Brutus, among those who would have him dead. "Et tu, Brute? Then fall, Caesar" are his final words.

As Antony flees, the Senators react quickly – they must spin this story to their benefit before the crowd can react badly against Caesar's death. Brutus suggests: "Stoop, Romans, stoop, / And let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood / Up to the elbows, and besmear our swords: / Then walk we forth, even to the market-place, / And, waving our red weapons o'er our heads, / Let's all cry 'Peace, freedom and liberty!" Calpurnia's dream has indeed come true.

Antony's servant enters to ask for safe passage for his master to approach, which Brutus promises. When Antony returns, he shakes hands with each of the bloody conspirators but laments openly over Caesar's body. The conspirators would like Antony to help convince the citizens of the justness of their murderous act. Antony asks permission to speak at Caesar's funeral and, despite Cassius' objections, Brutus agrees. Left alone, Antony asks for Caesar's pardon and swears he will get revenge for Caesar's murder with "Cry 'Havoc' and let slip the dogs of war."

As the second half of the story begins, people rush about in final preparations for Caesar's funeral. Antony speaks with a servant of Octavius Caesar – Julius Caesar's nephew, whom the murdered man had summoned to Rome. Antony warns the servant to observe the temper of the crowd and cautions Octavius to remain outside the city.

As the Roman mob demands an explanation for Caesar's death, Brutus addresses them, affirming his love for Caesar but claiming his death was necessary: "Had you rather Caesar were living and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to lie all free men?" As Antony displays Caesar's body, the crowd cheers Brutus with: "Live, Brutus, live! Bring him with triumph home until his house. Give him a statue with his ancestors. Let him be Caesar!" Then Brutus turns the podium over to Antony.

"Friends, Romans, Countrymen," begins Antony's famous speech. Then, repeatedly referring to "the noble Brutus," his speech becomes more and more sarcastic as he openly questions Brutus' motivations for Caesar's death. Antony reminds the crowd that Caesar brought much glory to Rome and refused the crown three times. He then describes, in detail, the death of Caesar and shows the crowd Caesar's vicious wounds. As the crowd's opinion begins to sway, Antony produces Caesar's will, which he purposely hesitates to read until the crowd begs him to do so. Caesar has bequeathed a sum of money to every citizen of Rome, and land for public gardens. The citizens' outrage turns to cries of "Revenge!" against Brutus and the conspirators. Antony learns that Octavius is already in Rome, while Brutus and Cassius have fled the city. War is unavoidable.

Things get ugly in the city of Rome. The mob runs across a poet named Cinna. Unfortunately for the poet, one of the conspirators was also named Cinna. The poet tries to explain he is not the same man, but the mob is in a state of agitation and tears the poor poet to pieces in revenge for Caesar's death.

DISCOVER: the story of the play...

Meanwhile, Antony, Octavius and the Roman noble Lepidus are forming a Second Triumvirate to rule Rome. Their first order of business is deciding which traitors the new government will put to death. When Lepidus is sent to collect Caesar's will, Antony shares with Octavius his disdain of their partner – the jockeying for power has already begun. But there is no time to lose, for the armies of Brutus and Cassius are gathering outside the city.

The scene flies to Sardis and the military camp of the conspirators, where dissent is also brewing. Cassius, arriving with his army, is described by Brutus as "A hot friend cooling." Alone in Brutus' tent, they have a heated argument when Brutus accuses Cassius of taking bribes, but they ultimately reconcile. Brutus then reveals he is sick with grief, having heard that his wife Portia has committed suicide – fearing Octavius and Antony, who have been killing those they label as traitors. As Cassius laments, Brutus expresses Roman stoicism, and the men prepare for the impending battle to be held at Philippi. The military captains leave Brutus alone for the night, but sleep does not easily come. The Ghost of Caesar appears to Brutus, promising to meet him on the battlefield the next day.

On the plains of Philippi, Antony and Octavius arrive with their armies. When Antony tries to give orders to Octavius, the younger man asserts his authority as a Caesar and refuses to take direction from Antony. When Brutus and Cassius arrive for a pre-battle parley, the men exchange heated insults and Octavius hurls defiance at the conspirators.

Cassius calls his friend Titinius to him, confiding it is his birthday and sharing the vision of an omen: two mighty eagles who alit on the soldier's banners, only to be replaced the next day by birds of prey. Cassius and Brutus discuss what they will do if their army loses; Cassius implies suicide is better than capture. A great battle rages. The spirit of Caesar seems to spur the Triumvirate's cause. Cassius thinks he sees his men retreating and his tents set on fire. He sends Titinius riding off to investigate, and his servant, Pindarus, up the hill to report. When Pindarus cries that Titinius has been surrounded by horsemen who shout for joy, Cassius concludes he is captured and the battle lost. Calling Pindarus back, he orders him to obey his master and kill him with his own sword; Cassius dies, believing Caesar revenged. Pindarus, freed from his master, wishes his freedom had not been bought at such a high price. When Titinius returns with Trebonius, we learn that the horsemen surrounding him had been his friends, reporting of their army's victory. Finding the body and realizing Cassius has misconstrued everything, Titinius kills himself with Cassius' sword. *Brutus is led to the site of the dead bodies. Impressed by the dead men's courage, he muses: "Are yet two Romans living such as these?" But the battle continues – there is no time to mourn. But the end is near for Brutus: "I know my hour is come." Thus Brutus kills himself and Caesar is revenged – the Ghost can now rest in peace.*

Octavius and Antony discover Brutus, dead. Antony declares: "This was the noblest Roman of them all: / All the conspirators save only he / Did that they did in envy of great Caesar; / He only, in a general honest thought / And common good to all, made one of them." As Octavius and Antony prepare to celebrate their victory, peace has come to again Rome...for now.

Written by Kate Magill for Marin Shakespeare Company's 2009 production

DISCOVER: themes

A **literary theme** is an idea, message or lesson which is explored in a literary work. Often these are implied rather than blatantly stated.

STRUGGLE FOR POWER (THE GRAND STAIRCASE OF HISTORY): A major theme of the play is the corruptive influence of power. From the very beginning of the plot to the very end, everything is driven by a desire for increased power. Julius Caesar returns from his military victory over Pompey, having conquered vast territories including Britain, for Rome. He is perceived as having a desire to be crowned the King of Rome and the entire Empire. It is feared that his power will make him rule in a tyrannical and dictatorial way. Because the Senators do not want to lose their own power, several of them, led by Cassius, plot to destroy Caesar. Brutus is manipulated into joining the conspiracy, for he fears his friend will become a ruthless dictator; he openly states his belief that power corrupts all leaders.

After Caesar's assassination, Octavius and Antony seek their own power structure and Cassius, leading the conspirators, plots for his own victory. The two forces, in their search for ultimate power, are destined to clash. In the end, Cassius and Brutus are defeated in the power struggle, and Octavius and Antony emerge victorious. The power struggle, however, never ends, for Octavius will eventually defeat Antony and become Emperor of Rome.

Author, critic and theoretician of the theatre, Jan Kott, described this struggle succinctly in his book *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* by depicting, "A succession of kings climbing and pushing one another off the grand staircase of history..."

MOB MENTALITY: Though power is wielded by the likes of Pompey, Caesar, Brutus and Antony, such power is only useful with the backing of the people. Shakespeare shows how the Roman people are easily swayed with the opening scene in when Marullus refers to the crowd celebrating Pompey's defeat (after they once cheered for Pompey and now celebrate Caesar): "You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things! / O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome, / Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft / Have you climb'd up to walls and battlements, / To towers and windows, yea, to chimney-tops, / Your infants in your arms, and there have sat / The livelong day, with patient expectation, / To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome:" After the assassination of Julius Caesar, Brutus speaks to the crowd and convinces them that Caesar was ambitious and would have been a terrible leader. He is able to convince the crowd that what he and the conspirators did was the best for Rome.

Immediately following, Mark Antony plays on the emotions of the crowd and sways them to his side. He uses his emotions to create sympathy in the angry mob. Once they have been softened, he hints that Caesar had a will, but he says that he won't read it because it would anger them too much. Then the crowd cries for him to read the will, insisting on hearing it. Then Antony displays Caesar's body, and shows the bloody robe he wore full of rips from the murderous daggers. The crowd is so enraged that they tear to pieces Cinna the Poet just because he has the same name as a conspirator. Antony's aside, "Mischief, thou art afoot" shows that he had **planned** to incite a riot with his speeches.

DISCOVER: Classroom Connections...

Classroom Discussion

Compare / contrast characters and plots in *Julius Caesar* to other Shakespeare plays. Some connections are listed below, but see if you can find more.

1. Brutus/Caesar vs. Iago/Othello (*Othello*)
2. The Soothsayer vs. Cassandra (*Troilus and Cressida*)
3. Brutus vs. Macbeth (*Macbeth*)
4. Antony in *Julius Caesar* vs. Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra*

Compare / contrast Julius Caesar with other deposed leaders from works of literature, movies or history. A few ideas are listed below to get you started, but there are many more.

1. Napoleon Bonaparte (Ruler of France)
2. Obi-Wan Kenobi (*Star Wars Movies*)
3. Richard Nixon (*U.S. President*)

Discuss **Mob Mentality** (see page 8) and examine the pros and cons of the need for the backing of the populace for political support. Is there any parallel between the behavior of the crowd in *Julius Caesar* and the people in the U.S. when choosing a President or going to war? Is there a parallel with Antony's rousing of the crowd and the speeches of any given President or Presidential candidate?

Hold a **mock trial** in the classroom. Put Brutus on trial for his treachery, or Antony on trial for causing a riot. Make sure your arguments are supported by the play.

Creative Writing

Write an item for a Roman newspaper. Pick one of the social or political issues from the play, come up with a snappy headline, and then write a column for a Roman paper (the Plebian Inquirer, perhaps?).

Write a 'Dear Abby' letter from the point of view of a character in the play. Ask for help with a major dilemma that the character must overcome in the play.

FOLLOW UP: Have students switch papers and write a response from "Abby."

Write a biography of one of the characters in the play. Support your biography with details from the play, and also be creative in imagining the lives of these characters. Include the following:

1. Where your character lives, give details about the dwelling.
2. Your character's childhood, including siblings and parents.
3. Your character's favorite hobbies or pasttimes.
4. If you could change one thing about your life, what would it be?
5. Which other characters in the play do you care about the most and why?

DISCOVER: Classroom Connections...

Art // Design Projects

Design **Standards** – Make a standard, a banner an army carries into battle. The standard should inspire the army and should include at least one symbol or central image (an eagle, a star, etc.) Styles may be modern (including graffiti art) or Roman.

Design an **Original Board Game** – Create a game based on the play.

Design and draw or sew several **costumes** for the play. Base your designs on research of what Romans wore in Caesar's time.

Design **scenery** for the play. Do a display on a poster or shadow box/diorama. Include a one-page explanation for your choices, including works cited.

Design a **comic book** for the show. Start by breaking the show down into scenes and then illustrating each scene. This could be an individual project or a class assignment.

Design and Create a **Movie Trailer** - Act out, or better yet actually film, a movie-style trailer for Julius Caesar.

Pre-Performance Questions

1. Why do you think this play has been performed for over 400 years?
2. What lessons do you think Shakespeare wanted us to learn from this play?
3. Which characters did you like in the play? Which characters did you dislike? Why?
4. If Shakespeare were in our classroom, what one question would you ask him about this play?
5. If you had the option to re-write part of the play, what would you change and why?
6. Do you see anything in the play that would be hard to perform onstage? How could you 'solve' this?

Post-Performance Questions

1. What did you think about how the actors portrayed their characters? If you were one of the actors in this play, would you have done it differently? Why or why not?
2. Were the actor's performances what you expected? Did they portray the characters in the way you envisioned them when reading? Why or why not?
3. What did you notice when watching the play that you did not pick up when reading or hearing about it? Why do you think that is? Does this change your opinion about anything? Why or why not?

DISCOVER: discussion topics...

1. Marullus is seen for only a short time in the play and yet says much to encapsulate how the conspirators feel about Caesar. Look at his lines in Act I, scene i. Why do you think he feels the way he feels?
2. Throughout the play, Caesar receives warnings about his impending doom. Look through the first two acts and try to find as many signs as possible. Are all these signs just a coincidence? What do you think was behind all these events?
Hints: The Soothsayer's "beware the Ides of March" (I, ii)
Casca's account of the tempest, comets, man on fire, lion, and bird of night (I, iii)
Calpurnia's dream (II, 2)
Artemidorus' letter (II, 3)
Portia hears a commotion (fray) coming from the direction of the Capitol (II, iv)
3. Brutus agonizes over the decision to kill his friend Caesar. In the end, he puts his love aside for the good of the country. Do you think Brutus is justified? Does assassinating a leader for the good of the people constitute bravery worthy of a hero, or do the ends never justify the means?
5. In Act II, scene ii, Portia enters and, begging Brutus to tell her what all these mid-night visitations in the orchard might mean, illustrates her worthiness as a confidante by showing that she has stabbed herself in the thigh but said nothing about it. Is this an act of courage? Love? Devotion? All of the above? Is she crazy? Why or why not?
6. Mark Antony uses his funeral speech to incite the crowd against the conspirators. Furthermore, he does it by focusing on Caesar's goodness, rather than saying anything negative about the conspirators. Can you think of other instances when crowds of people have been manipulated by a person's speech?
7. How powerful are words? Think of words that have power, such as hate, love, war, anger. What makes these words powerful? Have you ever been swayed by someone's words, and later realized that you had been misled? Have you ever been part of a group that did something you later realized was wrong.
8. In what ways do politicians and advertisers use mob mentality and emotions to try to persuade you to do what they want? Which of the tactics Brutus and Antony use in their funeral speech swayed you the most? Did you find yourself agreeing with one, both, or neither of them?
9. Think about Caesar the mortal man as opposed to Caesar the public figure. How does he continue to wield power over events even after he is dead? Do the conspirators succeed in their goals by killing him, or is Caesar's influence too powerful to be contained even by his death?
10. As Caesar's appointed successor, how does Octavius compare with Caesar? Consider his use of language and commands as well as the ways in which the other characters regard him and refer to him.

DISCOVER: quotes from the play...

For each of the following quotes from the play, respond with an answer which:

- a) states the meaning of the quote,
- b) connects the quote to the play as a whole,
- c) discusses personal feelings about the quote, the character or the action it causes OR
- d) connects the quote to your personal life.

Soothsayer: Beware the Ides of March. (I, ii)

Cassius: Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world / Like a Colossus, and we petty men / Walk under his huge legs and peep about / To find ourselves dishonorable graves. (I, ii)

Caesar: Let me have men about me that are fat, / Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights. / Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look; / He thinks too much, such men are dangerous. (I, iii).

Brutus: 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 utmost round, / He then unto the ladder turns his back. (II, i).

Caesar: Cowards die many times before their deaths; / The valiant never taste of death but once. / Of all the wonders that I yet have heard, / It seems to me most strange that men should fear, / Seeing that death, a necessary end, / Will come when it will come. (II, ii).

Caesar: I could be well moved, if I were as you; / If I could pray to move, prayers would move me; / But I am constant as the Northern Star, / Of whose true-fixed and resting quality / There is no fellow in the firmament. (III, i).

Caesar: Et tu, Brute! Then fall, Caesar. (III, i)

Antony: Friends, Romans, countrymen / Lend me your ears; / I come to bury Caesar not to praise him. (III, ii)

Antony: O masters! If I were disposed 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. (III, ii)

Antony: This was the most unkindest cut of all. (III, ii).

Octavius: He's a tried and valiant soldier.

Antony: So is my horse, Octavius, and for that / I do appoint him store of provender. (IV, i).

Caesar's Ghost: Thou shalt meet me at Philippi. (IV, iii).

Antony: This was the noblest Roman of them all. (V, v).

DISCOVER: William Shakespeare

His Life and his Work...

William Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. His father was a successful middle-class glove maker. Shakespeare attended school in Stratford, and would have memorized Latin texts such as Plautus' histories of Rome. At eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway, eight years older than he; six months later their daughter, Susanna was born. In 1585, Anne gave birth to Hamnet and Judith, a pair of twins. Around 1590, Shakespeare left his family and traveled to London where he worked as an actor and playwright. Within two years he wrote and produced what is believed to be his first play, *Henry VI, Part One*; the play's success led to Parts Two and Three. In 1593, *Venus and Adonis*, a long poem based upon Ovid, was published. Shakespeare dedicated it to the Earl of Southampton along with *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594). Shakespeare's Sonnets were also written for the Earl. Shakespeare continued to write as many as three or four plays per year.

By 1594, Shakespeare was acting and writing for the Lord Chamberlain's Men (called the King's Men after the ascension of James I in 1603), an acting troupe favored by many theatergoers in London and patronized by royalty. Shakespeare was part owner of the Globe Theatre, erected by his company around 1598, a three story open-air theatre that sat up to 3,000 people. Some of his later plays were also performed in the indoor Blackfriars Theatre.

Many details of his personal life are unknown. He retired to Stratford a wealthy and famous man, and died in 1616 at the age of fifty-two. Even then his works were considered timeless. By the early eighteenth century, he had the reputation of being the greatest poet to have written in the English language. Shakespeare authored thirty-seven plays and 154 sonnets.

DISCOVER: Iambic Pentameter...

Shakespeare wrote his plays partly in verse and partly in prose, sometimes alternating between the two in the same acts and scenes. It is not unusual, in fact, for one character to address a second character in verse while the second character responds in prose. Sometimes, the same character – Hamlet or King Lear, for example – speaks in verse in one moment and in prose in another.

Verse is a collection of lines that follow a regular, rhythmic pattern – in Shakespeare, usually **iambic pentameter**, a metric scheme in which each line has ten syllables consisting of five unaccented and accented syllable pairs. Such pairs are called "feet". The rhythm in each line sounds like:

ba-BUM / ba-BUM / ba-BUM / ba-BUM / ba-BUM

Here's an example from the play: You **blocks**, / you **stones**, / you **worse** / than **sense-** / less **things!**

Verse can be either rhymed or unrhymed. Often the variations in iambic pentameter in Shakespeare create rhythms that exert great power over our ear, by breaking the regularity of the verse structure.

Consider, for example, the rhythm of: **Friends!** / **Ro-**mans! / **Coun-**trymen! / **Lend** me / your **ears**.

DISCOVER: OTHER RESOURCES...

WEBSITES

<http://www-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/>

Read/print any of Shakespeare's plays scene by scene or in its entirety.

<http://absoluteshakespeare.com/>

Absolute Shakespeare, the essential resource for William Shakespeare's plays, sonnets, poems, quotes, biography, and the Globe Theatre

<http://www.folger.edu/index.cfm>

The Folger Library's internet guide to Shakespeare for Teachers and Students

<http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/index.html>

PBS's Guide to Shakespeare in the Classroom

<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/>

Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet -- easy navigation for students.

<http://www.shakespearehigh.com/classroom/index.shtml>

"Shakespeare High in the Classroom" -- easy navigation for students.

BOOKS

A Shakespeare Glossary by CT Onions

ISBN: 978-0198125211

A short, easy-to-use glossary that can be very valuable for the beginner

Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary by Alexander Schmidt

Vol 1 ISBN: 978-0486227269 VOL 2 ISBN: 978-0486227276

This book provides definitions, locations, and meaning for every word in Shakespeare's plays and poems. The 2 volumes contain more than 50,000 quotations.

The Oxford English Dictionary

ISBN for Compact Edition 978-0198612582

The Age of Shakespeare by Francois Laroque

ISBN: 0-8109-2890-6

Shakespeare Our Contemporary by Jan Kott

ISBN: 0-3930-0736-7

VIDEO

Julius Caesar, directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz (1953). Stars Marlon Brando, James Mason, John Gielgud, Louis Calhern, Edmond O'Brien, Greer Garson and Deborah Kerr.