

Julius caesar questionnaire

[People](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Act I

1. What do the final 4 lines of scene I suggest about the status of the people under Caesar's rule?
2. "Foreshadowing" is the technique of preparing a reader or audience for something to happen later in the narrative. "Beware the Ides of March" is an example of such a technique. Can you guess what event may be foreshadowed by the Soothsayer's warnings in scene II? (I, 21)
3. Much of scene II is given over to Cassius's speeches to Brutus, trying to persuade him that he should rule rather than Caesar. Given this fact, what was the purpose of scene I?
4. Does Brutus tell Cassius why he has been feeling "passions of some difference" of late? (II, 45) Could they relate to his feelings for Caesar as ruler?
5. Cassius tells Brutus that "many" wished Brutus saw himself the way they do. Why is it important that he tells Brutus that such people are "groaning underneath this age's yoke"? (II, 66) What does that mean?
6. What does Cassius mean when he describes his role for Brutus as "your glass"? (II, 73)
7. What do you think Brutus means when he tells his friend that his advice will only be important "if it be aught toward the general good"? (II, 91)
8. How does "lov[ing] honor more than than [fearing] death" (II, 95) relate to Brutus's becoming king?
9. Why does Brutus tell Cassius the story about Caesar and himself, swimming the Tiber River and fearing for their lives?

10. Summarize the meaning and intent of Cassius’s speech to Brutus in lines II, 144-167.
11. What is Caesar’s attitude toward Cassius (II, 205-219)?
12. After what you have heard about Caesar during his rule, do you believe he was genuine in his desire to refuse the crown of king, or not? (II, 269 ff.) Why?
13. Give evidence from scene II to explain why Cassius is plotting to overthrow Caesar.
14. “ So every bondman in his own hand bears the power to cancel his captivity. ” Explain Casca’s statement in the context of the Romans’ growing fears of Caesar’s “ monstrosity”. (III, 106-107)
15. To what does Cassius ascribe Caesar’s feeling that his powers be exercised? (III, 110-111)
16. What “ enterprise” is Cassius referring to in lines III, 129-136?
17. Casca and Cassius hope Brutus will change once he is in power. How do they describe this change? (III, 161-167).

Act II

1. Summarize, in a sentence or two, Brutus’s speech on pp. 21-22. Also— has Brutus decided to ally himself with Cassius and try to topple Caesar?
2. Do you think Brutus and Cassius have sufficient grounds to topple Caesar, even though much of their apprehension seems to be based on premonitions rather than Caesar’s bad deeds? Why?
3. What are Brutus’s deepest feelings about his plan to murder Caesar? (pp. 23-24)

4. “ Oh, that we then could come by (influence) Caesar’s spirit/And not dismember Caesar! But, alas,/Caesar must bleed for it! Brutus still has reservations about the murder. Why, then, must Caesar still “ bleed for” his abuse—or potential abuse--of power? (I, 178-180)
5. Why do you think Caesar has grown “ superstitious of late”? (I, 208)
6. Do you think Brutus is lying to his wife, Portia, when he tells her he is “ not well inhealth”? (I, 272)
7. Calpurnia tells her husband, Caesar, “ When beggars die, there are no comets seen; the heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes. ” Explain in reference to Caesar’s rule of Rome. (II, 31-32)
8. Caesar says, “ Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant taste of death but once. ” Explain. (II, 33-34) [Note: This line is one of Shakespeare’s most famous.]
9. Why is it significant that Caesar tells one of his murderers, Decius, “ I love you”? (II, 78) [Note the play on Decius’s name: To die is to become “ deceased”.]
10. Do you think the conspirators are motivated by “ emulation” (envy) as Artemidorus says they are? Why or why not? (III, 14)
11. To whom does the Soothsayer owe allegiance? Why, do you think? (III, 32)

Act III

1. “ Et tu (you, too?), Brute? Then fall, Caesar! ” says Caesar, dying. What do his dying words say about Caesar’s regard for Brutus’s opinion? Might he have meant anything else by the question, do you think? (scene I, line 84)

2. “ Ambition’s debt is paid. ” Explain the meaning of this statement, uttered by Brutus on Caesar’s demise. (I, 90)
3. Lines III, 121-123 proved prescient less than 150 years after Shakespeare’s death with the mutiny of the British during the English Revolution against their king, Charles I, and his murder on January 30, 1649. To what other historical events does Caesar’s murder relate?
4. Summarize Antony’s sentiments toward Caesar after the murder is committed? (Consult both III, 217-224 and III, 275-296 for this question.)
5. Why does Antony befriend Brutus, Cassius, and the other conspirators? (III, 235)
6. When is “ death” a suitable punishment for “ ambition”? (III, 29)
7. “ I have done no more to Caesar than you shall do to Brutus,” says Brutus in his funeral speech. Explain in reference to question 1, above. (III, 36-37) Does Brutus expect to be murdered, too? (III, 45-47)
8. “ And Brutus is an honorable man,” is the refrain of Mark Antony’s famous eulogy of Caesar on page 56. Given his expressed love for the fallen leader, this refrain conveys Antony’s anger at the murderers through irony—saying one thing but meaning something quite the opposite. But Antony admits, credibly, that he “ does not know” the whole story of Caesar’s so-called “ ambition” and thus leaves himself—and Brutus and the conspirators—the option to celebrate the murderous act once he knows more. Practice saying this complex oration aloud and try to provide this refrain with an inflection that conveys Antony’s hostility. . Perceiving that he has raised the ire of the crowd to bloodthirstiness, Antony’s sarcasm turns mellow; when, at III,

225, he reiterates that the conspirators “ are wise and honorable”, he seems to mean it and urges the people to listen carefully to the reasons given by the conspirators for the murder. What was Antony’s true purpose in the eulogy? Did he achieve it or not, given the fact that the crowd does, in fact, go off to kill Brutus?

Act IV

1. What is the thematic significance of Portia’s death? That is, why do you think the playwright thought it just that the lead conspirator and usurper, Brutus, should lose his wife as a result of his having participated in the conspiracy? (II, III)
2. “ 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. ” [This is another of Shakespeare’s most famous lines.] Explain the meaning and significance of this statement to the war between the legions of Antony and Brutus by referring to III, 250-252.
3. Summarize, in a sentence or two, Act IV’s importance to the play.

Act V

1. “ OJulius Caesar! Thou art mighty yet. Thy spirit walks abroad and turns our swords in our own proper entrails. ” What truth about wars might this speech by Brutus be said to acknowledge? (III, 101-102)
2. What event does this speech (“ O Julius Caesar ...”) presage? (V, 57)
3. Mark Antony’s speech establishes, once and for all, that Brutus’s intentions were honorable, and his sincerity in working for the ultimate good of the Roman people genuine. What, then, does Octavius mean when he suggests that the victorious forces of Antony “ use” his

memory by staging a “ respectful” burial? What significance might such a funeral have for the Roman state? (V, 82-83)

4. Now that you have read the play in its entirety, decide for yourself whether or not Shakespeare believed that the murder of Caesar was in the best interests of the Roman people? To answer this question, reflect upon the facts of the play: who lives? (were their acts just?), who dies? (were their acts unjust? , and how do the speeches associated with their deaths shed light on the way “ God” (in the case of a fictitious story, the playwright himself) would judge them and their actions?
5. Since Brutus himself is said to have been “ the noblest Roman of all” (V, 74), why do you think Shakespeare kills him off before the play’s conclusion? That is, is Shakespeare conveying any message, moral or practical, by killing him off? [Remember: The reader must assume that nothing in such a play is included by accident.]