

Julius caesar. plot, theme, major characters, structure, and personal opinion on ...

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The Tragedy of Julius Caesar

Summary

Throughout the course of the play, *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare, the assassination of General Julius Caesar and the ensuing power struggle over Rome occurs. The tale begins when two elected officials, Flavius and Murellus, scold the commoners for their lack of loyalty. The plebeians are celebrating Pompey's defeat in battle against Caesar, though they had just recently commemorated his many triumphs in combat. In an act to discourage this unfaithfulness, the officials force the commoners to cease their commemoration and then strip the crowns off of Caesar's statues. By limiting the amount of support Caesar attains, the tribunes assume that this will also restrict the amount of power he acquires.

Soon after, Caesar and his retinue appear as his friend Antony prepares to sprint the ceremonial victory run through town. As the group pauses to converse, a Soothsayer warns Caesar about the perils that await him on the fifteenth of March, but he disregards this comment and leads the entourage elsewhere. After only Cassius and Brutus remain, the two senators voice their concerns on Caesar's rise to power. Cassius believes that he is not their superior and thus should not be the king, though Brutus's main concern is Rome's disintegrating democracy. Without delay, Caesar and his escorts return to the area, where Caesar expresses his fear to Antony that Cassius may become dangerous. The mob again departs, so that Casca is able to recount to Brutus and Cassius the events that they had missed. Casca reports that Caesar was offered a crown three times, though he had refused it each time it was provided. Also, despite the fact that Caesar had suffered

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from a seizure during this time, he was still able to strip Flavius and Murellus of their power as a punishment for their unruly behavior. Casca and Brutus then vacate the premises, which allows Cassius to be unaccompanied as he review his plans to manipulate Brutus. He aims to leave forged letters for Brutus that encourage him to rise to power, overthrowing Caesar in the process.

In the next scene, two Roman senators named Casca and Cicero note the strange phenomena that have occurred lately, which hint at future danger. After Cicero departs, Cassius soon joins Casca, allowing Casca to tell of the senate's plan to make Caesar King of the Senate the next day. Once Cinna arrives, Cassius then tells of his scheme to murder Caesar and delves into the details. Afterwards, he instructs Cinna to leave the forged letters for Brutus at various locations as a part of this plan.

Later on, Brutus is seen pacing alone in his home garden as he reviews the situation. Though Caesar is his friend, Brutus believes that he will eventually become corrupted by his power, and he must die before this occurs. His resolve is only strengthened by the spurious letters he receives, so that he is certain that he must take action against Caesar. Immediately afterwards, Cassius and the other conspirators enter Brutus's house, where the men discuss which tactic to use to achieve their goal. Brutus rebuffs the idea of killing Antony along with Caesar, since he supposes that he is not a threat to them.

The next day, Caesar agrees to remain at his home after his wife Calpurnia begs for him to, since she had foreseen his death in her dreams. One of the

conspirators, Decius, persuades Caesar into traveling to the senate. He soon leaves his mansion with Antony, Brutus, and the other accomplices surrounding him. Meanwhile, a man named Artemidorus waits on the street for the Caesar, so that he can deliver a letter notifying him of his impending doom. However, his attempt to save Caesar fails when he ignores Artemidorus' warning and enters the Senate, where the conspirators successfully kill him.

During the same instant as his comrade's death, Antony flees. However, once his safety is assured, he soon returns to mourn for his fallen companion. The conspirators eventually allow him to deliver a speech at Caesar's funeral, though Cassius frets that he will turn the plebeians against them. As soon as the men vacate the premises, Antony swears to the heavens that he will avenge his fallen friend. After the ceremony commences, Brutus explains the necessity of Caesar's death, so that the crowd comes to believe that he deserves to have Caesar's power. Thus satisfied, he announces to the Romans that he has authorized Caesar's friend to speak, out of his generosity. However, Antony's exceptional speech portrays Caesar as a kind and loving person, which turns the masses against the conspirators. Brutus and Cassius flee from Rome, and Caesar's adopted son Octavius travels to his father's house. While this is occurring, the mob confuses Cinna the poet with Cinna the conspirator, and they instantly lynch him.

In a prompt fashion, Antony, Lepidus, and Octavius construct an army to meet Cassius and Brutus' military force. One night while Brutus is reading,

he is disturbed by Caesar's ghost, who informs him of his impending death on the battlefield. During the next day, the armies face each other in Philippi, though the leaders meet to insult each other first. Afterwards, Cassius speaks to Brutus about the atrocious omens that they have seen recently, and they concur that they would rather die than return to Rome as captives. The men then leave to their separate armies, where the battle soon ensues. Later on, when Cassius instructs his friend Titinius to investigate the state of Brutus's army, his comrade is soon seen surrounded by believed-to-be enemy soldiers. Since Cassius has caused this to occur, his guilt induces him to commit suicide with the very sword that had previously aided in Caesar's death. When Titinius discovers Cassius' body, he also kills himself in response. Afterwards, Brutus finds the corpses of his friends but continues to brawl singlehandedly, because both sides of the fight have gained and lost land during the battle.

Eventually, Antony's army wins the war, so that Brutus and his military force are required to flee. As a response to once again seeing Caesar's ghost, Brutus urges his soldiers to leave without him and commits suicide. When Antony, Octavius, Messala, and Lucillius notice Brutus's body, they declare that he was the noblest man in Rome, for he acted out of his concern for the democracy, instead of jealousy. The men decide to bury his body in a noble fashion and to allow his soldiers into their army. Once the details are agreed upon, the men go off to celebrate their victory.

Theme

While evaluating the play, Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare, the flaws of nobility appears to be one of the major themes. The protagonist, Brutus, is <https://assignbuster.com/julius-caesar-plot-theme-major-characters-structure-and-personal-opinion-on-shakespeares-tragedy/>

meant to symbolize this main idea, for he truly acts based on the common good instead of his personal discrepancies. In the beginning of the story, Cassius manipulates him into joining his scheme by using his noble nature against himself. Once Brutus is convinced that Caesar must die to preserve the Roman democracy, he fully commits himself to what he calls an honorable cause. This displays one of the flaws of nobility, that once a dignified person is committed to a cause, they are unwavering, despite any contradictory information. Towards the end of the play, Brutus accepts his death and commits suicide in a calm fashion after he notices Caesar's ghost. This can be viewed as a foolish act because of his willingness to give up his life, based on his interpretation of a phantom's appearance. Through this evidence, one can understand that the flaws of nobility is a reoccurring subject throughout the play.

Furthermore, the fickleness of the crowds is another topic that is present throughout the story. In the beginning of the composition, Flavius and Murellus become outraged with the commoners for their disloyalty. This is because the plebeians were celebrating Pompey's defeat, even though they had previously celebrated his victories. Since the crowd is easily influenced by Caesar to view Pompey as an enemy, their unfaithfulness and inconsistency becomes evident. Moreover, after Caesar's murder, Brutus's words persuades the crowd to view Caesar as a greedy aspiring king. Moments later, Antony coaxes the masses into regarding Caesar's death as an atrocity against a kind soul. Throughout these events, the commoners display very little loyalty for any one person, and is easily persuaded to completely change their beliefs based on the skill of the speaker. These

recurring actions display the major themes, the lack of loyalty the crowd has for any one person, as well as the flaws of nobility.

Major Characters

Brutus- The tragic hero of the play, Brutus' noble nature and honor eventually leads to his downfall. Brutus fails to question the motives of his fellow conspirators, and in truly believing that the letters represented the whole of Rome's opinion, threw himself wholeheartedly into the cause. Though he has truly pure motives for his actions, by underestimating Antony and the crowd's fickleness, Brutus is forced into a bloody battle that he had hoped to avoid. Instead of fleeing from his fate, he killed himself in a composed fashion, and though this action preserved his honor, he could have tried other methods to save himself. By sacrificing his life for respect and nobility, this ultimately leads to Brutus's doom.

Julius Caesar- The man that this play is named after, General Julius Caesar, seems to be overconfident during his rise to power. Caesar even has the audacity to compare himself to the gods, and in believing he is immortal, fails to heed the warnings of many natural phenomena. He is knowledgeable in some regards, since he senses the danger Cassius could cause and is highly skilled in battle. Furthermore, Caesar does seem to genuinely care about the people of Rome, as is evident in his will. He also seems to care about his friends and family, and is heartbroken when Brutus participates in his assassination.

Antony- One of Caesar's closest friends, Antony is able to act in the necessary manner for each situation. He appears to be the perfect politician,

gaining the trust of the conspirators and the masses, though he only has a genuine interest in his own ambitions. Antony proves himself to be disloyal to most people, through his use of the commoner's money for himself and insulting his comrades behind their backs.

Cassius- The man that first manipulates Brutus into believing that Caesar should die, Cassius mainly acts out of jealousy for Caesar's power. Cassius does seem to care to an extent about the welfare of others, as is evident with his guilt over Titinius' capture. Cassius' suicide could be considered more of an impulsive act than one of guilt, since he acts in a frightened manner.

Structures

As one analyzes The Tragedy of Julius Caesar, by William Shakespeare, it becomes apparent that the author bases the play on many points of view. Throughout the story, different characters secretly reveal their true motives and feelings to the audience through soliloquies and monologues, thus creating dramatic irony and suspense. Though the audience knows that Cassius forges the letters, they are unable to inform Brutus, and are drawn into the play because of it. In addition, Shakespeare utilizes foreshadowing to create suspense, such as Calpurnia's dream of Caesar's demise. Again, the audience knows of Caesar's death and feels the urge to warn him, but is unable to influence the events of the play. Furthermore, Shakespeare combines the conflicting topics of fate and free will throughout the story, thus giving the play more depth and significance. Though Brutus is informed of his death before his battle with Antony, one could argue that Brutus

willingly chose to commit suicide. Though many natural phenomena warned
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of Caesar's impending death, the general could have chosen to stay with Calpurnia and would have then avoided his demise. Through the use of monologues, soliloquies, foreshadowing, and clashing concepts, Shakespeare creates a play worthy of remembrance.

Opinion

It is clear that while creating The Tragedy of Julius Caesar, Shakespeare expertly utilized meaningful characters and an historic event. Based on Caesar's murder, the author artfully employs foreshadowing among other literary devices to create a tragic play. Calpurnia's dream, Artemidorus' letter, and other phenomena, further capture the audience's attention. Moreover, by producing incredibly flawed characters, this creates an even more engaging story. Brutus could be considered the perfect example of this, because of his blindness to the evil motives of his friends and the fickleness of the masses in his attempts to act nobly. Since every character has a flaw, this only makes the story more realistic and entertaining as a result. Furthermore, Shakespeare devises a realistic ending based on the characters he establishes, which legitimizes the play. In hindsight, it is extremely unlikely that Brutus and Cassius would have won the war. If they had succeeded, though the audience may have had a more satisfied feeling, this would have sacrificed some of the play's authenticity. In addition, Shakespeare's play conveys many universal themes, which are just as useful in modern life as during his time. One is warned of the fickleness of the masses and the untrustworthy nature of politicians. The audience is also educated on the consequences of acting solely on honor and assuming a

person is strong morally. Overall, Shakespeare's play is well written, realistic, and conveys universal themes to the listening audience.