

Brutus and antony's speeches to the crowd after caesar's death essay sample



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"Julius Caesar" is a historical play by William Shakespeare. It is set in Italy, during the Roman era. The plot revolves around the murder of Julius Caesar and the power struggle between Caesar's friends and enemies. In this essay I will compare and contrast Brutus and Antony's speeches after Caesar's death.

Both Brutus and Antony's speeches are used to try and convert the Roman public to their side. After Brutus and his fellow conspirators kill Caesar outside the senate, Antony meets with Brutus and manages to persuade him that he agrees with the reasons why they killed the dictator, so that he is allowed to talk at Caesar's funeral. However, his real intentions are revealed in an emotional soliloquy that reveals that he is desperate to avenge his close friend Caesar. Brutus sets one condition on Antony's speech- that he must not say anything against the murderers. Brutus uses his speech to convince that he has acted for the common good of Rome, whereas Antony tries to make the people avenge the death of his beloved Caesar.

The first speech is that of Brutus. The most striking factor is the shortness of the speech, but it is effective. It would be far less effective though, if the crowd didn't have such a high opinion of him. This is demonstrated with the quote

"Believe me for mine honour, and have respect to mine honour"

The speech uses informal prose, which allows the audience to relate to him. He flatters the audience watching the speech- describing them as having great wisdom. This flattery results in the audience having confidence in him that helps him greatly later on in the speech. Also, he anticipates questions

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and provides answers to them. Brutus is very democratic in his explanation of why they killed Caesar- he says he loved Caesar, but loved Rome more. He claims that Caesar's downfall was due to his high ambition, but isn't entirely effective. Again, he uses the crowd's high opinion of him to pull himself through this section of the speech. Towards the end of the speech he asks the crowd for a reply- this is a major gamble as it would be unlikely that he would be able to provide a satisfactory answer. Brutus's final comment is:

" As I slew my best lover for the/ good of Rome, I have the same dagger for myself/ when it shall please my country to need my death"

He obviously doesn't mean it, but it is a fine example of dramatic irony, as later on in the play Brutus kills himself with the same dagger after his army are defeated at Philippi. In a manner similar to the opening scene- where the fickle crowd changes from Pompey to Caesar- the public proclaim Brutus as their ruler.

On the other hand, Antony's speech is far more clever and manipulative. From the offset Antony claims that Brutus is a superior speaker, and this is portrayed well when he says

" I am no orator, as Brutus is"

He is far from being a poor orator- he speaks articulately and uses elegant blank verse. At the beginning he appears to uphold what the conspirators have done but then he picks out the flaws in Brutus's argument. He counteracts what Brutus says about Caesar's ambition by reminding the crowd of how the dictator: rejected the crown 3 times, brought money into

the Roman coffers, was a faithful friend and was kind to the poor. Antony uses irony extensively as he refers to the assassins as 'honourable men'. The crowd is won over thanks to the suggestions that Antony, which are used in place of open judgements. Personal support is enlisted from the crowd, emphasized with the cry from a member of the audience:

"Poor soul! His eyes are red as fire with weeping"

The idea of mutiny and rage is planted into the minds of the crowd by Antony, even though he claims he is doing the opposite. The crowd is tantalized by Antony as he lets them know about Caesar's will but says he refuses to read it out- even although his intention is to tell them. Antony sends the crowd into an even deeper frenzy when he gives an imaginative account of what happened during the murder, even though he wasn't present when it happened. He claims to know which wound was made by each of the conspirators, emphasizing the cut supposedly made by Brutus as:

"The unkindest cut of all"

Finally Antony's objective is complete when he reads out the will, which causes rioting from his Audience. Yet again the public have switched allegiances from different sides. Antony knows Caesar's revenge will be attained when he states:

"Now let it work mischief, thou art afoot/ Take thou what causes thou wilt"

Despite the fact that both speeches have very different reasons, they share quite a few similarities. Both speakers were very close friends of Caesar, <https://assignbuster.com/brutus-and-antonys-speeches-to-the-crowd-after-caesars-death-essay-sample/>

which allows both to speak of what Caesar was really like accurately. The two speeches are used to win over the crowd to their point of view, despite the very different manifestoes. The opening of both speeches is similar- an appeal for attention from the confused crowd. The differences are far more striking: democratic Brutus believes he has acted for the common good whereas Antony wishes to avenge his beloved Dictator and increase his political career.

The speeches of Brutus and Antony are key moments in Roman history and their quality is apparent for such an important occasion. Antony claims he is a poor orator, but gives an excellent talk which dismisses everything Brutus said. Due to this he secures revenge for Caesar and seals the fate of Rome.