

# Idealism in the tragedy of julius caesar by william shakespeare



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In The Tragedy of Julius Caesar, William Shakespeare uses rhetoric, dramatic irony, and the characters of Cassius and Brutus to reveal with vivid strokes how idealism undermines our capacity to comprehend different outcomes and forces us down a path of societal distress.

Idealism limits our capability to think and therefore lowers our potential as human beings. Shakespeare effectively shows this through conversations between Cassius and Brutus. Brutus is the embodiment of idealism because of his patriotism for Rome and his belief in Rome and its people. Cassius on the other hand is cunning and he is able to use this patriotism in that is in Brutus to further his own agenda and specific goals. Men at some time are masters of their fates. The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves” This illustrates how simple it was to convince Brutus to kill Caesar. All Cassius needed to do was touch upon Brutus’ ego every so slightly in order to promote thought that showed him a picture of a world where he, Brutus, was ruler and how amazing that world could be for Rome. Cassius also cunningly puts forth the idea that we have control our own fate, if we want something we need to accomplish it ourselves. The fault is not in our stars, suggests that no one is born to rule, we need to earn that right which Caesar has not and Brutus can easily do. Brutus now could not look past this ideal world that he had created in his head and kept comparing it to the one with Caesar. He was debating whether or not to kill Caesar but not once did he reevaluate his position with Cassius that Caesar was ambitious. His ideal world limited the scope of his thinking a ultimately lead him to the killing of Caesar. “ Like wrath in death and envy afterwards... Let us be sacrificers but not butchers, Caius.” (61, Shakespeare) Brutus’ limited thought

process is explicitly shown here as well, he is not able to see beyond the point that it would be wrong to kill Marc Antony simply because he was a close friend of Caesar. He saw that in his ideal world Marc Antony would not have to be killed, instead Antony could play an instrumental part in convincing the Roman people that the killing of Caesar was necessary. But in reality Brutus had been warned multiple times by Cassius that Marc Antony should be killed or at least not allowed to speak. Cassius tries to explain to Brutus that Marc Antony, if allowed to speak to the Roman public, could wreak havoc to an already volatile situation but because of his strong ideals and beliefs Brutus was left unmoved. This vividly illustrates that idealism can seriously hinder our abilities to think forward and significantly decreases our potential as human beings.

Idealism is easily manipulated to further one's own agenda and self centered views. With the objective of convincing a man to turn his back on his friend, Cassius focuses on two specific strategies. First to prompt Brutus' sense of civic responsibility and to weaken Brutus' devotion to Caesar. First, Cassius uses devices such as contradiction and dramatic comparisons. He points out Caesars shortcomings and contrasts him to fellow men, showing no difference between Caesar and ordinary men in comparison. This implies that Caesar is just as likely to become corrupted with power, despite him being treated as a god. One example of this is Cassius' constant comparing Caesar with Brutus. " " Brutus" and " Caesar"—what should be in that/ " Caesar"? Why should that name be sounded more than/ yours?"(23). He forces Brutus to question whether such ordinary and weak men deserve to hold such power, well continually flattering Brutus. Once Brutus starts to

believe that Caesar doesn't actually have the kind of power that is implied, he starts thinking that Caesar is actually not fit to lead. In reality Cassius is jealous of Caesar's power and even the close relationship that Brutus and Caesar have. Cassius always wanted to be part of Caesar's inner circle and be part of the process as well, this never actually happened though and Cassius sought revenge in the form of breaking the relationship between Brutus and Caesar as well as seize all of Caesar's power. Cassius is using Brutus to pursue his personal vendetta and Brutus has fallen into his trap. Cassius is aware that knowing the audience is essential to successfully persuading. When Brutus uses the word honor twice in eight lines, emphasizing the weight he places on honor. Cassius quickly takes advantage of this. " I know that virtue to be in you, Brutus,/ As well as I do know your outward favor./ Well, honor is the subject of my story." He also emphasizes other words that Brutus resonates with, such as " free" and " Rome" as Brutus is a patriot and is willing to do anything for his country.