

# Show how shakespeare demonstrates the use of persuasion

[Literature](#), [Play](#)



William Shakespeare demonstrates the use of persuasion through many different techniques throughout 'Julius Caesar'. During the play Shakespeare uses many other themes as well as persuasion, such as the supernatural, greed and power. Power is seen in several major characters throughout the play and is the main reason why the conspiracy started, to murder Caesar. Shakespeare wrote 'Julius Caesar' during the Elizabethan age 1558-1603. The genre of the drama was history and the key features show the heroes to be imperfect. The play contains powerful and striking language throughout. Shakespeare uses descriptive imagery to create the world of Rome on stage, which was important in Elizabethan times for a clear image of scenery. In Elizabethan London, plays were the public's only entertainment, so Shakespeare made his characters very complex and powerful minded to strike emotion in the audience, and I think to raise issues in society at that time. He uses the two different types of speech, blank verse and prose which both have different impacts on the audience. Shakespeare's main themes throughout is persuasion.

He shows us the many techniques of persuasion, how characters opinions change, showing that they are fickle and how characters can influence others. From the start of the play in Act one Scene two, we see Cassius as a talented General and longtime acquaintance of Caesar. Cassius dislikes the fact that Caesar has become godlike in the eyes of the Romans. He is consumed by jealousy because of Caesar's growing power and is the first person to point out Caesar's ambition 'Now is it Rome indeed, and room enough, when there is in it but one man' (1. 11. 155)

Cassius firstly uses sarcasm to make Brutus think of Caesar in a different light 'Where many of the best respect in Rome-Except immortal Caesar... ' (I. II. 60) He then flatters Brutus saying that he has heard many people talk of him highly '.. and groaning underneath this age's yoke, Have wish'd that noble Brutus had his eyes' (I. II. 61) Brutus is flattered by these words, that anonymous Romans have said about him. I think this shows like Caesar, Brutus can also be vain. Brutus lets slip that 'What means this shouting? I do fear the people choose Caesar for their King' (I.

II. 79) However, Brutus tells him, that Caesar is his good friend. Cassius plays on Brutus' words and goes on to tell him of two times when Caesar appeared weak '... Caesar cried 'Help me Cassius, or I sink! '... ' (I. II. 111) He calls Caesar a coward, and how 'he had a fever when he was in Spain, and when the fit was on him, I did mark how he did shake' (I. II. 120) Cassius shows him these times when Caesar was weak, so Brutus may think he is not fit to be a King of Rome. Brutus is a very noble man and patriotic to his country.

So anything that involves the good of the future Rome will make him think whether or not Caesar is good enough. Cassius goes on to flatter him even more 'Brutus and Caesar: what should be in that Caesar? Why should that name be sounded more than yours? ' (I. II. 141) Cassius uses very persuasive language here, comparing Brutus to Caesar, making Brutus think that Caesar is as good as he is. It is very effective on Brutus' self image. He goes on to say that there are no noble families left in Rome. Brutus knows what Cassius wants him to do, but does not commit himself to this yet, but '....

What you have said I will consider;' (I. II. 167) Brutus goes on to say that 'Brutus had rather be a villager Than to repute himself a son of Rome Under these hard conditions as this time... ' (I. II. 171) Brutus shows signs of disliking the idea of Caesar being King. Deep down Brutus is a good person but on the surface actually very weak. He easily gives in when Cassius manipulates him. Cassius' persuasion has worked, and he leaves him to think, with all the thoughts of Caesar's weaknesses and how he is not fit to be a king, left in his mind.

Cassius leaves him to consider the plot, knowing that he will most likely join him. The conspiracy is on its way, because of the art of persuasion which Shakespeare uses through the character Cassius. Persuasion is demonstrated again in Scene three of Act one, on the night that Rome is hit by a terrible and unusual storm. Shakespeare uses the themes of superstition and the supernatural to affect characters actions and thoughts. Cassius and the other conspirators know they should 'win the noble Brutus to our party' (1. 111. 41) So that night, Cassius and the other conspirators plan to throw forged letters into the house of Brutus.

Apparently written by Roman citizens worried that Caesar has become too powerful, they were designed to fool Brutus, further pulling him into the plot. Cassius is prepared to lie, in order to enlist Brutus' help. This art of persuasion converts Brutus to their side, and they join together that night planning their attack on the Ides of March. Cassius' persuasion is seen as devious and powerful. He is a very clever man, shrewd and impulsive. Brutus is a victim of persuasion a lot in the play.

His sense of honour makes it easy for Caesar's enemies to manipulate him into believing that Caesar must die in order to preserve the republic. While the other conspirators behave out of envy and rivalry, only Brutus truly believes that Caesar's death will benefit Rome. That same night when the letters are thrown into his house, he stays up thinking about the murder, and whether it will benefit Rome. Through his soliloquy Brutus is trying to persuade himself to act on Caesar's growing power.

He says that 'I know no personal cause to spurn him' (II. I. 1) But he manages to change his mind and convert himself to an enemy of Caesar, remembering all the things Cassius has told him , and how this will benefit Rome in the future. During Elizabethan times, the audiences loved to hear soliloquys, to have an in sight into what the person was thinking. Through a soliloquy, the audience understands things that other characters in the play cannot. When the other conspirators come to the house that same night, Cassius being a good judge of character says that Mark Antony is 'so belov'd of Caesar' (II. I. 156) and he suggests that 'Antony and Caesar fall together' (II. I. 166) However, Brutus overrules and persuades them that he does not need to be murdered, and Cassius does not argue with his decision.

He does not want to upset the noble Brutus, and let him slip from their conspiracy. Brutus thinks of Mark Antony as layed back and dismisses him 'And for Mark Antony, think not of him, for he can do no more than Caesar's arm when Caesar's head is off' (II. I. 181). Brutus' strenth at persuading them not to kill Mark Antony makes up for his weakness in plotting to kill Caesar.

This has a direct result later, as Brutus and Cassius both die because of Antony.

In Act two, Scene one, Portia enters begging Brutus to tell her what all these midnight visitations in the orchard might mean, she illustrates her trust and worthiness as a confidante, by showing that she has stabbed herself in the leg but has not complained about it. She uses her wound to try and persuade him to tell her of what is going on in Rome at the present state. Brutus however, does not tell her, but says that '... by and by thy bosom shall partake the secrets of my heart' (II. I. 305) Her wounded leg, trying to persuade Brutus of telling her his secrets and why he is awake so late, is not successful.

Brutus is seen as a weak man, because he did not tell her what was going on in Rome which shows us that he is still not completely sure of what he is committing himself to. The next place in which persuasion is demonstrated, is on the morning of the Ides of March at Caesars house. Calphurnia his wife, is frightened about him going to the Capital, from the warnings the soothsayer told them, and her dream that she had that night.

She tells him 'Do not go forth today: call it my fear that keeps you in the house, and not your own' (II. II. 1) She persuades him successfully at first to stay in that day because of the dream she had about Caesar's statue 'Which like a fountain with an hundred spouts, did run pure blood; and many lusty Romans Came smiling, and did bathe their hands in it: and these does she apply for warnings and portents..' ( II. II. 78) However when Decius comes to

Caesars house to make sure he is coming to the capitol that day he interprets the dreams in another way to try and persuade Caesar to come, as the conspirators have planned to murder him that day.

This dream is all amiss interpreted; it was a vision fair and fortunate: Your statue spouting blood in many pipes. In which so many smiling Romans bath's signifies that from you great Rome shall suck... ' ( II. II. 83) Decius, to persuade Caesar even more, says that 'and know it now: the senate have concluded to give this day a crown to mighty Caesar' (II. II. 93) When Casear hears this, he dismisses what his wife has said. Her persuasion was unsuccessful because Caesar felt he needed to go the Capital, or else he would be made fun of by the people of Rome, because woman were not seen as equal.

He goes to the Capital that day, only to find out that her prophecies and the omens that she thought indicated a warning were true. These two examples of persuasion used by the wives of Caesar and Brutus indicate to us the audience that woman's points of views and worries did not effect their husband's decisions. In both cases, their persuasion was unsuccessful and dismissed by their husbands. I think this shows us, that at the time Shakespeare wrote 'Julius Caesar' woman did not play an important role in their husbands lives, and were very much kept away from secrets they may have.

After the murder of Caesar, Antony comes to talk to the conspirators about his funeral, wanting an explanation to why they did it. Antony seems to be

very friendly towards them considering they just murdered his very close and loyal friend. He manages to persuade them to let him speak at the funeral after Brutus, purely because of Brutus' nobility and kindness towards others.

Mark Antony uses the emotion of guilt to make Brutus feel sorry for him 'O mighty Caesar! Dost thou lie so low? Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils, shrunk to this little measure? Fare thee well' (III. I. 151) I think that Mark Antony maybe, being sarcastic and not being totally honest when talking to the conspirators. He talks to them with their two name 'Caius Cassius' (III. I. 212) showing the tension in the scene. He addresses them formally, also showing that he never intends to be their friend. Cassius notices why they should be afraid of Mark Antony, but Brutus speaks too soon, and allows him to speak at the funeral after him, another one of Brutus' dreadful mistakes. Brutus' and Antony's speech show strong language, and are probably the most powerful speeches of the play.

Brutus speaks first at the funeral addressing the crowd as 'Romans, countrymen and lovers! ' (III. I. 13) appealing to them as citizens of Rome. He speaks in prose, as if coming down to their level which may seem patronising towards them. Brutus is very honest giving the real reasons why he murdered Caesar 'not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more' (III. II. 22) He asks the crowd rhetorical questions 'Which of you is so low that you would prefer to be a slave? ' (III. II. 67) Brutus is a very noble and respected man in Rome, so whatever he says, the public will consider this to be true.



He is very persuasive, making the crowd consider his questions, and leaving thoughts in their heads of how Caesar was 'as he was ambitious, I slew him' (III. II. 27) Using rhetorical questions 'Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman?' (III. II. 31) He offends the Romans pride, as civilised and well respected people of Italy. They were very proud of their republican status, and did not want a king to reign. Their obvious answer to the questions is no. He wins the crowd to the consprators side, by being very honest and true to what he believed in.

The people of Rome, know of Brutus' nobility and know that he would not lie to them. They are very much on his side untill Mark Antony comes into the scene with Caesar's corpse. Using this visual aid of his body and rags, draws the attention away from the noble Brutus, and back to reality, that a very good leader has been murdered, purely because of his apparent ambition that Cassius was envious of, which the public never saw. This is a very clever and persuasive tactic used by Mark Antony even before his speech has started. He begins his speech to a hostile crowd, who are very much in favour of Brutus.

The crowd warn Mark Antony 'Twere best he speak no harm of Brutus here' (III. II. 170) Mark Antony speaks in blank verse, showing nobility and respect. He tells the crowd that 'I have come to bury Caesar, not to praise him' (III. II. 76) His speech very much mirrors that of Brutus'. He uses repetition throughtout 'Yet Brutus says he was ambitious, and Brutus is a noble man. ' (III. II. 95) but follows this with statements that contradict this. Mark

Antony sways the opinion of the crowd without directly attacking the conspirators.

He asks the crowd whether they consider Caesar's actions ambitious, as all of his deeds were for the good of Rome, and not for himself 'I thrice presented him a kingly crown, which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?' (III. II. 98) He takes a second out of his oration, which is clever as it gives the crowd a moment to consider what he has said. He plays of the audience each time he tells them that he will not read Caesar's will, which makes the crowd love him even more 'The will, the will! We will hear Caesar's will' (III. II. 41)

His speech by Caesar's body and by eventually reading his will, are calculated very well and persuasive to the audience, which turns the crowd against the conspirators. He is very clever in his speech by the body of Caesar, saying that 'the unkindest cut of all' (III. II. 184) was made by Brutus whom Caesar loved. It brings the crowd to dislike Brutus in this speech, showing us how quickly their opinions change and how they are very fickle 'They were traitors. Honourable men! (III. II. 155) Antony's speech brings about what Cassius most feared, the people of Rome coming to Antony's aid.

At the camp of Brutus at Sardis, Cassius and Brutus have another disagreement, about Cassius being greedy, and selling their possessions to other people. Brutus asked Cassius for gold to pay his army, however Cassius refused him. Cassius tries to pass this off as a misunderstanding saying that the messenger got it wrong. Cassius used the persuasion of guilt

to make Brutus feel sorry for him and he then offers him his dagger 'There is my dagger, and here my naked breast; within, a heart dearer than Pluto's mine, richer than gold: I that thou be'st a Roman, take it forth' (IV. III. 9)

Brutus, being the noble and respectful man he is forgives him and they both shake hands. Cassius' persuasion made Brutus feel guilty, making him think that he had upset him. As we can see, Brutus and Cassius are beginning to doubt one another, which hints to us the audience, their failure. Brutus and Cassius discuss their approach on their armies, and they decide to intercept them at Phillipi. Cassius is unhappy about this decision, but Brutus persuades him saying that the local people "twixt Philippi and this ground do not stand but in a forc'd affection: for they have grudg'd us contribution' (IV. III. 203)

Cassius lets Brutus have his way, as he has just found out that his wife Portia committed suicide, showing sympathy towards him. Octavius and Mark Antony, are also having disagreements, on the approach of their armies.

Antony is unsuccessful in persuading Octavius to fight on the left. Fighting on the right, in Roman times was more successful and reserved for the leaders.

Octavius says 'Upon the right hand I, keep thou the left' (V. I. 18)

Mark Antony does not argue with him, and because of this Octavius loses his battle. Romans believed that suicide was the most honourable way to die.

At the end, when Cassius persuades Titinius to help him commit suicide, he is seen as less honourable than Brutus. Brutus fails to persuade three people to kill him 'What I, my lord? No, not for all the world. ' (V. V. 6) so he kills himself. So in the end Brutus proved that he was more honourable than

Cassius 'This was the noblest Roman of them all;' (V. V. 68) Persuasion is the key element in the play, affecting all the main characters and storyline throughout. Cassius is the main character who uses this technique to his advantage but really because of power, envy and greed.

It is because of persuasive men like Cassius that more honourable people like Brutus are brought down. Because of their actions more innocent people are affected too, like Portia. But, like many plays, the other side gets revenge. Brutus' persuasion to let Anthony live allows the sinful people to be punished; both in speeches and on the battlefield. Shakespeare uses the element nature to decide how characters act. Through supernatural incidents, characters act accordingly. This is more exciting for the audience and more interesting to events in the play.

The kind of persuasion in this play is sinful and devious, and therefore deserves punishment. Humans are in general sinful, and pay the price, so innocent people are killed. The poet Cinna is killed, purely because he shares the name with one of the accomplices. Portia also kills herself because of the neglect from her husband Brutus. Caesar is also largely innocent, despite what Cassius thinks, and loses his life because of others and not himself. Persuasion is to blame for the wrong doings in the play. It is also the reason why those who committed the wrongs in the first place, are eventually punished.