

The tragedy of julius caesar by william shakespeare

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Do people ever watch commercials without the intention of purchasing the item, but at the conclusion of the commercial they feel as if they must have it? That's the power of persuasion at its finest! Persuasion is a technique that has been used throughout the ages. Everyone has influenced someone at some point or another, from teens, elders, children, leaders, individuals in advertising, or whomever, wherever; they' ve used it! This tool even dates back to Shakespeare's time, where once again it is constantly in motion. William Shakespeare even uses persuasion in his compositions, such as The Tragedy of Julius Caesar. In this work Shakespeare conveys the message of how powerful a good persuasive speaker or strategy can be. The power of one's influence can be seen throughout the tragedy, whether it's pushing the Roman citizens to feel a certain way, a rebuttal to someone else's claim, or to convince someone to perform a specific task.

As the story of Julius Caesar unfolds one immediately sees the wheels of persuasion begin to churn the waters of this ancient story. As the group of conspirators develop they realize their plot would be much more successful if they were accompanied by the noble Brutus, their dilemma being Brutus has no intention of contributing. Cassius advises Brutus by saying, " I will do so: till then, think of the world" (I. ii. 402). He then goes on to exclaim: For who so firm that cannot be seduced?....

He should humor me. I will this night, in several hands, in at his windows throw, as if they came from several citizens, writings all tending to the great opinion that Rome holds of his name. (I. ii. 408-415) Shakespeare is

expressing in this line that there is no one who is so stubborn and

determined that they cannot be persuaded. The line also interprets how
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Cassius intends on planting fake letters from citizens and allowing Brutus to receive them in order to give Brutus reason to persecute Caesar.

When Cassius decides he must have Brutus on his side the persuasion begins with those very lines. As the tragedy unfolds, the future of the Roman Republic is uncertain because Brutus falls into the trap set by the conniving Cassius. Brutus says, " It must be by his death: and for my part,/ I know no personal cause to spurn him,/ but for the general" (II. i. 611-613). When these words are spoken Brutus is declaring that he will help slay Caesar and his ambition, not because he himself has a reason to, but for the welfare of the Romans.

This alteration demonstrates just how powerful a little persuasion can be, although it is not always moral. One could say that Brutus didn't need to be persuaded and denied Cassius at first just to appear as a respectable, good natured man, but he truly wanted to execute Caesar due to his personal secret envy. However, in Act II after Brutus states that he has no personal means to perform these actions he declares his real concerns saying, " He would be crown'd:/ How that might change his nature, there's the question" (II. i. 613-614). Plutarch, author of Life of Marcus Brutus, recognizes the fact that Brutus was indeed persuaded when he states in his work that, " but Brutus was roused up and pushed on to the undertaking by many persuasions of his familiar friends, and letters and invitations from unknown citizens" (Plutarch 1).

Finally Brutus announced his verdict, leading he and his fellow Romans into a bleak time in their nation's history which led to the persuasive speeches and

the fate of the republic at the funeral of the ambitious Caesar. After Caesar was slain, a battle forms in the mists and the key weapon, persuasion, grasps a big role swallowing all in its wrath and wrapping the Republic in its restraints. As the Romans gather to mourn over the loss of their beloved leader, Caesar, Brutus speaks on behalf of their loss. He says: Any dear friend of Caesar's, to him I say, that Brutus' love to Caesar was no less than his. If then that friend demand why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my answer: Not that I loved Caesar less, but I loved Rome more.

Had you rather Caesar were living and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to love all free men. (III. ii. 1551-1558) As Brutus speaks to the mourners he is trying to convey the message that he didn't resort to killing Caesar for his personal gain, but because he felt it was in the best interest of the people. With his intelligence he uses words he believes will appeal to their emotions and convince them that it was the right decision to make. The citizens retort to his speech by saying numerous things such as, " Caesar's better parts will be crown'd in Brutus.

/ We'll bring him to his house with shouts and clamours" (III. ii. 1587-1588 & 1589-1590). The Romans are sad, yet understanding that this strenuous task had to be done and rejoice at Brutus' good nature and strength to perform such mission for the betterment of their society. The people of Rome were taken in by the powerful persuasive words of a talented public speaker.

Therefore, makes them oblivious to the persuasive techniques that were used as a tool to aid in the construction of negative thoughts and a birth to what the conspirators want others to believe. On one hand, someone could

say that the citizens were full of sorrow, in need of reassurance, and wanted to believe that everything was more advantageous than it actually was, thus not involving any persuasive methods to be used. On the other hand, one could say that when one grieves over a tragic loss, where so much love and faith is lost the griever is going to revolt with a confused and mad attitude, therefore requiring a plethora of persuasive methods. As Brutus modulates during this dreadful period of sorrow he confesses his love for Caesar, but also his reasoning behind the conspiracy and Dana Jackson says it best in An Account of Shakespeare's Adaptation of Julius Caesar, by stating, " This change serves to show Brutus in a different light next to his co-conspirators. He changes Cassius from Plutarch to have a vein of ambition and show a personal agenda, and perhaps vendetta, toward dethroning Caesar.

This of course, is nonexistent in Brutus" (Jackson 1). In the conclusion of Brutus' address Antony is presented with a dilemma in which he must find a resolution for. In unison with Brutus' speech Mark Antony takes the pulpit facing the grieving, but yet now content Romans. Antony speaks of how Caesar led his life, as well as his nation by saying: He hath brought many captives home to Rome whose ransoms did the general coffers fill: Did this in Caesar seem ambitious? When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept: Ambition should be made of sterner stuff: Yet Brutus says he was ambitious...I thrice presented him a kingly crown, which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition? (III. ii.

1632-1641) Antony magnifies the good deeds Caesar performs during his lifetime, which in turn causes Brutus and the other conspirators' actions to

appear ghastly, consequently enraging the people of Rome. His speech is full of persuasive words, ideas, statements, and altogether a plan to sway the people to revolt against the “honourable men.” Antony began to sway the others well beforehand because as Plutarch says in *The Life of Antony*, “Caesar had fallen in the senate-house, Antony, at the first moment, took a servant’s dress, and hid himself. But, understanding that the conspirators had assembled in the Capitol, and had no further design upon any one, he persuaded them to come down” (Plutarch 1). The people of Rome ponder his spoken words in his speech at the memorial service and say, “Methinks there is much reason in his sayings/....

If thou consider rightly of the matter, Caesar had had great wrong./ They were traitors: honourable men” (III. ii. 1652-1654 & 1698)! In these brief statements the citizens express their fury and belief in what Antony is telling them to be valid. In turn, this shows how Antony influenced the citizens into an outrageous rebellion with the thirst for blood in vengeance. However, some would say that the people are not persuaded they are simply presented with all the facts for the first time, entitling them to a change of heart.

Contrary to that belief Antony simply brought the basic information of which the Romans, already knew into the light and used his persuasive ways to modify their opinions. When Caesar’s body was placed in the Forum, Appian of Alexandria says, in *Marc Antony’s Funeral Oration*, that, “Very soon the people began to change their minds about the amnesty. Then Marc Antony, seeing their state of mind, did not give up hope” (Appian 1). The persuasive

ways don't come close to ceasing in the tragedy, rather they sky rocket out of control. As the legendary story of The Tragedy of Julius Caesar unfolds the audience is invited to see first hand and to be persuaded themselves by the influential schemes and people throughout the tale. One could argue that it all begins when the Conspirators seek Brutus to join their alliance by planting persuasive evidentiary support of why he should slay Caesar.

The use of persuasion hits a colossal amount at Caesar's interment, where Brutus and Antony are both presented with an opportunity to tell their side to the Romans. Brutus has the support and understanding of the people, but shortly after his victory Antony swoops in and triumphs, swaying the people toward the opposing principle. Persuasion brings vital aspects such as: accomplishing tasks, alters whole societies, and can ratify almost anything. Not only has this technique been seen throughout the generations, but it remains a part of the twenty first century as well, where it has only grown and effects the lives of many who are oblivious to it. Furthermore, persuasion is not always for the greater good.

As the years go by influential tactics only increase as new technology gives persuasive techniques another platform for it to play on as well as a new way to nonchalantly weasel its consequential ways into the human race. For instance, Plutarch says " And they were well persuaded that Cassius, being a man governed by anger and passion, and carried often for his interest's sake, beyond the bounds of justice, endured all these hardships of war and travel and danger most assuredly to obtain to himself, and not liberty to the people" (Plutarch 1). The power of persuasion can alter one's life, maybe

even destroy it, thus it is vital that the world's predecessors learn about it's powerful, and at times treacherous, effects before it is too late!