

# Analysis of 'julius caesar'



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In the play 'Julius Caesar' by William Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, the Emperor of Rome, is murdered during the third Act. It has been suggested that power and the quest for power are the reasons behind his murder.

Power is defined as a position of authority or control with the ability to do or act upon you will. The issue to be investigated is whether Brutus, Octavius and Antony became so corrupted in their quest for power that they killed Julius Caesar, so as to gain his power.

It has also been suggested that 'power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. However, this is not the only way power affects people. For instance, power could make an individual nobler or more successful, or enable them to help those under their rule. The following shall outline what Brutus, Octavius and Antony do in the play, and explain how power affects these characters.

Brutus, probably the most significant character in the play, is the leader of the group who plans to kill Caesar, although Cassius is the initiator of the plot. Brutus loves Caesar, as Caesar does him, and ironically this is why he kills Caesar – he does not want to see him corrupted by the absolute power he (Caesar) would have if he were king. He gives Caesar the final stab which kills him. He then leads his and Cassius' army against Antony and Octavius' and finally kills himself to avenge Caesar's death. Caesar was getting so popular with the people that they wanted to crown him king, which would mean he would have absolute power.

Brutus knew this, and so he convinced himself that he needed to kill Caesar for once Caesar was king, the absolute power would corrupt him and he

would become a tyrant, doing whatever he pleased. Brutus “ But for the general. He would be crown'd: How that might change his nature, there's the question: It is the bright day that brings forth the adder, And that craves wary walking. Crown him that; And then, I grant, we put a sting in him, That at his will he may do danger with. Th' abuse of greatness is when it disjoins Remorse from power... And therefore think him as a serpent's egg Which, hatch'd, would, as his kind, grow mischievous, And kill him in the shell. ” (Act 2, Scene I, lines 12–19; 32–34) So Brutus killed Caesar not for personal gain, but for the perceived good of Caesar and of Rome.

From this we can see that Brutus was on one level a very noble man. Power or the search for power is not the motivation for his actions here. However, power or the fight for power does destroy his and Cassius relationship. At the beginning of the play they were very close and scheming together very well, but once Caesar was dead and they were seeking equal power over the same army, they started arguing and got angry with each other, to the point that Cassius wanted to die. Cassius (to Brutus) I, that denied thee gold, will give my heart: Strike, as thou didst at Caesar; for, I know, When thou didst hate him worst, thou lovedst him better Than ever thou lovedst Cassius. Act 4, Scene III, Lines 103–106) It is also power which destroys Brutus in the end.

Before Caesar's death he was relatively happy in his position, but once the power was up for grabs, he unwillingly became involved in the struggle for it. If he did not (become involved) he would be killed by Antony and Octavius anyway. But when his army started losing the battle, to the point where he had to flee, Brutus realised that the only way out for him was to kill himself, which also avenged Caesar's death. So effectively, it was the search for

power which destroyed him, although it was not his motivation for joining in the battle. Octavius appears after Caesar is killed and along with Antony proclaims himself ruler of Rome.

He collaborates with Antony in their quest to kill people who might get in the way of them keeping power, and to help him win the battle. He does this so that he can gain power for himself and keep it, not for anyone else's benefit. Octavius' main aim is to gain power for himself and keep it. Evidence of this is his and Antony's list of the 'proscribed', a list of people to be killed.

Antony " These many shall die; their names are prick'd.

" (Act 4, Scene I, line 1) This list would have included Brutus and Cassius and anyone else who might get in the way of him staying ruler of Rome and having loads of power. This is why he fights against Brutus and Cassius in the battle – he is trying to prevent them from gaining power so he can have it himself. It is evident that the quest for power motivates his actions. Antony and Octavius proclaimed themselves rulers of Rome, so you would suppose they would have equal power.

But Octavius does not seem to think so, as he tries to order Antony around to get him to do what he wants him to. Antony Octavius, lead your battle softly on, Upon the left hand of the even field. Octavius Upon the right hand I; keep thou the left. Antony Why do you cross me in this exigent? Octavius I do not cross you; but I will do so (Act 5, Scene I, Lines 16–20) He acts more powerful than he actually is. Power does not make Octavius nobler – all he does with it is to try to get more – he is corrupted by it.

However, while power does end up making him more successful for a while (he and Antony win the battle) it does destroy his character – he becomes cold and callous toward the end, and only interested in killing the enemy. Octavius (to Brutus and Cassius) Come, come, the cause: if arguing make us sweat, The proof of it will turn to redder drops. Look; I draw a sword against conspirators... Come, Antony; away! Defiance, traitors, hurl we in your teeth. If you dare fight today, come to the field; If not, when you have stomachs. ” (Act 5, Scene I, lines 48-51; 64-66) Antony is an interesting character.

He is a close friend of Caesar, and is always seen next to Caesar, apart from when Caesar is murdered. He is quite distressed when he finds that Caesar is dead, but he is also angry, and wants to avenge Caesar's death by killing the murderers. However, he not only wants to avenge Caesar's death in the battle, he also wants to prevent Brutus and Cassius from gaining power, probably so he can have it himself. Antony aims to avenge Caesar's death in the battle.

However, it is also evident that he wants power. As stated before, Antony and Octavius proclaimed themselves rulers of Rome after Caesar's death. It is obvious that he wanted to keep this power, as he was the main player in formulating the death list of anyone who might try to take the power off him. Moreover, the power that he had gained made him dishonest. He wanted to change Caesar's will, in which Caesar left each citizen seventeen dracmas and all of Rome his estates, because he wanted to cut off some charges in legacies (that is, to pay for some expenses from the legacies in Caesar's will) to help pay for the upcoming battle.

Antony “ But, Lepidus, go you to Caesar’s house; Fetch the will hither, and we shall determine How to cut off some charge in legacies. ” (Act 4, Scene I, lines 7–9) He was using a dead man’s money for his own purposes which in no way would benefit anyone else apart from Octavius. This power also made him more successful, as he won the battle against Brutus and Cassius. So while he was motivated to fight Brutus and Cassius by the thought of avenging Caesar’s death, the search for power or the idea of keeping power was also motivation for Antony’s actions. Power also causes Antony to become dishonest, not nobler.

Several major characters in ‘ Julius Caesar’, namely Antony and Octavius are motivated by power and the search for power, and Antony becomes dishonest with power. Brutus, on the other hand, acts purely for unselfish reasons, mainly for the good of Rome, not because he wants power.

Therefore, it can be seen that power does corrupt but the search for power is not the reason or motivation for everyone’s actions. Bibliography Gill, R.

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