

Cicero essay example

Politics



The motives that inspired the political system in the late Roman Republic may be best illustrated through an examination of the writings by Cicero. Marcus Tullius Cicero was a Roman philosopher, lawyer, orator and politician. However, Cicero considered his political involvement as the greatest achievement despite his notable success in legal practice and oratory. Indeed, it is during this period of consulship that there was a Catilian conspiracy which sought to overthrow the Roman government. As a consequence of this attempt to overthrow the government, Cicero called for the execution of the five conspirators without the conduct of due process. In his works, *Orations against Catiline*, Cicero exposes the plot by the by Luis Catiline and his allies to overthrow the Roman government to the Roman senate. Catiline was gunning for the consulship for a second time following a defeat during the first round. In his quest to ensure he garnered the seat, Catiline engaged in widespread bribery. It is this action by Catiline that infuriated Cicero who consequently issued a law that sought to proscribe machinations of the sort. It was axiomatic to all observers that the law as passed by Cicero was targeted at Catiline. In response, Catiline plotted for the murder of Cicero and other central figures of the Roman senate on the day of election. However, Cicero was able to get wind of the plan and thereby postponed the election so as to avail the senate with time to discuss the aborted coup de' tat. A day after the day that the election of the senate members was to be done, Cicero addressed the senate on the matter prompting immediate and violent reaction from Catiline. The senate issued a martial law which was usually invoked whenever the Roman republic was faced with imminent danger form sedition or treason. This effectively meant that ordinary law that operated in the normal course of events was

suspended. Cicero who was a consul at the time was vested with absolute power following the suspension of the ordinary law.

Catiline lost the election for the second time upon which his allies had arranged to overthrow the government as they had anticipated a defeat. The plan as hatched was aimed at causing an insurrection, burn Rome and kill as many senators as they would. Nonetheless, Cicero was able to know of the plan through investigations of his own and he consequently called a meeting on the 8th of November in the temple of Jupiter Stator near the forum, where he delivered the famous Catiline Oration. The opening remarks of the oration lamented for how long Catiline would abuse the patience of the people and mock them. When Catiline ran away, Cicero gave a further oration on the following day where he informed the citizens that Catiline had not gone in exile but had rather joined with his conspirators in the illegal army. He further averred that the people should rejoice since it had been saved from a bloody rebellion and presented evidence indicating that Catiline's accomplices had confessed to the crimes. In his final argument or oration delivered in the temple of Concordia, he calls for the execution of the conspirators.

In the First Phillipic against Marcus Antonius, Cicero simply offers his views on the political situation following the killing of Julius Caesar. In his oration, he seeks to convince the senate that his enemy, Marcus Antonius and his actions were inimical to the unity of the nation. However, he lavishes praise on Marcus for his finesse in speech as well as his good intentions and promises but faults the unconstitutionality and fallacies of his actions. To reinforce his argument, Cicero tells the senate that nothing was being done through the senate since measures were usually passed without consent. He

<https://assignbuster.com/cicero-essay-example/>

targets the senate and the advisors to Caesar. Towards the end of his oration, he targets his enemy, Marcus Antonius and Dolabella though they were not present at the venue where he delivered the oration. In the Phillipic, Cicero explains the reasons informing his going away and return, the need for Caesar's in laws, the problems afflicting Rome and the contingency of some of the laws of Marcus. This has the effect of demonstrating that Cicero was out to sway the opinion of the senate against Marcus yet he also lavished praise on Marcus for his good deeds. In fact, he both praises and chastises Marcus towards the end of his Phillipic though he was absent from his oration. The First Phillipic was a senatorial speech and was conducted on 2 September 44 BC. In his first Phillipic, Cicero criticizes the laws or legislation proposed by Marcus and Cornelius Dolabella of whom he said had acted contrary to the will of Caesar. He calls for the return of the consuls into caring for the welfare of the people. In his Phillipic, Cicero had made a call against Marcus Antony and in support of Octavian and the survival of the Roman Republic. However, this call failed and Marcus and Octavian later partnered and took over the Roman power, Cicero was declared an enemy of the state and executed.

Works Cited

- Cape Jr., Robert W. "The rhetoric of politics in Cicero's fourth Catilinarian." *American Journal of Philology* (2006): 12-17.
- Wooten, Cecil W. "Cicero's Philippics and Their Demosthenic Model." *University of North Carolina Press* (2009): 14-18.
- Yonge, CD and Henry G Bohn. *M. Tullius Cicero. The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero.*. London: York Street, 2008.