

Power of rhetoric

[History](#), [Ancient History](#)



In the play "Julius Caesar" there is considerable overlapping of rhetoric and power. In the play we find a somewhat large number of situations when the power of rhetoric is used to shape the entire lives of characters, and redirect the plot of the entire story. Shakespeare puts tremendous accents on the power to sway large populations with just a few words. While there are many other forms of power in this play rhetoric seems to be the most powerful. Rhetoric in "Julius Caesar" can be defined using four main points of analysis, first being the role of Caesar compared with rhetoric to establish the theme of the play, second the way the power of speech actually lead to Caesar's downfall, third how the mastery of words caused the power struggle in Rome, and finally, how the power of speech lead to the fall of the conspirators. When looking at how Caesars gained his absolute power, you quickly find the link between this power and his absolute power over words. So now we have discovered that the key to Caesar's power is his power over words, next need to discover what Caesar actually did with this power. so when looking at the first scene we quickly realize that Caesar has turned the masses to his side and has complete obedience of the populous, except a few opposers that Caesar will quickly deal with. In scene one we find out that Flavus and Marrulus are against Caesar's power, when they start to ask the populous why they were out side they quickly find Caesar is in power and become angry "What, know you not, Being mechanical, you ought not walk Upon a labouring day without the sign Of your profession?" (I. 1. 2—5). After his lengthy discussion with the cobbler he finds Caesar in control and is very angry, but because Caesar has the complete obedience of the roman army these few resistors were taken care of. So now we see that Caesar's power

over words has allowed him complete power over his people. In the second scene after Caesar has left, Cassius convinces Brutus of Caesar's mortality and uses his power over language to convince Brutus to help assassinate Caesar. This is what leads to Caesar's downfall. Cassius' power to convince Brutus of Caesar's mortality is how Cassius is able to convince Brutus to help him. "I was born as free as Caesar, so were you. We both have fed as well, and we can both endure the winter's cold as well as he" (I. ii. 99–101). So now Caesar has competition in whoever has the most power of rhetoric. It becomes obvious later in the play that Cassius' power of words will become the ultimate downfall of Caesar. When we get to act II scene 1 we see that Cassius has amassed a large group of followers using his power and it looks like Caesar has no chance to escape from the army that has been built up against him, but Caesar still has a few ideas on how to defend himself even after his death. Consequently, this is how the mastery of words led to a power struggle in Rome. After Rome lost its main orator you find that the secondary speakers were brought out to metaphorically "duke it out" at Caesar's funeral to see who would claim power in Rome. First to speak to the crowd is Brutus, who has portrayed he has ability with the spoken word as any other speaker in the play. After his speech he temporarily convinces the populous to join his side, but makes the mistake of allowing the other great orator of Rome to speak after him. Because Antony is such a great speaker since he learned from Caesar, he is able to permanently move the public over to his side in hopes to avenge the death of Caesar. We now see that because Antony was exposed to all of Caesar's power he learned some of his master's power and thus Caesar lives on in Antony. Antony's speech was

more personal with the plebeians and so swayed them over to his side “ When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept” (III. ii. 88). Antony convinces the people that Caesar had their best interests in mind and so his death was unnecessary. The plebeians get wild and they kill Cinna the poet who they mistake for Cinna the conspirator. With Antony in control it looks like the conspirators are doomed to be killed by the masses, but somehow they escape the crowd. At the conspirator camp Brutus and Cassius begin to anger each other and they start to disagree, but since Cassius is a great speaker he manipulates Brutus and makes him feel bad, and they finally agree, now the conspirators power has allowed them to amass a huge army to take on Antony and Octavius who have also amassed hordes of men. The opposite powers have caused a clash there are too many powerful men in Rome for them to all stay alive so the battle was fated to happen. Once the battle has started the men use their power of words to create an even battle until one small communication on the battlefield causes chaos. Cassius has been informed by his slave who is much more illiterate than Cassius that the messenger he sent has been captured. This construed information leads to Cassius' death. After many other good men die from this misunderstanding we see the full extent of Caesar's power as does Brutus “ O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet” (V. iii. 93). We finally see the full extent of the power over the spoken word and how it caused the devastation of the conspirators. As a result of Caesar's great use of language we see that throughout the entire play he was the master of rhetoric and was never surpassed by any other character, even in death his words still had a major impact on Rome. The power of rhetoric is still one of the most influential ways of displaying power

in the play and one of the key things that influence the plot and how characters behave.