

How the audience's perception of cassius and brutus is likely to change during th...



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'Julius Caesar' is one of Shakespeare's most thought provoking plays. It depicts the story of Julius Caesar, one of history's most successful dictators, who was killed by a group of politicians of whom was his close friend Brutus, which led him to say his iconic last words: 'Et tu Brute!', which are the only words in the play which are written in Latin and have a special significance. From the beginning we can see that Caesar has ambitions to become Emperor and when he thinks the senate is going to offer it to him, he is more than willing to accept. It is this that leads Brutus to killing Caesar as we see how much Brutus wants to protect the republic.

The irony of this is that once Caesar dies Octavius takes over and becomes Emperor Augustus and there is no one to oppose him, as all the conspirators have been killed. Although, when written it had been over fifteen hundred years since the death of Caesar, the play still had many themes that appealed to an Elizabethan audience. Caesar in many ways has parallels to Queen Elizabeth I: both were physically weak but had a lot of power and both of them were childless and had no one to take over their position. Other themes that are explored are of loyalty and friendship and Shakespeare shows how these can have conflicting interests. Another major theme is honour and how respect is the most important thing in Roman society.

In Act 1 Scene 2, we see that Cassius is jealous of Caesar and detests him. Cassius tries to convince Brutus to work with him to murder Caesar as he believes it is the right thing to do; he also tries to persuade Brutus that this is morally correct.

Cassius starts to work on Brutus from line 35; he starts by making Brutus feel guilty to draw him on to conversation. “ You bear too stubborn and too strange a hand/ over your friends that loves you”. This shows that Cassius is intelligent; he insists on talking to Brutus and accuses him of being unfriendly, making Brutus feel guilty. Cassius has a determined character as he has already started working on his plans to kill Caesar by improving his relationship with Brutus. Cassius appears to be manipulative: “ Tell me good Brutus, can you see your face!” Cassius asks Brutus whether he can see his true potential. Cassius replies to Brutus by saying that he underestimates himself and he will show him how high his potential is, “ so well as reflection, I your glass”. This reveals Cassius' sneaky character as he tells Brutus he will show him his true potential in order to get Brutus to participate in his plan, to murder Caesar.

Cassius has a devious character, and shows linguistic talent:

“ I have heard

Where many of the best respected in Rome –

Except immortal Caesar – speaking of Brutus,

And groaning underneath this age's yoke,

Have wished that noble Brutus had his eyes”.

Cassius tells Brutus that many of the most respected citizens in Rome (apart from Caesar) are suffering badly under Caesar's rule. Cassius is cunning as

he tells Brutus that he wishes that he could see the damage Caesar is creating.

Brutus on hearing the crowd at the games of Lupercal cheering, says, " I do fear the people/ Choose Caesar for their king" and Cassius answers " Ay do you fear it? Then must I think you would not have it so". Cassius is quick witted in order to make Brutus realize that he must work with him to murder Caesar.

Cassius appears to be influential as he is having success in persuading Brutus to help him murder Caesar. ' If it ought toward the general good, / Set honour in one eye and death I' th' other.' Brutus tells Cassius he will do what he has to do as long as it is for the good of most people. With this encouragement Cassius launches into a deep speech persuading Brutus that Caesar should not be in control since he is physically weak. Cassius tells Brutus about two events that show how weak Caesar is.

The first is about a time where Caesar challenged him to swim across the flooded river Tiber on a stormy day. ' Help me Cassius, or I sink.' Cassius tells Brutus that Caesar could not swim through this river and begged him to save him. ' And this man/ Is now become a god, and Cassius is/ A wretched creature, and must bend his body; Cassius mocks Caesar and tries to make Brutus realize that Caesar who is weaker than him is the only man who counts in Rome. Cassius goes on to tell Brutus the story when Caesar was sick on campaign ' Give me some drink Titinius, / As a sick girl." He refers to Cassius as a sick girl, being called a sick girl was extremely insulting at that time as men were considered to be superior to women. Cassius is convincing

and tells Brutus that even he is stronger and would be a better ruler than Caesar.

Cassius has a sly character; his true feelings are revealed through a soliloquy at the end of this scene. ' If I were Brutus, and he were Cassius/ He should not humour me'. Cassius believes that/ If he were Brutus and Brutus were him, he would not listen to him. This shows Cassius is crafty and influential being able to easily convince Brutus to believe in something that he doesn't believe in.

In Act I Scene 2 Brutus appears to be weak, he easily does what Cassius wants, falling into his trap, " If it ought toward the general good/ Set honour in one eye and death I' th' other." This shows that Brutus will do anything if he believes it is for the good of others, in just a short time Cassius has persuaded Brutus to get rid of Caesar.

In Act 2 Scene 1 Brutus takes the dominant role, he has made up his mind about Cassius' proposal and is confident, while Cassius has become weaker. Their characters have almost reversed.

In Act 2 Scene 1, Brutus is more confident, " It is the bright day that brings forth the adder/ And that causes wary walking' Here Brutus tells Lucius that on bright days, poisonous snakes come out in the sunshine and that is when you have to be careful where you tread. This shows that Brutus has become shrewd like Caesar; he is crafty and certain in what he is doing. Brutus shows anger towards Caesar and believes it is right to kill him. ' Then lest he may prevent, / And, since the quarrel/ Will bear no colour for the thing he is" He believes that Caesar's actions cannot be reversed, referring to Caesar as '
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thing'. This shows that he now truly detests Caesar and that Cassius has succeeded in convincing Brutus that Caesar is corrupt. Now that Brutus has made up his mind; he is confident and certain in his plan to murder Caesar, he is now in control and has taken the lead, which Cassius had in Act 1 scene 2.

Brutus also becomes more demanding and feels that he is stronger than Cassius. Cassius asks Brutus " And let us swear our resolution." Brutus answers no: " No, not an oath. If not the face of men, /The sufferance of our souls, the time's abuse. If these motives weak, break off betimes. And every man hence to his idle bed" Brutus rejects Cassius's offer to make an oath; this is the first time he has ever said no to Cassius. He tells Cassius that a secret oath is dishonourable and unworthy of honourable Romans whose simple words should be enough. This shows Brutus is idealistic, he then gives Cassius a long speech; this is the point where Brutus shows Cassius he is in control.

Brutus become the more dominant character and does not take other people's opinion into consideration compare to Act 1 Scene 2. Cassius asks ' But what of Cicero? Shall we sound him? I think he will stand very strong with us.' All of the other conspirators agree but Brutus does not take their opinions into consideration. ' O name him not, let us not break with him, / For he will never follow any thing that other men begun.' The fact that Brutus disregards their opinions shows that he is now in control and has power as everyone agrees with him. Cassius says ' then leave him out,' Cassius and the other conspirators immediately agree with Brutus. This suggests Brutus has natural charisma. He has just joined the conspiracy and acts as the

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leader, steadily rejecting all the proposals made by others and imposes his own ideas on the group.

In Act 2 Scene 1 Cassius appears to be weaker and less confident. He does what he is told by Brutus and does not argue. In this scene Brutus constantly belittles Cassius. This is shown near the beginning of this scene where Cassius believes Cicero should be called, by Brutus disagrees saying he is not worthy of being called, Cassius immediately agrees with him. This shows Cassius is being belittled; he also appears to be self-effacing.

Cassius suggests that Antony should die with Caesar, because he is a cunning planner and could put them all in danger. Brutus dismisses Cassius again. Antony is only 'a limb of Caesar' harmless when Caesar is dead. Cassius does not argue, he allows Brutus to take control. This is ironic as Brutus is wrong, this is shown later in the play.

In Act 4 Scene 3 Brutus accuses Cassius of corruption. Cassius starts to show anger to Brutus for the first time, 'You know that you are Brutus that speak this, Or by the Gods, this speech were else your last.' Cassius tells Brutus he would have killed anyone else making such accusations.' This shows Cassius' fury towards Brutus. This is the first time we have seen Cassius become so aggressive towards Brutus.

Brutus ignores Cassius's threats therefore Cassius resorts to getting sympathy from Brutus. 'Brutus hath rived my heart. A friend should bear his friend's infirmities; / But Brutus makes mine greater than they are.' Cassius appears to be self-dramatising, he looks for sympathy from Brutus telling him that he has broken his heart, and that Brutus should bear his
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weaknesses but makes them bigger than they are. This shows Cassius' bold and strong character that we saw in Act 1 Scene 2 become small and weak. Cassius has now come to the point where he cannot bear to be hated by Brutus and resorts to getting his sympathy.

For the first time, Cassius does not conceal his feelings and thoughts as he did in Act 1 Scene 2, but instead he shows Brutus that he is upset. He has become so desperate he attempts to attract Brutus' emotions as he pities himself.

' Come Antony, and young Octavius come,

Revenge yourselves alone on Cassius,

For Cassius is aweary of the world.

Hated by one he loves; braved by his brother;

Checked like a bondman; all his faults observed,

Set in a note-book, learned, and conned by rote ...

There is my dagger, And here my naked breast'

' 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.'

Here Cassius is hyperbolic, he pities himself in order to get Brutus's sympathy, Cassius cannot bear that Brutus hates him. He says that Brutus loved Caesar more than he loved Cassius. He also points out how Brutus is noticing of all his faults to insult Cassius. Cassius also says he is willing to give up his heart as his forfeit for not giving Brutus gold. Cassius here has risked everything and his plea seems genuine, this lets the audience start see his weakness and we start to feel sympathy for him just as Brutus does. Cassius blames his quick temper on his mother and Brutus says he will make allowances for it in the future.

In the start of this scene Brutus is stern, he is furious with Cassius. Accusing him of corruption. ' You yourself/ Are much condemned to have an itching palm' Brutus claims Cassius always wants money, Brutus appears to be angry and aggressive ' Be ready Gods with all your thunderbolts: dash him to pieces.' We start to see a more aggressive side to Brutus in this scene, he can't bear Cassius.

Brutus belittles Cassius, ' Go shows your slaves how choleric you are' He ignores his threats and mocks Cassius' temper. ' From this day forth,/ I will use you for my mirth, yea for my laughter,/ When you are waspish.' ' There is no terror Cassius in your threats.'

Cassius asks Brutus to kill him, Brutus quickly says put away your dagger, this was a joke and we will put this down to our state of mind. Brutus emotions are revealed we can see he is upset that he has brought Cassius to the point where he wants to kill himself.

Towards the end of this scene the gentle side of Brutus emerges, Brutus does not like arguing with Cassius, Cassius says 'give me your hand' to Brutus, he replies and my 'heart'. This shows that Brutus has given Cassius the sympathy he has attempted to get. This tells us that Brutus bears a kind and gentle Character, as

This whole section shows a powerful and dramatic reversal in roles as we see Brutus take over the role fully as the more dominant character. We also see the Cassius has a more emotional and sensitive side to him. However, we see Brutus being more self-confident and arrogant thinking he is the better soldier. Also, we see Brutus starting to act more like Caesar.

Throughout 'Julius Caesar', Shakespeare uses language effectively in order to highlight and emphasise emotions as well the characteristics of Brutus and Cassius.

An example from Act 1 Scene 2 shows diverse language techniques are used. 'He doth stride the narrow world/ Like a Colossus, and we petty men/ Walk under his huge legs.' Shakespeare creates a powerful image by making Cassius compare Caesar to Issu, in I seem like a 'God'. It shows one of seven wonders of the ancient world. Shakespeare describes Cassius as a giant who s in control over the world while 'petty men' such as Brutus and Caesar worship him; the word petty is used to make citizens of Rome sound insignificant.

In Act 1 Scene 2 Shakespeare uses language to make scenes more dramatic.

Cassius says 'Men at some times are masters of their fates' this means that

a man has times when he can describe his own future. Cassius also says that
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there are faults in his underlings. The word 'underlings' make the phrase more effective as it means inferior, insulting Roman nobles.

Shakespeare also uses onomatopoeia. 'The torrent roared', he shows Cassius describing the torrent roaring. This makes him appear strong as he could swim across the River Tiber. Shakespeare uses repetition to emphasise characters 'How he did shake/ 'Tis true this God did shake;' here Shakespeare uses the word 'shake' twice to emphasise Brutus's anger towards Cassius, this is used by Brutus to tell Cassius he is an insignificant man.

In Act 4 Scene 3, Shakespeare uses more effective language, 'There is my dagger/And my naked breast; within a heart/ dearer than Pluto's mine, richer than gold.' The use of language is effective as Cassius is telling Brutus to kill him; this attracts the reader's attention as they start to believe that an important character may die.

Throughout the play many changes in the characters of Brutus and Cassius are evident we discover that they have to pay the ultimate price for their actions. We see how the choice between principle and friendship is questioned and a darker side to human nature and how people can be prepared to do almost anything for power. Overall we learn that Cassius is a man who does not want anyone else to have power apart from himself. We see Caesar who desperately wanted power for the sake of having power and Brutus an innocent idealistic character turn into Caesar craving power.