

# The failure of cicero history essay



Even though Cicero was successful in executing several of the Catilinarian Conspirators, he failed to convict Gaius Julius Caesar, due to insignificant evidence, leading to the destruction of the Roman Republic 18 years later. Lucius Sergius Catilina, who wanted to overthrow the republic and make his own empire, was a popular senator at the time, and in October of 63 BC sent letters urging many current members of the senate to leave the city. He and a few of his friends from the Senate thought Cicero had begun to abuse his power as Consul, and decided to overthrow the senate entirely. Their plan included arson, and the assassination of much of the Senate. After this had happened, Catiline was killed in battle in January of 62 BC. Cicero throughout all the action had given four speeches, called "Oratio In Catilinam" and numbered I-IV. The fourth of which accused several of Catiline's friends of being behind the conspiracy. The *senatus consultum de re publica defendenda* "Decree of the Senate on defending the Republic" gave Cicero the power he wanted to kill Caesar, who claimed it was a temporary reform and therefore invalid in his case. Had Cicero gotten what he wished for, death of Caesar as well as public fame for saving the Republic, history would not be as it is today.

However due to his failure, Caesar lived. And as a direct consequence to this, the Roman Republic was destroyed. Had Caesar died, in 62 BC as opposed to in 44 BC, in his assassination, he would have not been able to start his revolution. (Foss) Octavian would never have been taken in and the Caesarian Era of power in both the Senate and Military would have been nipped at the bud.

The first two of Cicero's speeches were aimed at bringing down Catiline from his position of military power. The first was given inside of the Temple of Jupiter Stator, a temple built and dedicated by Romulus himself, where the Senate was meeting that day. They were meeting there because Cicero himself did not want Catiline to make it to the meeting, and the uprising of his power could be stopped without protest. However, Caesar is rumored to have told him, and he was present for his accusation, which was at the time thought to be ridiculous. Cicero did receive one of his wishes, which was Catiline being brought to the attention of the senate, and perhaps admitting his actions by angrily storming out of the Temple. In fact the first speech given, *Oratio in Catilinam in Senatu Habita*, held Cicero's famous line "O Tempora O Mores," "Oh the times, Oh the customs." In fact the opening statement, "Quo usque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra?" or "How long, O Catiline, will you abuse our patience" (Cicero, line 1, oration 1) is a phrase used amongst Latin scholars to this day.

This would in turn make his planned overthrow of the senate a failure.

Without the military, Catiline would be unable to give himself power over the senate. This plan also involved Cicero taking out some of Catiline's Generals, often via assassination, as well as other peoples in the senate who held power, including Julius Caesar himself. His plan eventually turned into Cicero and his friends using their armies to surround Catiline in the Apennines.

Catiline, being the proud Roman he was, did not surrender, and every soldier fighting with Catiline that day fought to the death. Cicero had officially ended the Catilinarian conspiracy and succeeded in killing two of Catiline's Generals after the battle. However, Caesar had wisely chosen to lay low throughout

the whole thing. We only know of his involvement in his response to Cicero's wish to kill the conspirators, where he defends them.

Gaius Julius Caesar is a man who had earned much fame for things accredited to him, rather than him actually getting. Shakespeare's Play, Julius Caesar, is a perfect example of this. Caesar's life while often looked upon as one of Roman Politics and simple Republic Lifestyle, was actually one filled with darkness and behind-closed-doors type dealings. He aside from his own attempt at emperorship, helped another man with his own attempt 18 years prior. Caesar, while never formally admitting to helping Catiline, nor working with him, did attempt to defend him after his political rival Cicero denounced the conspirator in front of the Senate. At this meeting, which took place in the Temple of Jupiter Stator, Cicero had delivered the first in his series of four Orations Against Catiline. Caesar is told to have almost immediately stood up in defense of the other senators accused of the conspiracy. This one account is one of the very few accounts of Caesar's involvement in the conspiracy we have today. Caesar is also rumored to have helped fund Catiline with both money and soldiers, however there is no proof of this.

Now, because he was scared of Caesar's credibility due to his status as a nobilis, or noble man, Cicero had some of the living conspirators who were being tried soon strangled in the Tullianum, a great Roman prison built in the 600's BC, where they thought they were meeting with Caesar to try to hide the evidence against them. Cicero is known for even escorting some of the to-be-executed prisoners to the Tullianum himself, as a sign of peace and end to the accusations. Oddly enough, the word Tullianum is also in Latin an <https://assignbuster.com/the-failure-of-cicero-history-essay/>

adjective meaning written by M. Tullius Cicero himself. This word *tullianum* is derived from his nomen or family name. The prison was built by the Roman king Ancius Marcus, who is believed to be related to Cicero. In fact the only reason Cicero's family, if indeed he was related to Ancius Marcus would be that when the kings of Rome were expelled, they lost all nobility status.

Now hypothetically, what would have happened had Cicero succeeded in killing Caesar. While we will never know for sure, Cicero would have kept his position as Consul, as well as pursued his goal throughout this whole ordeal, public recognition, with both the senate and masses as savior of the Roman ways. Cicero is noted for wanting a holiday in his honor. In order to see how this might have played out, we must look at Cicero's background. We cannot look at those of Caesar, Catiline, and the others, because Cicero would be the man in charge. Roman historian Will Durant gives us a good history of Cicero on page 141 of his book *Caesar And Christ*.

Soon he was practicing law himself and making speeches whose brilliance and courage won him the gratitude of the middle classes, and the plebs. He prosecuted a favorite of Sulla and denounced the proscriptions in the midst of the Sullan terror (80 BC.) Shortly afterward, perhaps to avoid the dictator's revenge, he went to Greece, and continued there his studies of oratory and philosophy. After three happy years in Athens he passed over to Rhodes, where he heard the lectures of Apollonius, son of Molon, on rhetoric, and those of Poseidonius on philosophy. From the first he learned the periodic sentence structure and purity of speech that were to distinguish his style; and from the other that mid Stoicism which he would later expound in

his essays on religion, government, friendship, and old age. (Durant, page 146)

Durant shows us that Cicero had popularity with the masses because of his trials with the allies of Sulla, as well his speeches which “ won him the gratitude of the middle classes.” It has been speculated that had Cicero killed Caesar, he would have become him not long thereafter. Cicero’s power had grown immensely because of his speeches, as well as his ability to please all parties. Cicero perhaps was trying to take over the republic as a new dictator, by claiming to keep it safe, via killing, or denouncing the others who did the same.

Cicero had many powers, and it is arguable that he had more than his job allowed for. However, people often neglect the fact that the state of the republic had been declared an emergency because of Catiline’s actions. Cicero had the power to do anything he wanted. Both good and bad things have come of this. Julius Caesar started the first thoughts of due process of law, refusing to give up and be killed because of what little evidence we have of his involvement in the conspiracy. One large failure of the events from 63 to 62 BC is that Cicero failed to find Caesars involvement. By doing this, he allowed for the destruction of the republic he was attempting to save just 18 years later. The plan would have backfired enormously in that it tried to create an Empire, and would have in fact made it near impossible in the future, without Caesar. Rome indeed had conspiracy, and plenty of it. The Catilinarian Conspiracy was of the latter end of a string of 10 conspiracies, taking course just under 100 years, ending with the assassination of Caesar

in 44 B. C. The destruction of the republic in 44 BC was of direct consequence to Cicero's failure.

Citations:

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