

Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar was a great general and leader. He had big ideas about his place in Rome's history. Caesar thought Rome's political system was corrupt and needed to be changed. And he thought he was the man to bring a centralized government to improve Rome. But to gain the power to make these changes, he had himself declared a dictator for life. This upset many people, especially since it went against Rome's 465-year-old tradition of being a republic. Most upset were a number of Rome's senators, who feared losing their power under a dictator's rule. What would they do?

Characters

Crowd

Cassius, a Roman Senator

Brutus, a Roman Senator

Casca, a Roman Senator

Calpurnia, Julius Caesar's wife

Julius Caesar, famous Roman leader

Slave

Decimus Brutus, a Roman Senator

Marc Antony, a Roman Senator and
friend of Caesar

Narrators A-C

* SCENE 1 *

Narrator A: It is the festival of Lupercalia in February, 44 BC. A great crowd is following Julius. In a side street, Brutus is listening to the crowds and shaking his head.

Crowd: Hail Caesar! Hail Caesar!

Cassius: What's the matter, Brutus? You don't look happy.

Brutus: I've been in a bad mood lately.

Cassius: So you aren't planning to attend the celebration and see the crowds gather around Caesar.

Brutus: I can't get enthusiastic about THAT!

Cassius: So you don't like our friend Julius Caesar?

Brutus: I like him fine. And I know he's a great general who won Gaul for us, but . . .

Cassius: But he is getting too powerful? I agree with you. We are all from great families. Your ancestor Lucius Junius Brutus fought against the last king of Rome so that we would be free of royal powers! We've had a Republic for more than 400 years, and now, it seems as if Caesar wants to become a king himself.

Narrator A: Casca runs in from the festival in the nearby streets.

Casca: Cassius, Cassius! Oh, hello Brutus.

Cassius: You can speak freely in front of our friend Brutus.

Casca: You won't believe what I just saw. Marc Antony offered a crown to Julius Caesar in front of the crowd. Caesar refused it and the crowd cheered. He offered it again—and the crowd cheered when he refused it again. The third time, he refused it again. But I could tell he wanted to keep it.

Brutus: If he keeps this up, he'll undermine our whole way of life!

* SCENE 2 *

Narrator B: The conspirators meet late at night.

Cassius: If just one of us kills Caesar, he would be considered a murderer, but if all of us do it, we are putting the end to a menace, and we can get the Roman people to agree with us.

Casca: So, here's the plan. On the Ides of March, we wait till a signal is given, and then stab him together. Do you swear to do it?

Brutus: We don't need to make promises—the fact that it's the right thing to do is promise enough.

* SCENE 3 *

Narrator B: It is the morning of the Ides of March. Julius Caesar's wife speaks to him.

Calpurnia: My love, don't go out. Promise me, you won't go out.

Julius Caesar: What's wrong?

Calpurnia: I had a dream of terrible things happening to you—unspeakable things!

Caesar: Normally, I would think it was just superstition. But so many strange things have been happening recently.

Calpurnia: Yes, remember that man on the street yelling to you “Beware the Ides of March”?

Caesar: Slave, what does the augurer say?

Slave: Oh, sir, something strange happened. The augurer sacrificed a sheep—and didn’t find a heart in it!

Calpurnia: All the more reason not to go, my husband.

Narrator B: In comes Decimus Brutus, another senator.

Decimus Brutus: We have a special surprise for you today. So, I hope you’ll be coming to the Senate House.

Caesar: I promised my wife I would stay at home—she’s worried there are too many bad omens.

Brutus: You want me to tell the Senate of Rome that you can’t go out because your wife is scared?

Caesar: Well, when you put it that way . . . I can put aside a little foolish superstition. Give me my robe, slave! I’m going!

* SCENE 4 *

Narrator C: They go to the Senate House.

Caesar: Hello, my friends. How are you today?

Casca: Get him!

Narrator C: They all start stabbing.

Caesar: No! Stop!

Narrator C: Caesar staggers back and forth and falls down as Brutus plunges the knife into him.

Caesar: You, too, Brutus?

Narrator C: Finally, Caesar dies. Marc Antony enters the room and is horrified.

Marc Antony: What has happened to Caesar? What have you done?

Brutus: We've ended the threat to our Republic. Come to the marketplace and we'll explain why.

Narrator C: He speaks to the other senators.

Brutus: Let's wash our hands in Caesar's blood, and walk out to the Forum shouting "Peace, freedom, and liberty." Then we can let the people know why we have done this deed.

Narrator C: They go out showing their bloody hands. Brutus stands in the marketplace and gives a speech.

Brutus: My fellow Romans, if you want to know why we killed Caesar, here's why: Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more. Would you rather have Caesar live and make you all slaves—or have Caesar die and let you all live free? Right now you are Roman citizens—not subjects of a king. I don't think you want to be ruled by one man. Am I right? If you think I've done wrong, I will kill myself.

Crowd: Live, Brutus! Live!

Narrator C: Then Marc Antony, Caesar's friend gives a speech:

Marc Antony: Friends, Romans, and countrymen. Brutus may be right about Caesar. Brutus is an honorable man, after all. But who filled up the treasury with money? Caesar. And who refused the crown three times when I tried to give it to him? Caesar. And who was it that you all claimed to love such a short time ago, cheering his name in the streets? Again, it was Caesar. Are you not sad now that he is dead? Is there anyone who can take the place of Caesar? Who brought us so much territory? Who was so brave a leader? He was one of the greatest Romans ever—and now he's gone.

Narrator C: The people start to remember what they liked about Caesar.

Crowd member 1: Oh, Caesar!

Crowd member 2: Kill the Senators!

Crowd member 3: Burn them! They have murdered our Caesar!

Epilogue: Soon there is a war between Caesar's enemies, including Brutus, and Caesar's friends, Marc Antony and Caesar's great-nephew, Octavian. But Caesar's death finally ends the age of the Roman Republic. Octavian—who was renamed Augustus Caesar—later became Rome's first emperor.