

Name _____ Period _____

Standards Focus: Historical Context

The Real Julius Caesar

Gaius Julius Caesar born July 12, 100BC, is one of the most well-known political leaders in history. Caesar was considered to be a military genius and brilliant politician, and his life and conquests continue to be widely revered and studied throughout the world.

It was believed that Caesar was a direct descendant of the Trojan prince Aeneas, who was the son of the goddess Venus. His father, whom he was named after, was a war hero and respected politician. Although a member of the aristocracy, Caesar and his family lived in one of the lower-class neighborhoods in Rome. Little is known about Caesar's early years, other than having two sisters, both of whom were apparently named Julia. Caesar's father died in 84BC, and Caesar found himself the patriarch of the family at age sixteen. A year later, Caesar married Cornelia, daughter of the famous orator Cinna.

As a young man, Caesar saw plenty of political and social unrest under the harsh dictatorship of Lucius Cornelius Sulla. Shortly after Caesar married Cornelia, Civil War erupted and Cinna was killed, leaving Caesar without an inheritance. In fear for his own life, he fled to Asia and joined the army, serving under Marcus Thermus. He received numerous honors, including the Civic Crown which was the second highest Roman military award at the time.

In 78BC, Sulla died unexpectedly in his sleep, and Caesar returned to Rome. He began his political career, becoming a renowned orator and powerful politician. In 63BC, Caesar was elected to the position of Pontifex Maximus, which gave Caesar great political and religious influence. Three years later, Caesar was elected senior Consul of the Roman Republic. Needing support both politically and financially, Caesar formed the First Triumvirate with Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (Pompey the Great) and Marcus Licinius Crassus, an extremely wealthy businessman.

Caesar then took the post of Proconsular Governor of Gaul and Illyria. Desperate for power, Caesar began the Gallic War, which lasted from 58BC to 49BC. His conquest was successful, and Caesar seized enormous parts of Europe for the Roman Empire. This war would become only one small element of Caesar's takeover as he continued to annex parts of Europe for Rome.

Despite Caesar's military and leadership success, he was disliked by many, who believed Caesar wanted to have solitary rule. It was at this time that Caesar's daughter Julia died during childbirth, leaving both Caesar and Pompey (who had married Julia) devastated. Later, Pompey married one of Caesar's enemies' daughters, which would prove to drive a wedge into the already crumbling relationship of the triumvirate.

In 50BC, Pompey ordered Caesar to disband his army and return to Rome. After Caesar refused, Pompey accused Caesar of treason. In 49BC Caesar returned to Rome with a small faction of his army, igniting civil war. Caesar defeated Pompey in 48BC, although heavily outnumbered by Pompey. Caesar was then appointed sole ruler of Rome. In 47BC, Caesar battled in the Middle East, conquering King Pharnaces II of Pontus. He declared his famous words *Veni, Vidi, Vici* (I came, I saw, I conquered) after his swift annihilation. His victories in battle made Caesar's popularity soar; he became an icon and a god to the Romans who immediately built statues and minted coins with his countenance.

Caesar's growing power and popularity only inflated his ego and personal agenda. He did what he wanted, with no opposition. He erected buildings, enacted laws, pardoned criminals, appointed his friends and followers to important positions in government, and declared holidays in his honor. This disregard for the electoral system that had been in place in Rome incensed many Romans. Caesar became an enemy of the state with a growing number of powerful underground factions.

After Caesar was named dictator for life (Dictator Perpetuus), concern intensified for the future of Rome. Marcus Brutus, once Caesar's close friend and confidant, began to conspire with his brother-in-law and friend Cassius and others. They called themselves the Liberators, and built a plan to assassinate Caesar.

On March 15 (the Ides of March), Caesar was lured to the forum to discuss a fake petition. Once there and distracted by the petition, Caesar was stabbed to death by his conspirators; by most accounts, he was stabbed twenty-three times, although Shakespeare increased that number to thirty-three wounds. It is reported that over 60 men either witnessed or participated in the assassination of one of the most powerful rulers of all time.

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Anticipation/Reaction Guide

Directions: Before reading the play, write “yes” if you agree with the statement, “no” if you disagree with the statement, and “?” if you don’t have a strong opinion about the statement. After reading, you will complete the last column, revisiting your original responses.

Yes = I agree

No = I disagree

? = I don’t know

Before Reading	Statement	After Reading
	1. Be careful whom you trust.	
	2. Excessive pride can lead to your own ruin.	
	3. Too much ambition can be dangerous.	
	4. Good leaders acknowledge their own weaknesses.	
	5. We cannot control our fate.	
	6. Politicians are only concerned with what the majority of people want.	
	7. Superstition can be a powerful driving force.	
	8. People want to see the good in others.	
	9. Weak people can be easily manipulated.	
	10. One man’s hero is another man’s enemy.	
	11. Words can be powerful weapons.	

After completing the “Before Reading” column, get into small groups, and record your group members’ names. As a group, tally (using tic marks: |||) the number of “yes”, “no” and “?” responses for each question using the chart below.

Group Members: _____

Statement #	Yes	No	I Don’t Know
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			

Once you have collected your data, discuss those issues about which your group was divided. Make your case for your opinions, and pay attention to your classmates’ arguments. Once you have discussed all of the issues, answer the questions on the next page.

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Anticipation/Reaction Guide Response

Pre-Reading Individual Reflection

Directions: Use the information and discussion from the "Before Reading" responses to answer the following questions. Be sure to use complete sentences.

1. Which statement triggered the most thought-provoking or interesting discussion?

2. Summarize your group's most interesting discussion/debate.

3. For any of the statements that you discussed, what were some of the strongest or most memorable points made by your group members?

4. How did you feel when a group member disagreed with the way you feel about an issue? Did they accept your personal opinion or disrespect it? What was your response?

5. Was any argument strong enough to make you change your mind or want to change any of your initial responses? Why or why not? What made the argument effective? How could your own arguments have been more effective?

Your teacher will collect your chart and responses to be used again when you have finished reading the play.

Standards Focus: Elements of Drama*Literary Terms to Know*

Drama is a form of literature designed to be performed in front of an audience. There are two main types of drama: *comedy* and *tragedy*. Like fiction, dramatic works have a *plot*, *characters*, *setting*, *conflict*, and one or more *themes*. It is essential to know the elements of drama when reading a dramatic work.

1. **act**: a division within a play, much like chapters of a novel
2. **aside**: lines that are spoken by a character directly to the audience
3. **cast of characters**: a list of characters presented before the action begins
4. **comedy**: a humorous work of drama
5. **dialogue**: conversation between two or more characters
6. **drama**: a work of literature designed to be performed in front of an audience
7. **dramatic irony**: when the audience or reader knows something that the characters in the story do not know
8. **foil**: a character who is nearly opposite of another character; the purpose of a foil (or character foil) is to reveal a stark contrast between the two characters, often the protagonist and antagonist
9. **iambic pentameter**: a line of poetry that contains 5 iambs of two syllables each
10. **monologue**: a long speech spoken by a character to himself, another character, or to the audience
11. **scene**: a division of an act into smaller parts
12. **soliloquy**: thoughts spoken aloud by a character when he/she is alone, or thinks he/she is alone
13. **stage directions**: italicized comments that identify parts of the setting or the use of props or costumes, give further information about a character, or provide background information
14. **tragedy**: a serious work of drama in which the hero suffers catastrophe or serious misfortune, usually because of his own actions
15. **tragic hero**: a protagonist with a fatal flaw which eventually leads to his demise

Activity: Using the words from the list above, create a 15-question Multiple-Choice quiz. You must use the information/definitions from this page, but you may also add your own knowledge to create your questions. Be sure to create an answer key and keep it on a separate piece of paper. For example:

1. The two main types of drama are:
 - a. plays and monologues
 - b. comedies and tragedies
 - c. histories and biographies
 - d. monologues and soliloquies

When you have finished, give the "quiz" to a partner and take his or her quiz. Then, check each other's answers, and turn in your quizzes, your answer key, and your scores to your teacher. Your teacher can even find the best questions and use them on a real quiz.

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Standards Focus: Approaching Shakespeare's Language

When approaching the works of Shakespeare, it is important to remember that Shakespeare intended his works to be performed in front of an audience. If you are having trouble understanding what you are reading when you are reading silently to yourself, remember that this could be one of the reasons you may be having difficulty. The following are some guidelines to help you approach the language, and to comprehend the reading a little better.

1. **blank verse**: most of Shakespeare's plays are written in this form, which is very close to normal speech rhythms and patterns. Often Shakespeare will deviate from this form in order to make a point about the character's state of mind or for other emphasis, like a change in the mood.
2. **double entendre**: phrases or words which have double meanings, one of which is usually sexual in nature
3. **iambic pentameter**: a 10-syllable line divided into 5 iambic feet (one stressed syllable followed by one unstressed syllable). This is the basic rhythm of Shakespeare's verse.
4. **imagery**: language which works to evoke images in your mind (i.e. "And with thy bloody and invisible hand / Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond / Which keeps me pale.")
5. **metaphor**: a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is replaced by another, often indicating a likeness or similarity between them (ie. "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player...")
6. **prose**: normal speech rhythm; Shakespeare often wrote certain characters speaking either in all verse or all prose, indicating some personality trait of the character. If the character deviates from its normal form, be aware of a changing state of mind...often prose signals a character slipping into insanity!
7. **pun**: a play on words that either sound alike or that have multiple meanings
8. **rhyming couplet**: two rhyming lines at the end of a speech, signaling that a character is leaving the stage or that the scene is ending
9. **simile**: a figure of speech comparing two unlike things that is often introduced by like or as (i.e. "My love is like a red, red rose")