

Julius Caesar Summary

Act I.

Shakespeare's famous Roman play opens to the scene of two Tribunes, Marullus and Flavius scolding Roman citizens for blindly worshipping Caesar. Their conversation reveals deep-seated fears that Caesar is growing too powerful, too arrogant and must be stopped. Hoping to reduce the blind hero worship of Caesar, the two men remove ceremonial decorations off Caesar's "images" (statues) despite the obvious dangers of doing so...

A little later, we see Caesar leading a procession through the streets of Rome. A Soothsayer or fortune teller tells Caesar to beware the "ides of March [the 15th of March]" a warning that Caesar will die on this day. It is ignored. Cassius, who fears Caesar's ever growing power, begins to recruit Brutus, a close friend of Caesar's, towards his conspiracy by implying that Caesar is becoming too powerful... We also learn that Marullus and Flavius, the two tribunes pulling decorations off Caesar's statues have been put to silence for "pulling scarfs off Caesar's images [statues]." Brutus is suspicious of Cassius' motives but tells Cassius that he will think it over... Casca, another conspirator, reveals information to Brutus that suggests Caesar may be getting more ambitious...

Cassius' conspiracy gains momentum when he recruits a suspicious Casca to their cause against Caesar by pointing out that several recent strange occurrences are omens warning them against Caesar... To ensure Brutus joins his conspiracy, Cassius has Cinna place some forged letters where Brutus will find them convincing Brutus to join their cause. Cinna reveals that Brutus' good name will be an asset to their conspiracy...

Act II.

Brutus cannot sleep, revealing for the first time his own true fears that Caesar may be growing too powerful. A letter is discovered, which Brutus reads, convincing him to join the conspiracy. The complete group of conspirators meets at Brutus' house, discussing Caesar's assassination. Brutus argues against Caesar's right hand man, Mark Antony being assassinated as well. Cassius and Trebonius have their doubts but go along with Brutus. Brutus' troubled wife Portia tries to find out what her husband is planning, worried for him...

Calphurnia, Caesar's wife, wakes Caesar up after herself awakening from a terrible nightmare. She tells Caesar, that her dream foretells doom and succeeds in convincing Caesar not go to the Senate (also referred to as The Capitol) on the "ides of March" which is tomorrow. Decius Brutus arrives and hearing that Caesar will not be at the Senate tomorrow, flatters Caesar into going so as not to show fear (allowing Brutus and company to kill him there).

Artemidorus waits in a street with a letter warning Caesar of the conspiracy, hoping to avert Caesar's assassination...

Portia worries for her husband, hoping his "enterprise" today will succeed. The Soothsayer who warned Caesar about the "ides of March" in Act I, waits in a narrow street hoping to warn Caesar of his imminent danger...

Act III.

Caesar arrogantly tells the Soothsayer that today is the "ides of March", but the Soothsayer tells him the day is not over yet... Artemidorus nearly warns Caesar but Decius Brutus prevents this. Popilius wishes the conspirators good luck, scaring them that Caesar may already know their plans.

Metellus Cimber petitions Caesar to lift his brother's banishment order. Caesar refuses and the conspirators kill Caesar. Mark Antony flees. Mark Antony pretends to treat Caesar's murderers as friends. He asks to speak at Caesar's funeral. Cassius thinks this is dangerous, Brutus, disagreeing, lets Mark Antony speak at the funeral.

Mark Antony reveals his true hatred for the conspirators. Octavius, Mark Antony's ally is remain safely outside of Rome a little longer... Brutus and Cassius explain to the citizens of Rome why they killed Caesar, gaining their support.

Using the immortal words, "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;" Mark Antony turns the citizens of Rome against Brutus and Cassius by making the citizens feel remorse for Caesar's cruel death and by bribing them with the news that Caesar's will gifts each citizen money from his will. Mark Antony uses this fact to suggest Caesar was a great man who should not have been murdered.

The crowd, now an angry, crazed mob, go after the conspirators including Brutus and Cassius who flee in fear...

A poet called Cinna who bears the same name as one of the conspirators is killed by the angry mob which shows Shakespeare's insight into the senselessness of the mob mentality...

Act IV.

The Triumvirs (Octavius, Mark Antony and Lepidus) decide which of the conspirators shall live and which shall die. Mark Antony assures Octavius that Lepidus does not and will not ever have any serious power... The two men start planning their attack on Brutus' and Cassius' forces.

Brutus learns that Cassius has finally arrived. Brutus is angry with Cassius, Cassius saying he has done his friend no wrong. Brutus wanting privacy from his troops, tells Cassius to step into his tent where he will discuss the issue further...

Brutus angrily attacks Cassius first for contradicting his order to remove Lucius Pella for taking bribes and then Cassius himself for his own dishonesty. Cassius is upset by this but eventually Brutus chooses to forgive his friend. We learn that Portia, Brutus' wife has died, over one hundred senators have been put to death by the Triumvirs and that a large army led by Mark Antony and Octavius is approaching their position... Brutus is greeted by Caesar's Ghost which tells Brutus he will see Caesar again at Philippi.

Act V.

On the Plains of Philippi, Mark Antony's and Octavius' forces face Brutus' and Cassius' forces. The two sides insult each other, Mark Antony and Octavius then leaving with their army.

Later in battle with Mark Antony and Octavius, Brutus sends orders via messenger Messala to Cassius' forces on the other side of the battlefield.

Cassius' forces are losing ground to Mark Antony's forces. Brutus has defeated Octavius' forces but instead of reinforcing Cassius' forces, have instead sought out spoils or bounty from the field.

Needing information, Cassius sends Titinius to a nearby hill to report if it is friendly or not. Cassius instructs Pindarus to go atop a hill to report Titinius' progress to him.

Pindarus sees Titinius pulled off his horse and fears Titinius has been captured. This would mean Brutus' forces have been beaten so Cassius kills himself on Pindarus' sword. Titinius now returns realizing that Titinius was not captured but was greeted by Brutus' victorious forces. Brutus learns of Cassius' death. Titinius, mourning Cassius, kills himself.

Brutus inspires his men to keep fighting. Lucilius who is mistaken for Brutus is captured. Eventually Mark Antony realizes this. The battle rages on and Antony issues orders for Brutus to be captured, dead or alive...

Tired, weary, but still alive, Brutus finds a place to catch his breath with his few remaining followers. One by one, Brutus asks first Clitius, Dardanius and Volumnius to kill him but each refuses. Finally Brutus gets his wish by falling on his sword, killing himself.

Octavius, Mark Antony, Messala and Lucilius now arrive. Strato explains how Brutus died. Mark Antony pays tribute to Brutus' noble spirit by famously saying, "This was the noblest Roman of them all..." Octavius tells his soldiers to stand down, the battle now over...

- Jay Ranpura