



Image courtesy of Wordsworth Classics

Read and Respond

Julius Caesar By William Shakespeare



Please note:

- The questions and activities below are a small sample of ways that texts could be incorporated into lessons.
- The following activities might be completed over a series of lessons or as part of a unit of learning.
- Consider how these activities might be adapted to suit your context. How might you do this?
- Students may wish to complete some activities individually or in pairs/groups.
- Activities might be completed orally and/or in written format.

Background to the text:

Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare is a gripping tragedy set in ancient Rome. The plot revolves around the political intrigue and betrayal that leads to the assassination of Julius Caesar, the rise of Mark Antony and Octavius Caesar, and the ensuing civil war. It explores themes of power, ambition, and the consequences of political manipulation.

Aspects of Junior Cycle Level 3 Learning Outcomes in Focus:

Oral Language 8	Listen actively to interpret meaning, compare, evaluate the effectiveness of, and respond to drama.... noting key ideas, style, tone, content and overall impact in a systematic way ○★
Reading 7	Select key moments from their texts and give thoughtful value judgements on the main character, key scene...★
Writing 1	Demonstrate their understanding that there is a clear purpose for all writing activities and be able to plan, draft, re-draft, and edit their own writing as appropriate ○★

Links to L2LPs:

Communication and Literacy	1.4 Express personal opinions, facts and feelings appropriately, e.g. expressing an opinion on a television programme, relate news from their weekend
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Read and/or watch the following extract from Act 3, Scene 2.

This extract comes from Caesar's eulogy* and is by Mark Antony to the citizens of Rome. Mark Antony has been granted permission to speak at Caesar's funeral so long as he does not implicate the conspirators in his death, but he skilfully turns the crowd against them.

*A **eulogy** is a speech made at a funeral about the life of a person who has passed away.

(Extract from Act 3, Scene 2)

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interrèd with their bones —
So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious.
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Caesar answered it.
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest —
For Brutus is an honorable man;
So are they all, all honorable men —
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
He was my friend, faithful and just to me.
But Brutus says he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honorable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome,
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill.
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept;
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff.
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,
And Brutus is an honorable man.
You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse. Was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,
And sure he is an honorable man.
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
But here I am to speak what I do know.
You all did love him once, not without cause;
What cause withholds you then to mourn for him?
O judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason! Bear with me;
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
And I must pause till it come back to me.



Click the video to play or follow the link
below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q89MLuLSJgk>



Possible activities

Activity 1:

1. A **eulogy** is a speech made at a funeral about the life of a person who has passed away. We tend to remember the good they did, and the less positive side of a person is generally overlooked. Having read and/or watched the extract above, make a list of all the things Mark Antony reminds the citizens of Rome that Julius Caesar did.
2. Why does Mark Antony say that Caesar had to die? Support your answer with reference to the extract.
3. Does Mark Antony agree with Brutus? Support your answer with reference to the extract.
4. **Subtext** is what is not said, but implied or suggested. It is something understood by the reader, watcher, or listener of a text.
In your opinion, what is the **subtext** of this speech? How does Mark Antony convey this subtext to the audience?
5. An **orator** is someone who is good at public speaking. **Oratory** is the skill or eloquence of public speaking.
Is Mark Antony portrayed as a **persuasive orator**? Give three examples from the text that effectively show where he is being persuasive.

Activity 2:

Discuss in pairs and use a dictionary where required to write in the modern meaning of the phrases below.

Phrase from the Text:	Possible Modern Meaning:
'The good is oft interred with their bones.'	
'Ambition should be made of sterner stuff.'	
'O judgment! thou art fled to brutish beasts,'	



From your reading of the extract how do you imagine Mark Antony as a character?

Do you think he is an honest and truthful man? Compare and/or contrast his characteristics to another character you have studied in class.

Activity 3:

The speech above is an example of a **monologue**. This is a long speech by one actor in a text. It is a great example of skilled **rhetoric** or persuasive speaking, one which is still quoted from in modern times.



Can you think of any other impactful speeches from the last 100 years?

- Firstly, research and watch some examples of impactful speeches noting their persuasive techniques.
- Secondly, write your own short persuasive speech to be delivered to your classmates about a topic of your choice.

For further help with planning your speech, click to access [a speech writing support](#).