

# Julius Caesar Study Guide Questions

**NOTE:** Answer on your own paper. Typed answers are preferable; if you do handwrite, please be extraordinarily neat.

## I. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

**DIRECTIONS:** Use any reputable internet source to answer the following background questions. Answer thoroughly in your own words.

- 1) How did the Greek philosopher Aristotle define “tragedy”?
- 2) According to Aristotle, what elements make up a “tragic hero”?
- 3) The ruling body of Rome from 60 – 53 BC was the “First Triumvirate” made up of three individuals who shared power: Julius Caesar, Marcus Crassus, and Pompeius Magnus (Pompey).
  - a) What happened to Crassus?
  - b) What happened to Pompey ... that left Julius Caesar in sole control of power?
- 4) What is a Roman Triumph?
- 5) What is the history of the Roman Festival of Lupercal? How is it celebrated?

## II. LITERARY DEVICES

- 1) **ALLITERATION**—repetition of initial sounds (EX: “Happy heroes haunt the hallowed hallways.”)  
As you read the play, find and write down **10 EXAMPLES** of alliteration and where you found them. The following would make a good format for recording the alliteration you find.

**ALLITERATION:**

**LOCATION:**

“Oh you **h**ard **h**earts!”

1; 1; 35 (FYI—that means: Act I; Scene I; Line 35)

- 2) **METAPHORS**—comparing one thing to another (EX: “The sun was an executioner.”)

**SIMILES**—comparisons using “like” or “as” (EX: “Old age like trees in winter.”)

As you read the play, find and write down **10 EXAMPLES** of metaphor and/or simile. EX:

**METAPHOR/SIMILE:**

**LOCATION:**

“You **b**locks! You **s**tones!”  
(said to a group of men)

1; 1; 34

3) **PERSONIFICATION**—a non-human thing is granted human-like attributes (EX: “The sneering sea”)

As you read the play, find and write down **10 EXAMPLES** of personification. EX:

| PERSONIFICATION:  | LOCATION: |
|---|-----------|
| “Tiber trembled underneath her banks”<br>(Tiber is a river) | 1; 1; 45  |

### III. CAESAR ACT I

**SCENE 1:** The play opens on the day of Lupercal—which Shakespeare also makes occur on the same day that Caesar holds a Triumph. Flavius and Murellus, two government officials called *tribunes*, are upset that working folk are celebrating. They are upset because Caesar’s victory was not a victory over foreigners, but a victory in a civil war of Romans against Romans (Caesar vs. Pompey) ... therefore something to be lamented, not celebrated.

- 1) Give an example of a pun used in this scene:
- 2) When asked why he is “leading men about the streets,” the Cobbler gives both a comical reason and a serious reason. What are these two reasons?
- 3) Why does Murellus find the commoners hypocritical? (In other words, how did the commoners used to act regarding Pompey and now how do they act regarding Pompey’s defeat?)
- 4) In addition to driving the commoners from the streets, Murellus and Flavius are also going to “disrobe the images if [they are] decked with ceremonies.” Use the marginal notes to figure out what this means:

**SCENE 2:** Cassius tries to persuade Brutus to conspire with him against Caesar.

- 5) What are Caesar’s instructions to Marc Antony/Antonius? What does this indicate about Calpurnia?
- 6) What warning does Caesar receive from a Soothsayer? How does Caesar take it?
- 7) Cassius accuses Brutus of not being as friendly toward him as he had been before. What excuse does Brutus give for his behavior?
- 8) Name TWO ways that Cassius uses flattery as he talks to Brutus:
- 9) What do you think is the point Cassius is trying to make by telling the story of Cassius and Caesar swimming in a river?
- 10) Name TWO ways that Cassius tries to convince Brutus that Brutus is just as good as Caesar:
- 11) What does Brutus say he will do with all the information Cassius has just told him?
- 12) Caesar thinks that Cassius is dangerous. Name THREE faults that Caesar attributes to Cassius:
- 13) What handicap does Caesar reveal when he asks Mark Antony to talk to him “on [his] right hand,” or in other words, on his right side?
- 14) How many times was Caesar offered a crown? How do you know he was tempted to take it?
- 15) How did the crowd react to Caesar falling down? (By the way, Caesar is known to have been afflicted with epilepsy; that is why we call attacks of epilepsy “seizures.”)
- 16) What has happened to Murellus and Flavius?
- 17) At the end of the scene, Cassius reveals another plan to further convince Brutus to conspire with him against Caesar. What does Cassius plan to do?

**SCENE 3:** More plotting while a storm rages.

- 18) Name **FOUR** unusual/supernatural events that occur during the storm:
- 19) Cassius has gone about in this crazy storm with his jacket “unbraced” (open), baring his chest to the storm. He criticizes Casca for being afraid and not understanding the true cause of all the strange phenomena. Do your best to figure out what Cassius thinks is the true reason for the supernatural storm:
- 20) If Caesar is crowned king, Cassius says “I know where I will wear this dagger then,” meaning he intends to commit suicide. Read the rest of Cassius’s speech about suicide carefully. What does Cassius believe is the power of suicide?
- 21) In proclaiming the Romans weak, what are **TWO** things that Cassius compares them to?
- 22) What does Cassius ask Cinna to do?
- 23) In talking about Brutus, Casca says “Oh, he sits high in all the people’s hearts / And that which would appear offense in us / His countenance, like richest alchemy / Will change to virtue and to worthiness.” Do your best to “translate” this into modern language. In other words, what does this passage mean?

## **IV. CAESAR ACT II**

**SCENE 1:**

- 24) Brutus believes that Caesar is not dangerous now ... but he is afraid if Caesar is crowned, Caesar will change and his ambition will cause problems. Describe one of the metaphors that Brutus uses to describe Caesar’s potential for tyranny.
- 25) After Brutus reads the anonymous letter, what promise does Brutus make to Rome?
- 26) List the members of the conspiracy that arrive (helping you get familiar with their names):
- 27) Why does Brutus believe they should **NOT** ask Cicero to join the conspiracy?
- 28) Why does Brutus believe they should **NOT** kill Marc Antony as well? Note that in explaining his reasons, Brutus compares Antony to a limb (an arm/leg) of Caesar.
- 29) What reason does Cassius give for why Caesar might not go to the Capitol?
- 30) What method does Decius say he’ll use to get Caesar there?
- 31) Portia believes something is wrong with her husband Brutus. Name **THREE** pieces of evidence she states to back up her belief.
- 32) Why does Portia believe she has a right to know what is going on with Brutus?
- 33) **THOUGHT QUESTION:** Read the rest of Portia’s speeches carefully. How does Portia view marriage???
- 34) What unusual thing did Portia do to prove her “constancy” (her strength of character)?
- 35) Caius Ligarius shows up, obviously suffering from an illness. What are some ways he shows how much loyalty and respect he has for Brutus?

**SCENE 2:**

- 36) Why does Calpurnia want Caesar to stay at home today?
- 37) Write down **ONE** significant line that show Caesar’s attitude about death:
- 38) What bad omen do the augurers (fortune tellers) discover?
- 39) What bad dream did Calpurnia have?
- 40) How does Decius re-interpret this dream?

### SCENE 3:

41) What is the gist of Artemidorus's letter and what does he plan to do with it?

### SCENE 4:

42) Why does Portia send Lucius to the Capitol?

43) What does the Soothsayer plan to do?

## V. CAESAR ACT III

### SCENE 1: The death of Caesar

44) What reason does Caesar give for not reading Artemidorus's letter?

45) Metellus Cimber kneels before Caesar to plead in behalf of his banished brother (except really he just wants to get close enough to Caesar so he can stab him). How does Caesar react to this pleading?

46) What do the conspirators do with Caesar's blood?

47) What does Marc Antony's servant ask in Marc Antony's behalf?

48) What does Marc Antony say about the possibility of being killed by the conspirators?

49) Why does Marc Antony give an apology to Caesar (well, his spirit/corpse, anyway)?

50) Once assured of his safety, what favor does Marc Antony ask of the conspirators?

51) What does Cassius think about granting Antony's favor?

52) What two conditions does Brutus set before he grants the favor Antony asked of him?

53) When Marc Antony is alone with Caesar's corpse, summarize the gist of his speech over the dead body:

54) Who is coming to Rome to meet with Marc Antony?

### SCENE 2: Caesar's funeral

55) **BRUTUS'S FUNERAL SPEECH** ("Be patient till the last ...")

- Name TWO ways Brutus tries to establish his own credibility
- Name TWO rhetorical questions that Brutus uses:
- Give ONE example of the use of repetition for dramatic effect.

56) What does the crowd think about Brutus once Brutus has finished speaking?

57) Brutus tells the crowd he is going to leave but asks the crows to stay and do what?

58) **ANTONY'S FUNERAL SPEECH** ("Friends, Romans, Countrymen ...")

- Name two ways Antony uses **logos** (appealing to logical reasoning) to make a point:
- Name two ways Antony uses **pathos** (appealing to emotions) to create an effect:

59) How does the crowd react to this speech?

60) Why does Antony insist that he not read Caesar's will?

61) **ANTONY'S NEXT SPEECH** ("If you have tears ..."):

- How does Antony use visual aides to move the audience at various times in this speech?
- Summarize what Antony tries to persuade the audience about concerning Brutus and the stab wound made by Brutus.

- 62) Name TWO examples of how Antony uses self-deprecation (putting himself down):
- 63) How does the crowd react to this speech?
- 64) What did Caesar give the people of Rome in his will?
- 65) The servant of Octavius reports what about Cassius and Brutus?

**SCENE 3:** Why one should be glad one's name is not Cinna

- 66) Briefly summarize what takes place in this short scene:

## VI. CAESAR ACT IV

**SCENE 1:** The three men who will become the "Second Triumvirate" of Rome (Octavius Caesar, Lepidus and Marc Antony) meet to decide who they need to kill off and how they can alter Caesar's will to their benefit.

- 67) Marc Antony compares Lepidus to both an ass and a horse to what purpose? What point is he trying to make with these comparisons?

**SCENE 2:**

- 68) Why does Brutus suggest that he and Cassius go into the tent to continue their argument?

**SCENE 3:**

- 69) Cassius believes Brutus has wronged him because of what circumstance?
- 70) Brutus accuses Cassius of having "an itching palm" (being greedy) and meddling with bribes. How does Cassius react to this accusation?
- 71) What does Brutus further accuse Cassius of (i.e. what does he say Cassius has denied him?)
- 72) Cassius says he has been "hated," "braved" (bullied) and "checked" (scolded) by Brutus, so Brutus may as well \_\_\_\_\_. Cassius says he gets his bad temper from his \_\_\_\_\_.
- 73) A random poet shows up to try and persuade Brutus and Cassius to do what?
- 74) What happened to Portia? (Make sure to consult any marginal notes available to help you understand what happened to her).
- 75) What reasons does Cassius give for NOT marching to Philippi?
- 76) What reason does Brutus give as a counter-argument?
- 77) Later in his tent, Brutus asks his servant Lucius to do what? Why doesn't Lucius finish this task?
- 78) What is the message of Caesar's ghost?
- 79) THOUGHT QUESTION: What did you personally think about Brutus's reaction to the ghost?

## VII. CAESAR ACT V

**SCENE 1:** The four generals of the opposing armies (Cassius/Brutus vs. Octavius/Marc Antony) meet to "parley" (talk).

- 1. Give an example of an insult that each of the following characters gives to his enemy:
  - a. Octavius insulting fill in with a name:
  - b. Antony insulting \_\_\_\_\_:
  - c. Brutus insulting \_\_\_\_\_:

d. Cassius insulting \_\_\_\_\_:

- 80) What is significant about this day for Cassius?
- 81) Cassius says that he used to believe in the philosophy of Epicurus, who did not believe in omens that predict the future. What did he see that made him change his mind?
- 82) What did Cato do that Brutus does not approve of?
- 83) Even so, Brutus says: "Think not, thou noble Roman, that ever Brutus will go \_\_\_\_\_ to Rome. He \_\_\_\_\_ too great a \_\_\_\_\_."

#### SCENE 2:

- 84) How does the battle seem to be going for Brutus at this point?

**SCENE 3:** At this point, Brutus's army has defeated Marc Antony's ... but instead of helping Cassius, Brutus's soldiers have started spoiling the enemy. In the meantime, Cassius is losing to the armies of Octavius.

- 85) Why did Cassius kill his own flagbearer?
- 86) Cassius sees that his tents are on fire, so he sends Titinius to see if the troops by his tents are friend or foe. Because he cannot see well, he sends his servant Pindarus up a hill to observe what happens to Titinius. What does Pindarus report about Titinius?
- 87) How does Cassius's death "help" Pindarus and what does Pindarus intend to do once Cassius is dead?
- 88) Titinius reports that Pindarus didn't correctly perceive what was going on. What really happened when Titinius reached the soldiers he was sent to go see?
- 89) How does Titinius prove his loyalty to Cassius?

#### SCENE 4:

- 90) Lucilius pretends to be Brutus in order to spare his master and gets captured. What does Lucilius tell Antony about Brutus?
- 91) Why does Antony treat Lucilius (his enemy) so well?

#### SCENE 5:

- 92) Brutus asks four men if they will help kill him; all refuse except the last man. The four men's names are:
- 93) **THOUGHT QUESTION:** Before he dies, Brutus says, "Countrymen, My heart doth joy that yet in all my life / I found no man but he was true to me." What does this reveal about Brutus's character?
- 94) Why are Strato and Lucilius proud of the way Brutus died?
- 95) At the end of the play, Marc Antony gives a tribute to Brutus (his enemy!) Summarize what Marc Antony thinks about Brutus:
- 96) What is going to happen to Brutus's body that night?

**The End!**