

# **JULIUS CAESAR**

## **READING COMPREHENSION**

### **ACT 2**

### **YEAR 5 AND 6**

So much has happened already and there is so much more to follow. As we start act two, we find Brutus in his house. The storm is over and Brutus has found all the letters that were thrown through his window in the night. Do you think he's been convinced that Caesar should be dealt with? Let's find out....

“It must be by his death. He would be crowned  
How that might change his nature, there's the question  
Therefore think him as the serpent's egg  
Which, hatched, would grow mischievous  
And kill him in the shell.”

It sounds like Brutus has almost made up his mind! This is all just as Cassius planned. Maybe Brutus needs a final push to get him over the edge.....

There was a knock on the door! There stood Cassius surrounded by men in hoods.

“Good morrow Brutus, do we trouble you?” said Cassius  
“I have been up this hour, awake all night,” said Brutus, who did look very tired.  
“Do I know these men?”

One by one Cassius named the men. We would call them “conspirators” now. They are people who are part of a “conspiracy” which is a secret plan. Decius Brutus, Casca, Cinna and Metellus Cimber. These are the men that Cassius has brought with him, these are the men that are prepared to do harm to Caesar.

Decius said, “Shall no man be touched apart from Caesar?”

They had to decide whether anyone else would be “got rid of”. This was a chance for Cassius to get rid of the person he thought was most dangerous to his plans, he didn't waste a moment...

“I think Mark Antony should not outlive Caesar,” he said quickly, seizing his opportunity

But Brutus wasn't up for that, “Let's be sacrificers but not butchers” he shouted at Cassius

“Yet I fear him for the love he bears to Caesar,” argued Cassius, trying to cover his tracks.

“Let Mark Antony not die.” It was decided. All of them were worried that because Caesar was superstitious and because there had been a huge storm the night before, that Caesar wouldn't go to the senate because it might have made him

scared and suspicious. Caesar had to go to the senate today so that they could kill him before anyone found out about their plan.

Decius and Metellus thought it would be best if they went to Caesar's house to make sure he left for the Senate as normal. The plan was set.

All of the conspirators left Brutus's house. He was deep in thought, worrying if he was doing the right thing, when his wife Portia came into the room.

Portia asked him what was going on? He'd been up all night, wandering around and muttering. Brutus told her that he wasn't very well, that was all, but she knew he was hiding something.

"Here there have been six or seven men that did hide their faces," she said to him. She reminded him that she was his wife and deserved to know what was happening. Brutus wanted to tell her, but such a terrible secret must be kept, well, secret. He told her that she should go back to bed and that he'd tell her later.

It was March 15th, *The Ides of March*, the day the soothsayer had warned Caesar about.

Julius Caesar had just been through the worst night's sleep ever. His wife Calpurnia had been tossing and turning and mumbling and shouting in her sleep. He could only catch the occasional thing she was saying, something that sounded like "Help, ho, they murder Caesar." Honestly, last night of all nights - the night before he might be offered the crown once and for all. Although he was tired, he was excited for the day ahead of him. He was just about to leave for the senate, when Calpurnia burst into the room.

"You shall not stir out of the house today" she said to him. Ha! Not leave the house? Well, he was going to show her...

"Caesar shall forth".

Caesar was determined to go, but Calpurnia (who didn't really get superstitious) was suddenly very frightened of the dreams she'd been having. She'd decided that they were bad omens, and that her husband should not go out today.

Caesar said that bad dreams should be afraid of *him* and that he was more dangerous than danger. They argued for a while, but in the end he said he'd stay at home with her if it made her feel better.

She relaxed. Then Decius turned up.

"Ah, here's Decius, he can tell the Senate that I'm not coming today." Now this was a problem, this was exactly what Decius and the conspirators had been afraid of.

"Most mighty Caesar, let me know some cause  
Lest I be laughed at when I tell them so."

So Caesar told Decius about Calpurnia's dream. She had dreamt that she'd seen Julius Caesar's statue, like a fountain, flowing with blood and she said that Romans were smiling and bathing in it! Horrible.

Decius had to think quickly, he had to get Caesar out of the house.

"No, no." he said. "That's a good dream, it means that you are the life blood of Rome and all the citizens take nourishment from you. If I say break up the senate until another time when Caesar's wife will meet with better dreams, they will whisper. Lo, Caesar is afraid."

It was a good thing to say. Decius knew Caesar well, and he knew that Caesar wouldn't want anyone to think he was afraid.

Caesar thought about this for a minute, laughed and said

"How foolish do your fears seem now Calpurnia? I will go."

Decius breathed a sigh of relief, he had done his part. Mark Antony and Brutus arrived shortly afterwards to escort Caesar to the senate. He was pleased to see them, he was in a good mood again. Soon the crown might just be in his hands.

Back at Brutus's house, Portia was very worried. She knew her husband better than anyone, and something was up. She sent her servant Lucius to the senate to find out what was going on. Maybe if she found out what was happening, there would be time to stop it?

**JULIUS CAESAR**  
**READING COMPREHENSION**  
**ACT 2**  
**YEAR 5 AND 6**

**QUESTIONS**

**PAGE 1**

**1. Where is Brutus?**

At the senate  At home  At the doctors  At the festival

**2. What has Brutus found?**

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**3. Why does Brutus think of Julius Caesar as a ‘serpent’s egg’**

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**4. Write down a line from the text that shows that Cassius is in charge**

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**5. Why has Brutus been “awake all night”?**

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**5. Write down three people who are part of Cassius’ conspiracy to harm Julius Caesar**

i. \_\_\_\_\_

ii. \_\_\_\_\_

iii. \_\_\_\_\_

6. . What is “a conspiracy?”

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5. Read from *They had to decide whether anyone else would be “got rid of”....*

A. Who else does Cassius want to ‘get rid of’?

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B. Write down a direct quote from the text that supports this answer

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C. Did Brutus agree with Cassius?

YES  NO

Use a direct quote from the text to justify your answer.

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7. Why were all the conspirators worried?

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PAGE 2

8. Who is going to make sure Caesar goes to the senate as normal?

i. \_\_\_\_\_

ii. \_\_\_\_\_

9. What is the name of Brutus’ wife?

Pauline  Paula  Portia  Calpurnia

10. Write down two reasons Brutus’ wife thinks something strange is going on?

i. \_\_\_\_\_

ii. \_\_\_\_\_

11. *'Brutus wanted to tell her, but such a terrible secret must be kept, well, secret'.*

**What is 'the secret'?**

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12. *'It was March 15th, The Ides of March'*

Why is this a significant?

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13. *'Although he was tired, he was excited for the day ahead of him'*

**Why was Caesar tired and excited?**

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14 A. As Caesar is about to leave for the senate, what does Calpurnia say to him? Use a direct quote from the text

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14 B. Caesar replies, "Caesar shall forth."

**What does he mean? Tick one box**

He won't go to the senate

He will forfeit his plans

He will go to the senate

He will go back to bed

15. **Why does Caesar change his mind and decide to go the senate after all. Make reference to the text to justify your answer**

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**16. Why are Portia and Calpurnia significant characters in Act 2? Use evidence from the text to justify your answer.**

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**17. Put these events in order of when they happen in Act 2**

- Calpurnia has terrible dreams and begs Julius Caesar not to go to the senate
- Portia is suspicious about what is going on
- Julius Caesar agrees not to go to the senate
- Brutus receives letters through his window
- Decius persuades Julius Caesar to go to the senate after all
- Cassius arrives at Brutus' house with some other conspirators

**JULIUS CAESAR**  
**READING COMPREHENSION**  
**ACT 2**  
**YEAR 5 AND 6**  
**ANSWERS**

**1. Where is Brutus?**

At home

**2. What has Brutus found?**

Letters through his window

**3. Why does Brutus think of Julius Caesar as a 'serpent's egg'?**

Because as he grows he'll become more dangerous

**4. Write down a line from the text that shows that Cassius is in charge**

"This is all just as Cassius planned." OR

"There stood Cassius surrounded by men in hoods."

**5. Why has Brutus been "awake all night"?**

He's been worrying about what to do

**5. Write down three people who are part of Cassius' conspiracy to harm Julius Caesar**

Any 3 from below:

Cinna, Decius Brutus, Casca, Metellus Cimber

**6. . What is "a conspiracy?"**

A secret plan/plot

**5. Read from** *They had to decide whether anyone else would be "got rid of"....*

**A. Who else does Cassius want to 'get rid of'?**

Mark Antony

**B. Write down a direct quote from the text that supports this answer**

"I think Mark Antony should not outlive Caesar,"



**C. Did Brutus agree with Cassius?**

**NO**

**Use a direct quote from the text to justify your answer.**

“Let’s be sacrificers but not butchers”

**7. Why were all the conspirators worried?**

Because there had been a storm the night before and Julius Caesar was known to be very superstitious so he might stay at home and then find out about their plan.

**PAGE 2**

**8. Who is going to make sure Caesar goes to the senate as normal?**

- i. Decius
- ii. Metellus

**9. What is the name of Brutus’ wife?**

Portia

**10. Write down two reasons Brutus’ wife thinks something strange is going on?**

- i. He was awake and wandering around all night
- ii. Hooded men/men hiding their faces came to the door

**11.** *‘Brutus wanted to tell her, but such a terrible secret must be kept, well, secret’.*

**What is ‘the secret’?**

The plot/plan to kill Caesar

**12.** *‘It was March 15th, The Ides of March’*

**Why is this significant?**

The soothsayer had said to Caesar, “Beware the Ides of March”

**13.** *‘Although he was tired, he was excited for the day ahead of him’*

**Why was Caesar tired and excited?**

Tired because he’d been up all night but excited because he thought today he may be given the crown!

**14 A. As Caesar is about to leave for the senate, what does Calpurnia say to him? Use a direct quote from the text**

“You shall not stir out of the house today”

**14 B. Caesar replies, “Caesar shall forth.”**

**What does he mean? Tick one box**

He will go to the senate

**15. Why does Caesar change his mind and decide to go the senate after all.**

**Make reference to the text to justify your answer**

Because he doesn't want anyone to think he's scared:

*“If I say break up the senate until another time when Caesar's wife will meet with better dreams, they will whisper. Lo, Caesar is afraid.”*

*It was a good thing to say. Decius knew Caesar well, and he knew that Caesar wouldn't want anyone to think he was afraid.*

**16. Why are Portia and Calpurnia significant characters in Act 2? Use evidence from the text to justify your answer.**

They both sense things aren't right and try to warn their husbands but both are dismissed/ignored. Portia repeatedly asks Brutus what is going on and at the end of the Act sends her servant to see what is happening. Similarly Calpurnia's nightmares predict what is going to happen to Caesar but he ends up ignoring her pleas.

**17. Put these events in order of when they happen in Act 2**

Calpurnia has terrible dreams and begs Julius Caesar not to go to the senate	4
Portia is suspicious about what is going on	3
Julius Caesar agrees not to go to the senate	5
Brutus receives letters through his window	1
Decius persuades Julius Caesar to go to the senate after all	6
Cassius arrives at Brutus' house with some other conspirators	2