

JULIUS CAESAR

READING COMPREHENSION

ACT 1

YEAR 5 AND 6

The weather was good, that was a relief. It had taken ages to plan the festival and if it had rained, then the day would probably have been ruined. It was two o'clock on a February afternoon and the sun was shining! Everyone was starting to emerge from their houses full of excitement - it had been a long winter, but finally, finally everyone had something to cheer about. Well actually, they had two things to cheer about, because Julius Caesar had returned to Rome at last.

The war between Caesar and Pompey had lasted for four years but finally, finally it was over. Pompey was gone, Caesar was home and the good times were back. It was party time!

The streets were filling quickly now, tables were being set up crammed with food and drink - a feast! Music could be heard and people were beginning to dance. The Festival of Lupercal had begun. Let's just hope the rain stays away a bit longer. Suddenly there were soldiers.

"Hence you idle creatures, get you home", said the first soldier, called Flavius. "Is this a holiday?"

One of men, a shoemaker, turned to Flavius and said

"We make holiday to see Caesar and to rejoice in his return."

"You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things. Knew you not Pompey?" said another soldier, called Marullus

"Many a time have you climbed up to walls and battlements to see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome. And now do you strew flowers in his way that comes in triumph over Pompey's blood? Be gone!"

That's one way to ruin a party. It seems that not everyone was so happy to see Julius Caesar return. A lot of people (especially soldiers) were very fond of Pompey and were sad to see him go. A bit like when your favourite player gets transferred to another club. Except that Pompey hadn't been transferred, he'd been, well, killed by Caesar. So it's not like football at all.

The soldiers moved on and the festival started again.

Suddenly a cry went up: “Caesar,Caesar!” And there he was at the front of a procession - smiling and waving to the crowd, drinking in the love of the people. Then a shout came from within the crowd - “CAESAR, beware the Ides of March!” - “What man is that?” asked Caesar. His friend Brutus told him it was a soothsayer. Now a soothsayer is a person who is good at telling the future or predicting what's going to happen. They are kind of like magical fortune-tellers!

“Set him before me, let me see his face.Speak once again,” said Caesar
“Beware the Ides of March,” repeated the soothsayer.
“He is a dreamer, let us leave him,”said Caesar as he moved in, dismissing the soothsayer as a nobody. And with that Caesar was gone, smiling and waving to the crowd once again.

Brutus watched his friend disappear into the distance. Suddenly he felt an arm on his shoulder and turned to see Cassius. Cassius was another important Roman: he was clever and told everyone that he was their friend, but people were a bit unsure about him. He was what you might call...crafty. Brutus didn't really want to talk to Cassius right now, he had things on his mind. Brutus wanted to leave, but Cassius wanted to talk. Just then another cry went up from the crowd.

“What means this shouting” said Brutus, “I do fear the people choose Caesar for their king.”

Do you fear it?” asked Cassius - “Then I think you would not have it so....”

“I would not Cassius, yet I love him well.”

Brutus was uncomfortable with this conversation and wanted to leave, but Cassius had things to say. He told Brutus that Caesar was getting far too big for his boots, that Rome was about the people, not just one man. Cassius said that Caesar thinks “He doth bstride the narrow world like a Colossus and we petty men walk under his huge legs.” Cassius had to keep stopping as more shouts were heard from the crowd.

Finally he finished his speech and asked Brutus what he thought.... after all Brutus only wanted what was best for Rome, right?

Brutus told him he'd think about what Cassius had said, and then suddenly Caesar was passing back through the streets.

Caesar saw Cassius across the square as he passed by and whispered to his best friend, Mark Antony,

“Cassius has a lean and hungry look. He thinks too much, such men are dangerous.”

“Fear him not Caesar, he's not dangerous,” said Mark Antony. Caesar moved on, back towards his house. Brutus grabbed Casca - another Roman - to ask what all the shouting had been about. And Casca told him this....

“There was a ***crown*** offered to him.”

This is exactly what Brutus had feared. Although he liked and respected Caesar, he like Cassius, was a bit scared that Caesar would go too far - remember, nobody wanted a King or Emperor.

“Did he take the crown?”

“No, it was offered to him and he said no. Then it was offered again and this time he seemed a bit more tempted, but still said no. Then it was offered a third time and it seemed like Caesar was going to take it, but then he said no again. Then he fell down, looking like he was sick- but eventually he got up and the crowd cheered one last time.”

Casca left and Brutus’s brain was in overdrive. He had a lot to think about.

“We will speak tomorrow.” he told Cassius.

Cassius had a plan, and this was it.....

Caesar and Brutus are friends, but Brutus has doubts about Caesar. I will write some letters, saying that we are worried about Caesar. I will make the letters look like they come from lots of different Roman citizens and throw them through Brutus’s window. Maybe that will help Brutus realise that something must be done about this Julius Caesar.

That night, there was a storm. Now, there’s something you should know about Romans. They were incredibly superstitious. They thought that any strange weather or storms were the gods telling them that something was wrong. This worked perfectly for Cassius, as he could get even more people involved with his plan by telling them that the gods were angry with Caesar.

That night, he met with Casca and told him to give the many letters he had written to his friends and to throw them through Brutus’s window. He told Casca that if they could get Brutus onto their side then they could make change happen.

It was all for the good of Rome!

JULIUS CAESAR
READING COMPREHENSION
ACT 1
YEAR 5 AND 6

QUESTIONS

PAGE 1

1. What was the weather like? Tick one box

Raining Sunny Snowy Windy

2. *'Everyone was starting to emerge from their houses full of excitement'*
What does the word 'emerge' mean? Tick one box

Come out Disappear Sing

3. What city is this story set in?

4. What is the name of the character who has just returned home?

5. Who died in the war?

6. How long did the war between Caesar and Pompey last?

7. *"it had been a long winter, but finally, finally everyone had something to cheer about"*

Why do you think the narrator uses the word "finally" twice?

8. "Hence you idle creatures, get you home", said the first soldier, called Flavius"

Tick the synonym for 'idle'

lazy

sweaty

rich

young

9. Why are the two soliders, Flavius and Marullus, angry? Give two reasons with direct reference to the text

i.

ii.

PAGES 2-3

Re read the paragraph beginning, "Suddenly a cry went up...."

10.A. What does someone shout at Caesar. Write down the direct quote from the text

B. Who shouts it at Caesar?

C. What is a 'Soothsayer' -use a direct quote from the text.

11. After Caesar leaves, who does Brutus talk to?

The soothsayer Cassius Flavius Marullus

12. Re read this conversation between Brutus and Cassius:

“What means this shouting” said Brutus, “I do fear the people choose Caesar for their king.”

Do you fear it?” asked Cassius - “Then I think you would not have it so....”

“I would not Cassius, yet I love him well.”

Brutus was uncomfortable with this conversation and wanted to leave

**Why do you think Brutus is ‘uncomfortable with this conversation’.
Justify your answer with reference to the text.**

13. Write down two things Cassius says to Brutus

i.

ii.

14. Does Caesar trust Cassius?

YES NO

Justify your answer with a quote from the text

15. What was offered to Julius Caesar which made the crowds shout?

16. How many times was it offered?

17. What was Cassius' plan to get Brutus on his side?

Tell Brutus that Caesar doesn't like him

Write lots of letters, pretending they are from Roman citizens, saying they are worried about Caesar and throw them through Brutus' window

Give Brutus a great present

Write lots of letters saying that Caesar is wonderful

18. What do Romans think that strange weather and/or storms mean?

19. Why is a storm good news for Cassius?

20. What does Cassius tell Casca they need to make change happen?

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ANSWERS

PAGE 1

1. What was the weather like? Tick one box

Sunny

**2. ‘Everyone was starting to emerge from their houses full of excitement’
What does the word ‘emerge’ mean? Tick one box**

Come out

3. What city is this story set in?

Rome

4. What is the name of the character who has just returned home?

Julius Caesar

5. Who died in the war?

Pompey

6. How long did the war between Caesar and Pompey last?

4 Years

**7. “it had been a long winter, but finally, finally everyone had something to cheer about”
Why do you think the narrator uses the word “finally” twice?**

To emphasise the change in mood of the Roman citizens.

8. “Hence you idle creatures, get you home”, said the first soldier, called Flavius”

Tick the synonym for 'idle'

lazy

9. Why are the two soliders, Flavius and Marullus, angry? Give two reasons with direct reference to the text

- i. People are celebrating the death of someone they knew, "knew you not Pompey?"
- ii. People are throwing flowers/congratulating the person who killed Pompey when before they would have been celebrating seeing Pompey in the streets of Rome, "Many a time have you climbed up to walls and battlements to see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome. And now do you strew flowers in his way that comes in triumph over Pompey's blood?"

PAGES 2-3

Re read the paragraph beginning, "Suddenly a cry went up...."

10.A. What does someone shout at Caesar. Write down the direct quote from the text

"Caesar, Beware the Ides of March"

B. Who shouts it at Caesar?

A soothsayer

C. What is a 'Soothsayer' -use a direct quote from the text.

"a person who is good at telling the future"
a person who is good at...."predicting what's going to happen".
"They are kind of like magical fortune-tellers!"

11. After Caesar leaves, who does Brutus talk to?

Cassius

12. Re read this conversation between Brutus and Cassius:

"What means this shouting" said Brutus, "I do fear the people choose Caesar for their king."

Do you fear it?" asked Cassius - "Then I think you would not have it so...."

“I would not Cassius, yet I love him well.”

Brutus was uncomfortable with this conversation and wanted to leave

**Why do you think Brutus is ‘uncomfortable with this conversation’.
Justify your answer with reference to the text.**

Cassius has been described as ‘crafty’ and although he tells people he’s their friend he can’t really be trusted. By saying “Then I think you would not have it so” it sounds like Cassius is trying to suggest to Brutus that it doesn’t have to be this way and that he is going to persuade him to do something he might not want to.

13. Write down two things Cassius says to Brutus

- i. Caesar was getting far too big for his boots
- ii. Rome was about the people, not just one man.

14. Does Caesar trust Cassius?

NO

Justify your answer with a quote from the text

“Cassius has a lean and hungry look. He thinks too much, such men are dangerous.”

15. What was offered to Julius Caesar which made the crowds shout?

A crown

16. How many times was it offered?

3 times

17. What was Cassius’ plan to get Brutus on his side?

Write lots of letters, pretending they are from Roman citizens, saying they are worried about Caesar and throw them through Brutus’ window

18. What do Romans think that strange weather and/or storms mean?

That the Gods are angry

19. Why is a storm good news for Cassius?

It meant he “could get even more people involved with his plan by telling them that the gods were angry with Caesar.”

20. What does Cassius tell Casca they need to make change happen?

Get Brutus on their side