

Classroom Connections

Before the performance...



(Re) Making History

Ask half the class to outline the events leading up to Julius Caesar's assassination in *Julius Caesar*. Have the other half of the class use Internet resources to find historical information on the event. List both the theatrical and historical events on the board, discuss similarities and differences. Then ask students to write an edited treatment of the play that portrays *Julius Caesar* in a more historically accurate context. Ask each group to compare their treatments and list major changes to the play agreed on by all members of the group.



Who Writes History? Recording World Events

Ask students to pick a person who is prominent in politics, government, science or literature and write a brief paragraph about this person's life or achievements. Ask students to discuss how and where they got their information. Assign students partners and ask them to write a paragraph about the other prominent person. Compare stories. How were they similar or different? Ask students to consider their choices: If you lived in a different country, do you think you would have picked the same person to write about? Would you have written a different story? Why or why not?



Mysticism in Julius Caesar

What are some of the omens in *Julius Caesar*? What kind of characters believe they have seen visions of the future? Ask students to design a poster for *Julius Caesar* focusing on the mystical elements of the story. Ask students to present their work, explaining how the mysticism serves the story and what their poster communicates to an audience. Please send examples of your students' work to the Shakespeare Theatre Company!



Ted van Griethuysen as Julius Caesar and Trish Jenkins as Calphurnia in the Shakespeare Theatre Company's 1993 production of *Julius Caesar*.



How to Find a Hero

Have the class choose three villains from popular movies or stories. What traits do these villains have in common? Then have the class select three heroes. What traits do these characters have in common? How do you know when you are seeing a movie who the villain or the hero is going to be? Advise students to keep their eyes open for these signs when watching the play.



What Will People Do for Power?

Brutus assassinates Caesar believing that doing so will save Rome. Instead, war follows and many lives are lost. As a group, make a list of the destruction that follows Caesar's murder. How many people do we see or hear of dying? Discuss what might happen to such a "leader" in today's world.

Classroom Connections

...After the performance



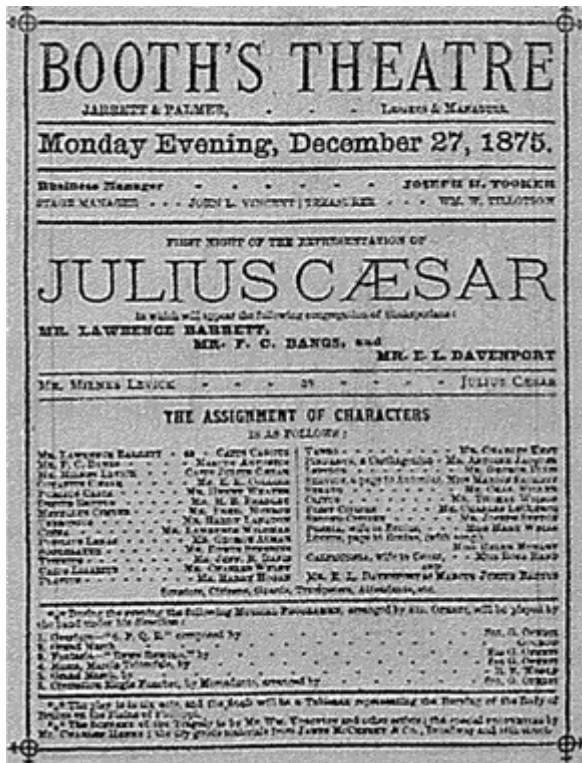
Tragic Hero

Who is the hero in *Julius Caesar*? In early Greek plays such as *Oedipus*, tragedies were about a tragic hero who caused his own downfall. The tragic hero had the potential for greatness but was doomed by fate to fail. Despite his failure, the tragic hero wins a moral victory in the end. Is any of this true for Caesar or Brutus?



Do Military Men Make Good Leaders?

Julius Caesar is offered a crown three times by Mark Antony but refuses each time. Why do you think Caesar refuses the crown? Make a list of current presidents and leaders of the United States, and list whether they have served in the military or not. Ask students to discuss if they think military service is important to good leadership. Would students vote for a candidate with military experience over one without? What are the different skills necessary to manage troops in wartime and lead a country? Ask students what they think the outcome of the play would have been, had Caesar accepted the crown.



Courtesy of the Folger Shakespeare Library

The Playbill printed on silk for the 1875 production of *Julius Caesar* in New York.



Whose Story Is It?

The play *Julius Caesar* focuses on three characters: Julius Caesar, Brutus and Mark Antony. Have students reflect on the Shakespeare Theatre Company's production: based on what they saw, which character in this story was presented as the protagonist of the play? Did the production help students see the characters differently than when they read the play? Divide students into small groups based on their answers and have them search through the text for specific lines and events that support their side of the debate as well as instances in the production. Bring all groups of similar viewpoints together to compile their findings, then have a member from each larger group present the case. Reflect on the arguments made by each side. Did anyone change their opinion based on the evidence presented?



Review the Production

Many writers and theatre enthusiasts make their careers by reviewing theatrical productions. Often, a good or bad review can make or break a production's financial success. Ask students to imagine that they are writing a review of *Julius Caesar* at the Shakespeare Theatre Company for the *Washington Post*. Or, ask students to read the *Post* review and write an op-ed letter responding to the review, either agreeing or disagreeing with the reviewer's comments. Send students' letters to the Shakespeare Theatre Company Education Department!



Elizabethan Presentation

In an Elizabethan production of *Julius Caesar*, none of the actors would have worn togas; they would have worn contemporary Elizabethan clothing. There would not have been any set to present Ancient Rome either. What could be supplied by the actors and playwright to convey the setting to the audience? Have students choose an era from the past and improvise a short scene. Challenge them to convey the world around them using words and gestures without any aid from a set or costumes.