

**Discussion Questions for the Shakespeare play *Julius Caesar* and Plutarch's *Life of Julius Caesar***

**A definition of some of the terms relating to Roman authorities may be helpful.**

- Aedile – officer in charge of public works, games, and police
- Censor – inspector of morals and conduct
- Consul – one of two chief magistrates of the Roman Republic
- Lictor – official who bore the fasces (a bundle of rods and axe that symbolized the authority of the magistrate) and accompanied consuls in their duties
- Pontiff – the titular head of the priests of Rome
- Praetor – a magistrate below the level of the consuls and having judicial responsibilities
- Quaestor – treasury official
- Tribune – protector of the rights of plebeians and opposed to the rights of the patricians

**Notes:**

- Caesar believed that Brutus might have been his son through a relationship with Brutus' mother, Servilia, who was in love with Caesar
- Rome was in theory, a republican form of representative government, with senators elected to represent the rights of the people. For the first several hundred years of its founding, Rome was a monarchy. The monarchy was overthrown by Lucius Junius Brutus, around 500 B.C.
- Marcus Brutus was believed to be descended from Lucius Junius Brutus
- Caesar never actually declared himself king, but was appointed lifetime dictator by the Senate, a title that was usually reserved for a person given absolute authority in times of war

**The following passages in the play can be traced to Plutarch's *Life of Caesar* and/or *Life of Brutus***

- Act I, ii., lines 158-161
- Act I, ii, lines 192 -195
- Act I, ii, lines 220-223
- Act I, ii, "He fell down in the marketplace. . . and was speechless."
- Act I, ii, "Marry, before he fell down . . . his throat to cut."
- Act I, iii, lines 9 -13
- Act I, iii, lines 16 – 32
- Act I, iii. Lines 85 -88
- Act II, i, line 46
- Act II, ii, lines 1 – 3
- Act II, ii, lines 39 – 40
- Act II, ii, lines 58 – 59

- Act II, iii, lines 1 -16
- Act III, i, lines 1 – 2
- Act III, i, line 6
- Act III, iii entire scene regarding Cinna the poet
- Act IV, iii, “Impatient of my absence. . . And, her attendants, absent, swallow’d fire.”
- Act IV, iii, lines 275 – 287
- Act V, i, lines 80 – 88
- Act V, ii, lines 80 – 90
- Act V, ii, lines 101 - 107
- Act V, iii, lines 98 – 102
- Act V, iv, lines 2 -6
- Act V, iv, lines 20-32
- Act V, v, lines 15 – 19
- Act V, v, lines 48 – 51

## Questions

1. What was your opinion/understanding of Caesar and Brutus before you read the play and lives?
2. What was your opinion/understanding of Caesar and Brutus after you read the play and lives?
3. In your opinion, why was Caesar killed?
4. Was Brutus justified in participating in the death of Caesar?
5. Why do you think Caesar allowed himself to be stabbed after he saw that Brutus was one of the conspirators?
6. Do you believe that Cassius manipulated Brutus into joining the conspiracy?
7. Brutus claimed that he was acting in the interests of the Republic; do you believe him?
8. After the death of Caesar, and the civil wars that followed, Octavius, later Augustus Caesar, was made Emperor ending the Roman Republic. Many believed that Brutus should not have killed himself, but should have opposed Caesar, Antony and Lepidus. What do you think?
9. How do Caesar, Brutus, Antony, Cassius, and Augustus compare with the Emperors who comprised the *Twelve Caesars*?
10. Did reading the play and the life together help in understanding the characters of Caesar and Brutus?
11. Did you like the play or the life better?