

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE  
DIRECTOR JAMES EVANS

# JULIUS CAESAR

ONLINE  
RESOURCES

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SHAKESPEARE

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## JULIUS CAESAR 2018: COMPANY LIST

### CAST

Julius Caesar	Kenneth Ransom
Metellus / Cinna The Poet	Jemwel Danao
Brutus	Ivan Donato
Portia	Maryanne Fonceca
Casca / Messala	Ghenoa Gela
Trebonius / Soothsayer / Pindarus	Neveen Hanna
Calphurnia / Octavius	Emily Havea
Cassius	Nick Simpson-Deeks
Decius Cinna / Lucilius	Russell Smith
Mark Antony	Sara Zwangobani

*Other roles will be played by members of the company.*

### CREATIVES

Director	James Evans
Set & Costume Designer	Anna Tregloan
Lighting Designer	Verity Hampson
Composer & Sound Designer	Nate Edmondson
Movement & Fight Director	Scott Witt
Voice Coach	Jess Chambers
Assistant Director	Nasim Khosravi

Cover image: 2018 Julius Caesar, Photographer: Pierre Toussaint

**JULIUS CAESAR  
2018: COMPANY  
LIST****CREW**

Company Stage Manager

Nicole Eyles

Deputy Stage Manager

Bridget Samuel

Assistant Stage Manager

Sean Proude

Head Electrician

Steve Hendy

Head Mechanist

Hayley Stafford

Head of Audio

Andrew Hutchison

Head of Costume

Hannah Lobelson

Costume Cutter

Claire Westwood

Costume Assistant

Brooke Cooper-Scott

Production Assistant

Matthew Schubach

Design Secondment

Chelsea Maron

# BACKGROUND

## BACKGROUND TO THE PLAY

Written around 1599, *Julius Caesar* might have been the play that opened the new Globe Theatre. The First Folio version is considered the original publication of this text and these days the play is often grouped alongside *Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, the works Shakespeare based on famous Roman historical events.

In this play, as in so much of his work, Shakespeare is not afraid to meld historical fact and fiction, and to produce a challenging, ambivalent drama that no doubt reflects some of the issues in Shakespeare's own political climate.

The play is political, short (almost half the length of *Hamlet*) and action-driven, and although the second half is dominated by war, the play is really about the power of words. Characters are torn down for them, built up by them and they manipulate through them. Cinna the Poet, a character that represents words, is symbolically killed in the central action of the play, and when Brutus and Octavius face each other in a parley before battle they fight with words, and about words:

Brutus: Words before blows: is it so countrymen?

Octavius: Not that we love words better as you do.

Brutus: Good words are better than bad strokes, Octavius.

(Act 5, Scene 1)

One of the greatest achievements of *Julius Caesar* is its representation of varied voices from varied classes. As an audience we don't just view Rome from Caesar's point of view; we hear the opinions, discontent, fears and passions of the cobbler, the plebeian, the ruler, the senator, the artist, the revolutionary and the foot soldier.

## SHAKESPEARE'S SOURCE

Shakespeare's main source for the text is Thomas North's 16th-Century translation of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*. Many character and plot details are lifted directly from the source material, and even some of the phrases are copied word for word. Of course, Shakespeare makes the story his own through the invention of powerful language and adjusting characters and situations to suit his needs.

Plutarch describes both Cassius and Brutus as 'leane and whitely faced fellowes', yet Shakespeare applies this description only to Cassius. Shakespeare shifts the date of Caesar's triumph and has it take place at the same time as the Lupercal, and he also gives Caesar the famous final words 'Et tu Brute?' rather than just having him pull his toga over his head in silence as Plutarch denotes. Shakespeare also has the conspirators assemble at Brutus' house the night before the assassination rather than at Cassius', allowing Portia to appeal to Brutus and play on his conscience while his destiny waits on the other side of the door.

**SYNOPSIS:  
JULIUS CAESAR**

Caesar has returned to Rome, triumphant after a war with the sons of Pompey.

During the celebrations, a soothsayer warns Caesar to beware the Ides of March.

Brutus, Caesar's friend and ally, fears that the Roman Republic will be destroyed if Caesar is crowned King.

Cassius and others convince Brutus to join a conspiracy to kill Caesar. Brutus' wife, Portia, senses her husband's unease and pleads with him to share with her what is going on, but he shuts her out.

On the day of the planned assassination, March 15th, Caesar's wife, Calphurnia, urges him to stay at home, but one of the conspirators, Decius, persuades him to go to the senate where the conspirators stab Caesar to death.

Caesar's loyal ally and friend Mark Antony asks to speak at Caesar's funeral and uses this opportunity to turn the citizens of Rome against the conspirators.

Brutus and Cassius escape and Antony joins forces with Octavius Caesar and Lepidus to rule Rome in a triumvirate.

The triumvirate declare war on Brutus and Cassius, who argue bitterly with each other. Brutus reveals that his wife, Portia, has committed suicide. Finally, they agree to march on the armies of Antony and Octavius.

During the battle, Cassius, misled by erroneous reports of a loss, persuades his servant to kill him.

Brutus commits suicide after his army is defeated and Antony praises him as 'the noblest Roman of them all'.

## THE MAIN CHARACTER?

It is interesting to consider who the main character is in *Julius Caesar*. Although Caesar holds the title, Brutus has almost six times the amount of lines. And whilst the action may pivot around the assassination of the infamous ruler, Caesar dies in Act 3, whereas Brutus' death is the subject of the final speeches of the play.

**Caesar** (Speaks 135 lines). He is the title role, and although smaller than the other parts, Caesar's shadow hangs over the rest of the play. Even when he is not physically present on stage, the consequence of his life and death influence everything that happens. He is mentioned more than any other character in the play. The play may be about Caesar's effect on the world, but it seems uninterested in exploring his inner life. He has a three-line soliloquy in Act 2, Scene 2, which gives little insight into his psyche.

**Antony** (329 lines) He speaks to us with passion, and his love for Caesar and ruthless militarism drive the action of the second half. His oration is the centrepiece of the play and contains, perhaps, its most famous line: 'Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears' (Act 3 Scene 2). He is a kind of revenging hero in this play and goes on to be one of the central characters of the sequel, *Antony and Cleopatra*.

**Cassius** (525 lines) mirrors *Othello's* Iago in his central role of manipulator or antagonist, bringing together the conspirators and plotting the death of Caesar. Cassius is the one pulling the strings in the first half of the play. He establishes a special relationship with the audience in his soliloquy (Act 1, Scene 2), saying he means to manipulate Brutus – to transmute his 'honourable mettle'.

**Brutus** (728 lines) has the most stage time and the most to say. He is the moral centre of the play, so his decision to join with the conspirators in killing Caesar is crucial. Like other tragic heroes such as *Othello*, *Hamlet* and *Lear*, we are left with his corpse at the end and a moving eulogy: 'This was the noblest Roman of them all' (Antony, Act 5, Scene 5).

The fact that Shakespeare kills off his title character less than half way through the action has often resulted in modern critics labelling this play problematic. But this is no dramatic mishap. Shakespeare deliberately explores this infamous assassination as the fulcrum of the action. The play is not a tribute to the downfall of a great leader, but rather an exploration of the pitfalls and practices of power; how it is gained, lost, usurped and misused.

## STUDENT ACTIVITY: IN THE CLASSROOM

### CRITICAL THINKING / DEBATE

Set up a classroom debate with four teams. Each is assigned one of the following characters: Caesar, Brutus, Cassius, Mark Antony. The topic of the debate is: 'My character is the main character in *Julius Caesar*.' The students must research their character, extract key quotes from the play and construct clear arguments to illustrate their point. Each team must be allowed to make an opening statement, then a second round of arguments, then a round of rebuttals.

## JULIUS CAESAR AND POLITICS

Academics believe Shakespeare used this infamous historic Roman uprising as an allegory to reflect the political climate of his own tumultuous court. Shapiro (2005) suggests that the disrobing of images at the start of the play echoes the Protestant reformation of Shakespeare's boyhood – tearing down signs of Catholicism – and the description of the city in celebration for Caesar's triumph is as much a description of London and the Thames as it is Rome and the Tiber. The play has continued to be a political vehicle ever since.



Figure 1: An excerpt from *Julius Caesar* highlighted by Nelson Mandela

In the late 1600s and early 1700s, Restoration interpretations took much liberty with the play, either modernising the language or adding text to reflect current political sentiments. For instance, in 1706 a production added a prologue delivered by 'The Ghost of Shakespeare', that showed support for the current political views of the Whig party. In 1937, the famous American director and actor Orson Welles directed *Julius Caesar*, dressing Caesar and his followers in the uniforms of fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

When Nelson Mandela was imprisoned on Robben Island from 1964 to 1982 it was Shakespeare's Complete Works, particularly *Julius Caesar*, that inspired him during the toughest experience of his political life and his fight against apartheid. This copy of the book, known as the 'Robben Island Bible', was passed amongst inmates for over a decade. Regularly confiscated by wardens, but always retrieved by inmates, the book is signed 32 times by prisoners, who highlighted passages about equality and injustice. In 1979 Mandela signed next to the passage that particularly spoke to him:

'Cowards die many times before their deaths;  
The valiant never taste of death but once.  
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,  
It seems to me most strange that men should fear;  
Seeing that death, a necessary end,  
Will come when it will come.'

(Act 2 Scene 2)

The book is still owned by one of the former prisoners, Surinarayan Kala Venkatrathnam, and he refuses to sell this priceless piece of political and social history.

Denzel Washington played Brutus in 2005 in the first Broadway production of this play to hit the stage since Al Pacino played Mark Antony 17 years earlier. Washington attracted record crowds but the production itself was highly criticised. Several audience members walked out at interval and New York critics claimed that the production lacked a solid political voice, featuring floundering actors lost amidst mismatched artillery, metal-detectors and I.D. tags.

In 2012, The Royal Shakespeare Company presented *Julius Caesar* with an all-African cast in response to Mandela's connection with this text. Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere's translation of the play into Swahili was intended to reflect the tyranny of some of the recent African leaders, including Robert Mugabe. In that same year, the Donmar Warehouse produced an all-female production of the Roman classic. Director Phyllida Lloyd said she wished to redress the gender imbalance rooted in not only theatrical history but in politics. As this play features only two female characters, both in a domestic role, Lloyd wished to bring women out of the home and into the public arena.

In 2017 a controversial New York City Public Theater production of *Julius Caesar*, dressing the title character as Donald Trump, sparked outrage from right-wing protesters who interrupted the performance shouting 'liberal hate kills'. Political fury from conservatives began to radiate around the United States with Shakespearean theatre companies and festival coordinators receiving abusive messages threatening rape, death and one even saying that the theatre staff should be 'sent to Isis to be killed with real knives.'

## **JULIUS CAESAR: AUSTRALIAN PERFORMANCE HISTORY**

Academic Anthony Miller (1998) notes that in 1856 the Melbourne press proudly announced that ‘for the first time in the colonies, Shakespeare’s historical tragedy of *Julius Caesar* would be produced. The production was grand, commercial, and in the Elizabethan tradition it ended with a comic jig. Miller notes four different Australian productions of the play between 1856 and 1889 that were all a reflection of the ‘enthusiasms and anxieties’ surrounding colonialism, and he suggests British settlers produced this classic in order to stamp the empire as the political successor of Rome, equipped with new lands and enterprises.

Most 19th century productions, however, were dominated by fame-seeking actor-managers such as George Rignold who cast himself in lead roles, relished big speeches in an operatic style, and had more than 200 extras create the forum scene in epic proportions.

In 1879 William Creswick’s Sydney production saw uncontrollable crowds shouting ‘hooray’ during Antony’s forum speech as a response to the nervousness surrounding mass unemployment at the time.

In 1909-10 famous Australian-born actors Oscar Asche and Lily Brayton produced costumed ‘recitals’ of *Julius Caesar* in the town halls of Sydney and Melbourne, with a focus on the political language and with relatively bare design. When Asche remounted *Julius Caesar* in 1922 it was a direct reflection of the contemporary politics surrounding the power-hungry Prime Minister, William Hughes, being overthrown in the national election.

Hugh Hunt’s 1959 production used ‘shrilling morse-code’ sounds and promoted Cold War conservative ideas of warning citizens against conspiracies towards the state. Whereas Orson Welles painted Caesar as the tyrant, Hunt regarded him as a figure of political stability raging against unruly revolution.

In 1972 Richard Wherrett’s Sydney production not only presented the play in modern dress but directly addressed the abundance of political unrest at the time; including John F Kennedy’s assassination, the disillusionment of Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War and the discontent surrounding 23 years of Liberal Party leadership that would soon see Whitlam take office. Later, in 1991, Simon Phillips set Shakespeare’s play in a vast boardroom using the play as an allegory for Whitlam’s dismissal. Phillips was also the first Australian director to address the play’s gender imbalance by casting women to play Antony and Casca.



Figure 2: Ben Mendelsohn as Antony, STC 2005



Figure 3: Kate Mulvany as Cassius, Bell Shakespeare, 2011

Robin Nevin also played the traditionally male role of Mark Antony in a 1996 Melbourne Playhouse production that steered away from pure politics and transferred the play into the ‘corporate jungle’.

In 2005 Benedict Andrews directed a production of *Julius Caesar* through the lens of the Iraq War, presenting images of torture and manipulation. The production explored how the modern media frenzy and its pervasive technologies can render real-life events cold and distant.

Bell Shakespeare’s last two productions of this play were in 2001, and again in 2011, where director Peter Evans worked alongside Kate Mulvany who took on the roles of dramaturg and Cassius. When asked about playing a traditionally male role Mulvany stated that *Julius Caesar* is a play ‘about agendas rather than genders. There are some purists that are quite shocked but in the end everyone sees Cassius the human being, not Cassius the woman or man’ (in Blake, 2011).

## JULIUS CAESAR: ON FILM

In 1953 MGM produced a film version, directed by Joseph Mankiewicz, starring Marlon Brando as Antony.

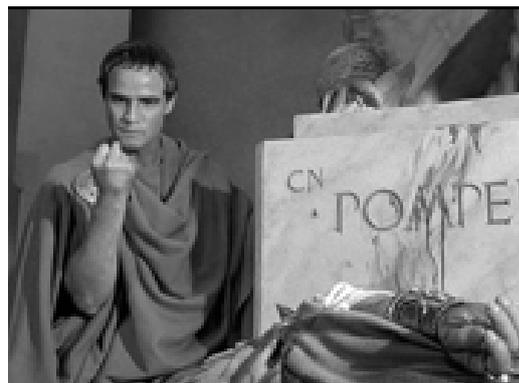


Figure 4: Marlon Brando as Antony in *Julius Caesar*, 1953

In 1970 Charlton Heston played Antony on screen opposite John Gielgud as Caesar.



Figure 5: Charlton Heston as Antony in *Julius Caesar*, 1970

In 1979 the BBC produced a very faithful television production of the play. This was a simple filmed stage production.



Figure 6: Charles Gray in BBC production of *Julius Caesar*, 1979

In 2012 the Royal Shakespeare Company did a film version of their Julius Caesar production set in modern-day Africa. The film was shot on location at the Royal Shakespeare Company's Stratford-upon-Avon theatre.



Figure 7: : *Julius Caesar* by the Royal Shakespeare Company, 2012

## STUDENT ACTIVITY: RESEARCH PROJECT

### DRAMA / RESEARCH

*Julius Caesar* has had a long and varied performance history, with each production responding to the social and political values and contexts of the time in which it was performed. Attitudes towards the play have particularly shifted in the 20th century, and directors have responded in many ways.

Research TWO stage productions of *Julius Caesar* from anywhere in the world that interest you and are different in their approaches to the play. Try to choose productions that occurred at different times throughout history.

### RESEARCH

For both the productions you choose answer the following questions:

1. When was the production staged and where?
2. Who was the director and who were the main actors?
3. Where was the production set? What time and what location?
4. Would you consider it a modern production?
5. What was the focus of the production? e.g. corporations, religious prejudice, comedy, feminism etc.
6. What were the set and costumes like? Any other design features (i.e. music/sound)?
7. Did they adapt the story in any way?
8. How was the production received by the public?
9. How was the production received by reviewers? Can you find any reviews to quote?
10. Was this production considered radical at the time?

11. Without the benefit of seeing the production, what are your thoughts on the director's choices?
12. Can you find images from this production? Include them in your research report, if possible.

### **REVIEW, COMPARE AND SHARE**

13. Once you have gathered your information do a quick comparison of the two productions you have chosen. How are they different and why?
14. Now get into pairs with another student and share the materials you have gathered. Does your partner have a similar or different response to the plays you have chosen?

### **EXTENSION EXERCISE**

Choose one of your productions. Write a short 200-word theatre review or blog on the production as if you were a journalist at the time. Include production images where possible.

# GLOSSARY

**GLOSSARY**

<b>Accoutred</b> – dressed	<b>Conceited</b> – imagined	<b>Prodigious</b> – ominous
<b>Affections</b> – emotions	<b>Couching</b> – bowing to	<b>Puissant</b> – powerful
<b>Ague</b> – fever	<b>Cull out</b> – pick, choose	<b>Quick mettle</b> – lively
<b>Apprehensive</b> – quick to learn.	<b>Cumber</b> – trouble	<b>Rated</b> – criticised
<b>Augurers</b> – priests who see the future.	<b>Doublet</b> – jacket	<b>Replication</b> – echo
<b>Awl</b> – leather tool	<b>Earns</b> – grieves	<b>Rheumy</b> – moist, damp
<b>Basest Metal</b> – inferior nature.	<b>Fain</b> – gladly	<b>Sad</b> – serious
<b>Bayed</b> – hunted	<b>Firmament</b> – sky	<b>Saucy</b> – defiant
<b>Bear the palm</b> – win the trophy	<b>Fray</b> – battle	<b>Soft</b> – wait
<b>Bent</b> – directed	<b>Fret</b> – cut patterns into	<b>Stemming</b> – battling against
<b>Beyond all use</b> – abnormal	<b>Gait</b> – footsteps	<b>Suit</b> – petition
<b>Bondman</b> – slave	<b>Gamesome</b> – likes sports	<b>Sway</b> – Kingdom
<b>Bootless</b> – without effect	<b>Gentle</b> – noble	<b>Taper</b> – candle
<b>Capitol</b> – Roman Senate	<b>Greybeards</b> – old men	<b>The falling sickness</b> – epilepsy
<b>Carrion men</b> – rotting dead bodies	<b>Hie</b> – hurry	<b>Thews</b> – muscles
<b>Cato</b> – a famous Republican	<b>Ides of March</b> – March 15th	<b>Tiber</b> – sacred Roman river
<b>Cautelous</b> – overly cautious	<b>Incorporate</b> – support	<b>Unbraced</b> – undone clothes
<b>Censure me</b> – scold me	<b>Intermit</b> – prevent	<b>Vesture</b> – clothing
<b>Chidden</b> – scolded	<b>Lethe</b> – underworld river	<b>Visage</b> – face
<b>Colossus</b> – giant statue	<b>Lusty</b> – healthy, strong	<b>Whelped</b> – given birth
	<b>Mantle</b> – cloak	<b>Whet</b> – incite, provoke
	<b>Palter</b> – say one thing and mean another	<b>Will bear no colour</b> – cannot be justified
	<b>Portentous</b> – hugely important	<b>Yoke</b> – slavery
	<b>Post back</b> – hurry back	

# CHARACTERS

## **JULIUS CAESAR**

Conflicting opinions of Caesar are presented throughout the play. The mob celebrate in the opening scene 'to make holiday to Caesar', yet Flavius and Murellus warn the people that he is a tyrannical leader that will soar above men and leave them in 'servile fearfulness' (Act 1, Scene 1). Although possibly driven by personal gain, Cassius speaks very ill of Caesar. He labels him a 'vile thing', a 'tyrant' and a 'colossus' that towers above other men despite being of little worth. The Caesar Shakespeare presents is not just flawed in the eyes of his enemies. He is portrayed as physically weak, childless, deaf in one ear and also having the 'falling sickness', otherwise known as epilepsy. However, it is Caesar's own pride and self-confidence that ultimately causes his downfall.

## **CASSIUS**

A young, disgruntled intellectual consumed by envy for Caesar's power who manipulates Brutus into joining, and eventually leading, the conspiracy to kill Caesar. Cassius presents qualities of the hungry revolutionary who refuses to rest and enjoy the luxuries of power. Caesar very much fears him for his 'mean and hungry look' and he foreshadows a lot of the qualities that the audience observe in Cassius throughout the remainder of the action. Cassius does observe men well, much more clearly than Brutus, and he constantly uses this to his advantage. In his two lengthy duologues with Brutus in Act 1 and 4, he sways him with rhetorical ease appealing to his ego, love of the state and dedication to loyalty and friendship. Anthony Miller (1998) says he is the play's 'busiest character' as he manufactures the conspiracy, enlists the assassins, ensures the act takes place and then defends his choices and position, until he has his man Pindarus kill him when he believes all is lost in the battle.

## **ANTONY**

Caesar's friend and most loyal follower. He first appears on stage in a running race at the feast of the Lupercal and is painted as a young, robust player who 'revels long a-nights' (Act 2, Scene 2). Despite finishing the action as the victor and new leader of Rome his greatest triumph in the play is often considered his famed speech that turns the mob against Cassius and Brutus. Antony not only delivers his message to the people in beautiful verse but manages to appeal to the mob on their level which breaks the stoic, cold traditions of Roman rule. Antony displays great rhetorical skills of manipulation, mixed with heart, passion, poetry and great appeal. He uses Brutus' main claim that Caesar was 'ambitious' against him, firstly agreeing and then slowly painting an opposite picture of a benevolent, generous ruler who left his own wealth to the people of Rome in his will. Antony plays the role of the revenger and he not only stirs the Roman rabble but shakes the audience out of Brutus' grasp with his impassioned war cry over Caesar's body, 'Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war' (Act 3, Scene 1).

## **BRUTUS**

An honourable and idealistic republican, who reluctantly joins the plot against Caesar when he sees Rome possibly falling under his tyranny. When we first hear from Brutus in the opening act he confesses to Cassius he is somewhat 'vexed of late with passions of some difference' and that he is 'with himself at war' (Act 1, Scene 2). Although Brutus seems to present some resolve throughout the play in his decision to assassinate Caesar and in running the army at Philippi, this troubled state never truly leaves him until his death. Brutus is often considered the protagonist of this story. It is Brutus' decisions we follow, and his inner turmoil over murdering Caesar mirrors that of Shakespeare's later protagonists Macbeth and Hamlet.

## **PORTIA**

Brutus' wife and the respected daughter of Cato, a politician and statesman of the Roman Republic (although he doesn't feature in the play). Unlike her husband, Portia shows great perception and emotional intelligence. She uses great skill in winning Brutus over and is the only character in the play to truly hold up a mirror to his behaviour. Unfortunately, Brutus is called to the senate before he discloses his plan to her. He is then dragged off to war and Portia takes her own life by 'swallowing fire' (Act 4, Scene 3) after she grows saddened by his absence. The Roman realm is a very masculine one and Portia only features in two scenes, and her death is merely reported. She is confined to her domestic space, must kneel to appeal to her husband and can ultimately only gain his attention by wounding herself in the thigh in Act 2.

## **CALPHURNIA**

Caesar's wife. In the opening Act she is called 'barren' by her husband, in public view. Like Portia she too has the intuition that her husband will befall some ill and kneels before him to beg he stay away from the senate. Calphurnia has a dream that Caesar's statue is spurting blood and many Roman citizens are bathing their hands in it, but she is unsuccessful in convincing Caesar to stay away from the Senate House.

## **OCTAVIUS CAESAR**

Julius Caesar's great nephew and adopted son who claims to be Julius Caesar's heir. He enters Rome and the action after the assassination of Caesar in Act 3. He is young and ambitious and forms the triumvirate with Antony and Lepidus.

## **LEPIDUS**

The third and oldest member of the triumvirate and is not as interested in power as his companions. Antony is very dismissive of his abilities, calling him a 'slight unmeritable man', however Octavius defends him as 'a tried and valiant soldier' (Act 4 Scene 1).

### **CASCA**

One of the conspirators. Casca is direct and blunt and is considered the humorous character in the play who speaks in rough prose. He shows much disdain towards Caesar when he recounts to Cassius and Brutus the events of Caesar publicly refusing the crown. He famously strikes the first blow during the assassination crying 'Speak hands for me!' (Act 3, Scene 1).

### **CINNA THE POET**

A common Roman and a poet, symbolising the art and power of language in the play. He is mistaken by the mob for Cinna the conspirator and is killed. This scene is crucial to Shakespeare's study of human nature. Although Cinna is able to point out to them he is not a conspirator, they attack him anyway purely because 'his name's Cinna' (Act 3, Scene 3), demonstrating the power of blind mob mentality.

### **SOOTHSAYER**

A traditional Roman fortune teller who foreshadows Caesar's assassination in the opening act of the play by publicly warning him to 'beware the Ides of March' (15th of March).

### **TREBONIUS, DECIUS CINNA, METELLUS**

Other conspirators against Caesar.

### **PINDARUS**

Cassius' servant, he helps his master commit suicide.

**STUDENT  
ACTIVITY: IN THE  
CLASSROOM****READING AND WRITING**

Whilst reading the play, create a character matrix. This is easy to do using an Excel chart or a Word document. For each character, write the nature of the relationship between the two characters, identifying the effect they have on one another. The matrix below has only seven of the main characters, however adding in others would add to the complexity and challenge of the activity. Another version of this task could be completing such a table for each act of the play to ensure student understanding of the play's plot and characters.

*See over page for table.*

	Caesar	Brutus	Cassius	Antony	Portia	Calphurnia	Casca
Caesar				Caesar's good friend and loyal follower.	Portia is Brutus's wife. She beseeches him to tell her his secrets.		
Brutus							
Cassius							
Antony							
Portia							
Calphurnia							
Casca							

# THEMATIC CONCERNS

## META-THEATRE

*Julius Caesar* is, like many of the plays Shakespeare wrote around this time, steeped in meta-theatricality; the art of a playwright drawing the audience's attention to aspects of theatre and performance. The following passage is particularly fascinating in this regard:

Cassius: How many ages hence  
Shall this our lofty scene be acted over  
In states unborn and accents yet unknown!

Brutus: How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport,  
That now on Pompey's basis lies along  
No worthier than the dust!

Cassius: So oft as that shall be,  
So often shall the knot of us be called  
The men that gave their country liberty.

(Act 3 Scene 1)

Cassius and Brutus refer to future (and current, i.e. Elizabethan) dramatisations of their actions, naively predicting that they will go down in history as heroes. The first passage has particular resonance for Bell Shakespeare and Australian audiences as we are certainly presenting the play in an accent 'yet unknown' in Shakespeare's day.

The play also constantly deals with the anxieties surrounding the public space and public speeches and debates. Shakespeare seems to be very aware of the performative nature of the Roman identity. The senators constantly address themselves in the third person and speak in formal and 'lofty abstractions'. Academic Coppelia Kahn (1997) states that it is 'as though they are spectators and audience of themselves as public figures...they present themselves as actors in the 'lofty scene' of politics, performing their parts before an audience of posterity'. In other words, they are playing a role to ensure that future generations and history books remember them in the light in which they have constructed themselves. Shakespeare is potentially unpacking the idea that these Roman nobles were forever in the practice of acting out their legacy in life to ensure it after death.

## LEGACY AND ROMAN MASCULINITY

Shakespeare is highly selective in the events he chooses to refashion in *Julius Caesar*, excluding military expeditions and the presence of Caesar's army. The play poignantly pivots around one particular event; the infamous murder of Caesar by the conspirators. It is important to note that prior to his death Caesar suffers much criticism: branded both a 'sick girl' who suffers from fever and fit and a republican threat that 'bestrides the narrow world/Like a Colossus' (Act 1, Scene 2). He is attacked for public displays of political 'foolery', labelled potentially ambitious and by Cassius's account he is even 'so vile a thing' (Act 1, Scene 3). However, after his assassination, apart from Brutus' public address, Caesar is now revered as 'the noblest man' (Act 3, Scene 1), generous to his people. As Warren Chernaik (2011) points out, by the end of the play 'Brutus and Cassius recognize that "Caesar's spirit" has conquered them', taking its true revenge in the form of eternalised myth; 'O Julius Caesar thou art mighty yet' (Act 5, Scene 3). Although his position in history is solidified by Antony's display of Roman, rhetorical craft, Shakespeare demonstrates how Caesar, by way of Roman masculine practice was already and always engaging in this process. In his assertion prior to assassination, 'But I am constant as the northern star/of... true fixed and resting quality' (Act 3, Scene 1), Caesar not only speaks in lofty and abstract notions, but he quite unconsciously confirms the fate that Roman masculinity has promised him. In death he is truly afforded the Roman ideal: a constant, fixed, honourable identity and an eternal position in history. Academic John Drakakis (1996) claims that 'perhaps there is no real Caesar, that he merely exists as a set of images in other men's minds and his own.'

What Shakespeare uncovers is the ambiguities of Caesar's persona and the self-delusion that arises from such a rigid notion of masculinity. Caesar displays arrogance in the face of mortality, is 'consumed in confidence' (Act 3, Scene 2) in life, and is gravely proud when Decius challenges his masculinity. Therefore, it is only after death that he can be truly constant, truly Roman.

## GENDER AND POWER

There are only two women in *Julius Caesar*, and each of these women only speak in two scenes. The women are not explored in great detail in the Roman historical sources and although Shakespeare affords them intelligence and insight they are, in the words of Coppelia Kahn (1997), ‘observers at best’.

Calphurnia seems to have little power in her relationship with Caesar. She is publicly humiliated as ‘sterile’ in Act 1, Scene 2, and is not listened to in Act 2, Scene 2, until she begs on her knees for her husband to stay at home. When Caesar’s manhood is challenged by Decius he swiftly dismisses Calphurnia, calling her foolish, and follows him to the senate. Calphurnia’s intuition and foresight are, of course, proved correct.

Portia seems to have more power than Calphurnia in relation to her husband and a more equal partnership with him. She also throws herself on her knees begging for Brutus’ secret, but her plea is successful, and he takes her into his confidence. She uses great reasoning and tactics to penetrate his troubled mind. Her first appeal is to her status as his wife and confidante. She then tries to influence Brutus by demonstrating her masculine qualities and her relationship with strong men: ‘I grant I am a woman: but withal a woman that Lord Brutus took to wife’ (Act 2 Scene 1), and her strength through the ‘voluntary wound’ she’s given herself. However, she is left at home during the ensuing war and in Act 4, Scene 3 we get the news she has committed suicide in Brutus’ absence (the reasons we’re given are her distress at Brutus’ absence and concern for the growing power of the triumvirate). We feel we never get to know her. David Daniell (1998) suggests Portia mirrors Ophelia in *Hamlet*, both young women being defined by the strange, withdrawn behaviour of their lovers and their lives ending in bizarre suicides.

## POLITICS

The big collision in this play is between idealism and pragmatism. The restraint of Brutus (not wishing to kill Antony after the death of Caesar) is in stark contrast with Antony's preparedness to sacrifice his own relatives for power after his takeover. Cassius exhibits some of the qualities of the Machiavel (a particularly vilified philosophy at the time), doing anything he needs in order to manipulate Brutus. He is like a backroom politician, a 'faceless man', recruiting numbers for a political coup or takeover. In Caesar we may see the image of a modern totalitarian leader, pragmatic and ruthless, in great contrast to Brutus.

The language of the play is infused with politics: it has a comparative clarity, simplicity and directness, a sparse 'Roman' style quite different to Shakespeare's other works. The play also contains the very modern notion of a 'preventive strike', a new term coined at the end of the twentieth century, an evolution from the idea of a 'pre-emptive strike'. A pre-emptive strike is a response to imminent danger, but a preventive strike is an attack in order to get rid of someone who may or may not be a threat. This is Brutus's justification of killing Caesar – that he may prove dangerous. In Brutus's speech in Act 2 Scene 1, he argues for killing Caesar because of his potential for corruption when crowned: 'How that might change his nature, there's the question.'

Politics wouldn't function without its voters, its audience. Shakespeare represents the public in Julius Caesar as a rabble with few redeeming qualities. We first see them as a mob, carving out their own holiday to see Caesar's triumph. Murellus berates them in the opening scene as 'blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things' in response to their fickle shift in support from Pompey to Caesar. Casca then gives us his cynical description of their unrestrained enthusiasm for the role-play coronation, saying that if Caesar had 'stabbed their mothers, they would have [cheered] no less' (Act 1, Scene 2). However, after Caesar's death, they are immediately swayed by the honourable Brutus to think Caesar was a tyrant and are ready to crown Brutus. Moments later, Antony sways them yet again to think the conspirators are traitors and murderers. They are bought by bribery, a gimmicky 75 drachmas each, and in the most harrowing scene of the play, this mob tears an innocent poet to death, even though they know they have the wrong man (Act 3, Scene 3).

## HONOURABLE AND DISHONOURABLE KILLING

Brutus makes a rhetorical distinction between these two kinds of killing, arguing that the conspirators 'purge' rather than 'murder'. He thinks the killing of Caesar is a necessary moral act, but regrets having to shed blood. When he addresses the people after the assassination he openly and honestly admits that his actions were honourable and implies that he should have offended no one because he slew his 'best lover for the good of Rome' (Act 3, Scene 2).

Caesar's nobility or otherwise is a great cause for debate. He makes noble statements, which echo Hamlet's sparrow speech: '...death, a necessary end will come when it will come' (Act 2, Scene 2). Is he really a tyrant? Does such a thing as a moral killing exist? Is this an example?

It is also impossible to look at this play without addressing the issue of suicide. In much classical writing, suicide was seen as a noble death. Today, we have a very different perspective, doing everything we can as a society to prevent suicide and regarding it as a terrible social problem. Both Cassius and Brutus take their own lives. In the play this is, perhaps, represented as a noble action. What is our reading of this as contemporary audience members?

## SHAKESPEARE AND HISTORY

Shakespeare's central source for *Julius Caesar* was Plutarch's *Lives*. However, as always, Shakespeare never let the truth stand in the way of a good story.

As in most of his histories, Shakespeare telescopes time. Historically, Caesar's triumph was in October of 45BC and the Feast of Lupercal on 15th February the following year, however Shakespeare makes these events simultaneous. The assassination of Caesar was a month later historically, but in this play it seems only days later. The Forum scene (Act 3, Scene 2) includes, in one sequence, action that in fact took place in several different places over a period of six weeks (Wells, 1994) and historically there were nine months between Brutus and Cassius meeting at Sardis and the battle at Philippi. Shakespeare compresses this time gap. Shakespeare also increases the number of wounds on Caesar from 23 to 33 – perhaps a reference that echoes the death-age of Christ.

The 'pulpit' where both Antony and Brutus go to speak is anachronistic – corresponding to an Elizabethan, not a Roman place of public address. Shakespeare also contemporises his play by addressing a popular current question in the Elizabethan court – dealing with tyrants. Academic Robert Miola (1983) believes that Elizabeth I used rituals such as chivalry to maintain power as a female leader in a patriarchal court. For a time, the men of the court played at winning her affections rather than dreaming of usurpation, but towards the end of her career discontent rose and rebellion loomed. The Earl of Essex and his supporters certainly thought of Elizabeth as a tyrant and one of the ways this was broached was under the guise of discussing Roman history. The link between Elizabeth and Julius Caesar was clear, a temporal ruler claiming divine rights. In the latter years of her rule, Elizabeth was known in almost mythological terms such as 'Gloriana' and 'The Faerie Queen' and fastidiously controlled the production and dissemination of her image. Caesar was similarly linked to mythology – called the father of Oberon (King of the Fairies) and linked to legendary (and false) exploits such as the building of the Tower of London.

## RHETORIC

The play is deeply concerned with rhetoric: the power of the spoken word, political persuasion and, as Cicero says, people's ability to 'construe things after their fashion'. The play's structure is dominated by lengthy, dense two-person scenes and impressive public speeches in which characters interpret language and imagery to suit their own ends. Despite claiming to hold up a mirror to Brutus so he can see his own face, Cassius is actually painting the image he knows Brutus wants to view. Cassius and Brutus' justifications for killing Caesar are full of fine sounding rhetoric. Cassius masterfully paints an image of a weak, feeble Caesar literally drowning and shaking with fever and hoists him up on 'huge legs' that tower above 'petty men' who are unjustly his 'underlings' (Act 1, Scene 2).

However, Brutus and Cassius' intellectual reasonings which hold much weight at the beginning of the play, slowly dilute as the action unfolds. In Shakespeare, any soliloquy before a brutal act usually affords a character time for contemplation, to see if they have a 'spur to prick to the sides' of their intent (*Macbeth* Act 1, Scene 7), but in Brutus' main address to the audience in Act 2 Scene 1 he denies himself this process. He begins the speech resolute, 'It must be by his death', and uses the next 25 lines to justify this somewhat hasty choice. He uses the metaphor of an unhatched snake to arrive exactly where he started, that he must 'kill him in the shell'.

The biggest battle in the play is a battle of words between Brutus and Antony, prose and verse, reason and passion, on the pulpit after Caesar's assassination. Antony's display of rhetorical genius ironically descends into blind brutality and the death of words with the murder of an innocent poet. Even the great verbal chess match between Brutus and Cassius in Act 4, Scene 3 is full of grandiose language but descends to quibbling over words 'I said an elder soldier, not a better/Did I say better?'.

## STUDENT ACTIVITY: CREATIVE RESPONSE

### SOLILOQUY

Imagine you are Brutus. You have been involved in the assassination of Caesar and now find yourself on the eve of war with Antony and Octavius' troops. The night before the battle, you have a quiet moment to yourself and you are reflecting on your actions.

Write a soliloquy working through the arguments for and against what you have done. Has it been worth it? Is Rome now better off? Will it be? What are the implications if you lose this battle tomorrow? Do you regret what you have done, or do you still believe it was right? Should you have listened to Cassius regarding killing Mark Antony or allowing him to speak at the funeral? Should you have struck a deal with Antony earlier?

Make use of imagery and metaphor to illustrate your soliloquy. It doesn't have to be in verse!

# DISCUSSION WITH THE DIRECTOR, JAMES EVANS

## DISCUSSION WITH THE DIRECTOR, JAMES EVANS

Shakespeare was obsessed with leadership. In play after play he scrutinised failed leaders and challenged beloved ones. This could have been dangerous, and Shakespeare seems to have walked a fine line, politically, thriving at a time when less-careful artists were caught up in the machinery of the Elizabethan police state. His plays were set in Ancient Rome, Medieval Britain, exotic Venice, mythical lands, but he was always examining his own society – a London emerging from the Middle Ages and on the brink of ‘modernity’. It is these arms-length settings that have allowed the plays to speak urgently to every new generation.

In *Julius Caesar* – written at about the halfway point of his career – Shakespeare delivers a ruthlessly efficient exploration of politics and power. The language of the play is direct and explosive: mob violence erupts, relationships fracture, and the republic crumbles, all through the power of the spoken word.

Brutus justifies the decision to kill his friend by literally commanding himself, out loud, to ‘prevent’ the hypothetical rise of Caesar. He instructs himself to ‘fashion’ the argument against Caesar, ‘think’ Caesar an unhatched snake and, finally, to ‘kill him in the shell’. Brutus shapes his own thoughts with spoken language, which is what Shakespeare asks of us.

As a director, I am not interested in a conclusive interpretation of *Julius Caesar*. I am not interested in spoon-feeding metaphor to the audience (Caesar = Hitler/ Ceauşescu/Trump etc.) I am much more interested in exploring the ambiguities woven throughout this play. Just when you think you know a character, Shakespeare shows you another side of them. Ambiguity is Shakespeare’s portal to the infinite. By asking more questions than he answers, he demands that we step up as an audience, no longer passive receivers of meaning, but active creators of it.

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*Julius Caesar* was probably first performed in 1599, at the brand-new Globe Theatre on the south bank of the Thames. Having just overseen the construction of the building, Shakespeare was in a metatheatrical mood. “All the world’s a stage”, a common metaphor at the time, was enshrined by Shakespeare in another 1599 play, *As You Like It*, and will forever be associated with his work.

In *Julius Caesar*, the conspirators know they are creating history. Immediately after the murder of Caesar, Cassius says:

“How many ages hence  
Shall this our lofty scene be acted over  
In states unborn and accents yet unknown?”

Act 3, Scene 1

Cassius imagines himself immortalised as a saviour of Rome, presumably played by Chris Hemsworth in the movie. Of course, Shakespeare doesn't allow Cassius to bask in victory. The assassination occurs at the midpoint of the play, and Shakespeare is more interested in the fallout than in the act itself. The pre-emptive strike against Caesar creates a power vacuum that sets the cause of Roman democracy back by over a thousand years.

A culture of violence consumes Shakespeare's Rome; it engulfs people at every level of society. Immediately after Mark Antony turns the mob against the conspirators, Shakespeare introduces a new character, an artist – Cinna the Poet. He is surrounded by the mob, who think he is Cinna the conspirator. When they find out he has nothing to do with the conspiracy, they decide to kill him anyway:

“Tear him for his bad verses.”

Act 3, Scene 3

When leaders use language that provokes or normalises violence, a dark, collective urge is unleashed. And the artist is always the first target.

Our production has a steely, industrial design aesthetic. It is contemporary, but not weighed down by modern references – no iPhones or handguns on stage. My particular interest is in dystopias – especially the way in which yesterday's dystopia becomes today's normality. Read today's headlines. Then imagine reading those same headlines in 2015. It would be unfathomable. And yet here we are, in a new reality.

*Julius Caesar* is a jolt against complacency. It is a forceful warning against the creeping advance of tyranny, but also against using tyranny's tactics to achieve an ostensibly noble goal. I hope this production will spark debate among audiences: What has changed in the last 419 years? And with politics now debased beyond belief, where are we headed next?

# SET AND COSTUME DESIGN

**STUDENT  
ACTIVITY:  
CREATIVE  
RESPONSE****THE CRITICAL THINKING AND DESIGN**

Before looking at Designer Anna Tregloan's set and costume designs for *Julius Caesar* (below), have a think about how you might stage the play if you were a designer. Write brief information, and provide image inspiration or your own drawings, to explain your choices for:

- Set design
- Costume design
- Props design
- Sound design (including music)
- Lighting design

**ANALYSIS**

Take a look at the design images by Anna Tregloan and answer the following questions:

**SET DESIGN:** Look at the set design diagram and model box image/s.

1. What is your first impression of the set?
2. What elements or features of the set design stand out?
3. What mood do you think the designer is trying to create with this set?
4. How do you think a director might tell the story of *Julius Caesar* on this set? Choose one section of the story and write your thoughts on how you might stage it using the design.
5. Describe the textures and features of the design in model box form.
6. Think about the world of *Julius Caesar*. What different settings and locations are in the play? How do you think the set design might achieve this?

**COSTUME DESIGN:** Look at the costume designs.

1. Looking at the designs, list all the elements of a costume that designers must take into account.
2. What colours and textures do you see in the costumes? Why do you think the designer has made these decisions?
3. For each of the characters in the designs:
  - Describe the character making reference to social status, personality traits, personal relationships, their role in the story, and any other important aspects.
  - Analyse the costume design for each character. How do you think the character's costume will communicate these aspects?
  - How would you expect the actors performing as the characters in the designs to embody their characters, using these skills?
  - What do you think the Director's interpretation of the characters might be, based on the costume designs shown?

## SET, COSTUME DESIGN BY ANNA TREGLOAN

### DESIGN NOTES

At the beginning of this play the set depicts a world teetering on the edge of dystopia. The design is inspired by the elements of the world we live in today that give that sense of an impending dystopic future; the increasing militarisation of the police force, the very obvious and purposeful presence of armed forces, and the many parts of the world where increasing numbers of people live a kind of 'make-do' existence. Tregloan combines these with overwhelming visual iconography and propaganda images to create a world of instability and mistrust.

The billboard at the centre of the set design is not only a very practical and creative theatrical structure, it represents layer upon layer of false hope and empty promises. Tregloan had to consider the logistics of a long touring season playing in many venues, so wanted to create a single object that would have many uses and could continually be reinvented.

At the start of the story the mood is very festive and so the billboard is adorned with decorations and depicts a huge image of a victorious Caesar. Later on, when mob rule has taken over and the image of Caesar has been destroyed, the frame becomes a much more utilitarian structure and a kind of improvised shelter or even torture chamber.

The costume design will also suggest an improvised or 'make-do' approach and will also chart the changes of the world of the play as characters start to 'self-militarise'.

The use of mask is an important part of the design. The citizens of Rome or 'mob' is a key feature of *Julius Caesar* but can be very challenging to represent on stage with a limited cast size. At the start of the play the mob will be depicted by actors in masks inspired by imagery of cheap coronation souvenirs or Royal wedding paraphernalia. They will look odd but deliberately festive. Later in the play, the use of masks will create a more disturbing and eerie atmosphere.

### COSTUME DESIGN BY ANNA TREGLOAN



Figure 8: Costume design by Anna Tregloan

**SET DESIGN BY ANNA TREGLOAN**

Figure 9: Set design by Anna Tregloan



Figure 10: Set design by Anna Tregloan

# RESOURCES

## RESOURCES

The best version of *Julius Caesar* for school students to use is the Cambridge School edition:

Gibson, R. (ed.) 2008, *Cambridge School Shakespeare: Julius Caesar*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Or for advanced readers there is the Arden but the notes are much more academic:

Daniell, D. (ed.) 1998, *Julius Caesar: The Arden Shakespeare*, Thomas Nelson & Sons, Walton-on-Thames.

### THE BEST SHAKESPEARE GLOSSARY:

Crystal, David & Crystal Ben, 2002, *Shakespeare's Words: A Glossary and Language Companion*, Penguin Books, London.

### BIOGRAPHIES OF SHAKESPEARE:

Ackroyd, P 2006, *Shakespeare: The Biography*, Doubleday, New York.

Shapiro, J 2005, *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare*, Faber and Faber, London.

Wells, S 1994, *Shakespeare: A Dramatic Life*, Sinclair-Stevenson, London.

### OTHER WEBSITES WITH GREAT RESOURCES:

Shakespeare's Globe in London, which has a very comprehensive Education section:

<http://www.shakespearesglobe.com/education/teachers/teaching-resources>

The Royal Shakespeare Company, which has plot summaries and production records:

<http://www.rsc.org.uk/education/>

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust has some fun blogs and other bits and pieces:

<http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/students-and-enthusiasts.html>

The Touchstone database is very UK-focused, but has some amazing images from a huge number of productions of all Shakespeare's plays: <http://traffic.bham.ac.uk>

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Blake, E 2011, 'Taking a Stab,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 October, <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/theatre/taking-a-stab-2011022-1md53.html>

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Chernaik, W 2011, 'Like a Colossus: *Julius Caesar*', *The Myth of Rome in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge pp. 79-107

Drakakis, J 1996, 'Fashion it thus: Julius Caesar and the politics of theatrical representation', *Shakespeare: The Roman Plays*, Longman, New York.

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Miller, A 1998, 'Imperial Caesar: Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" on the Australian stage, 1856-1889', *Australasian Drama Studies*, no. 33, St Lucia, Qld, pp. 80-94

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Shapiro, J. 2005, *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare*, Faber and Faber, London.

Wilson, R 1987, "'Is this a Holiday?": Shakespeare's Roman Carnival', *ELH*, vol 54, no. 1, pp. 31-44.

### THEATRE REVIEWS:

*STC Production, 2005*

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/review/julius-caesar-stc/2005/07/03/1120329322755.html>

*Bell Production, 2011*

<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/theatre/taking-a-stab-20111021-1md53.html>

# POST- PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

## **ACTIVITY ONE: AFTER THE SHOW**

### **Discussion and critical thinking**

As a class, discuss initial responses to the production and how the play was presented on stage. Complete the following questions individually or use them as the basis for a class discussion.

### **Performances**

Did the actors play the roles as you imagined them? Were any characters portrayed quite differently to how you imagined them? In what ways?

Which character/s did you connect with most? Was this different to how you felt about the character/s before the play?

### **Set**

How was Rome presented on stage? Why do you think this decision was made?

What were the key set pieces or props, and how were they used?

How did the set convey the changes of location from the Senate to the Forum, to the battlefield?

### **Costume**

How was costume used to denote social status?

Which characters had significant costume changes? How did their costume change and what did the change in costume signify about their character?

### **Sound design**

How was sound and music used to create meaning and enhance the story?

Choose one particular moment and describe how sound/music was used to influence the meaning.

### **Script and dramaturgy**

Were there any changes to the characters in the original play? Were any characters edited?

Did you notice any script edits? If so, what effect did these have and why do you think the script was edited?

## ACTIVITY TWO: WHO IS THE MAIN CHARACTER?

This activity builds on the earlier critical thinking/ debate activity.

### Analysis and creative writing

There are a few Shakespeare plays where the character named in the title is not necessarily the biggest role in the play or the one that the audience connects with.

In *Julius Caesar*, Caesar is obviously named in the title as the subject of the play. His character is extremely important to the action, but he is assassinated half way through and has far fewer lines than Antony, Brutus or Cassius. Is a main character always in control of their fate? Does Caesar have control over the events in his life? Can he be the protagonist if he dies well before the end of the play?

Over the years, audiences, actors and directors have often found Brutus or Antony to be the two biggest roles in *Julius Caesar*, but are either of them the main character from your perspective? Or is the main character someone else entirely?

### Group discussion

Get into groups of four or five. After seeing the production, who do you think is the main character of the play and why?

Use the following questions as a guide for your discussion:

- Which character were you most drawn to, and why?
- Who do you feel had the most stage time or the most lines?
- Do you think the director drew our focus towards one character in particular?
- Who did you care the most about, and why?

### Individual work

- Once you have decided which character you feel was the main character in this production, make a list of the important things that occurred to them throughout the play.
- Did the character cause these things to happen or were they a victim of circumstance?
- Why are they the most important character to you?

### Creative writing

- Write a short diary entry from this character's perspective about the things they have experienced throughout Bell Shakespeare's production of this play, or even one event that you thought was important. This can be a very personal and emotional response to how this event/s made them feel, how others treated them, how they are positioned in their world. Do you think they feel empowered or disempowered?