

SHAKESPEARE'S JULIUS CAESAR

ROME TO RIGHT NOW



THE BIG QUESTION

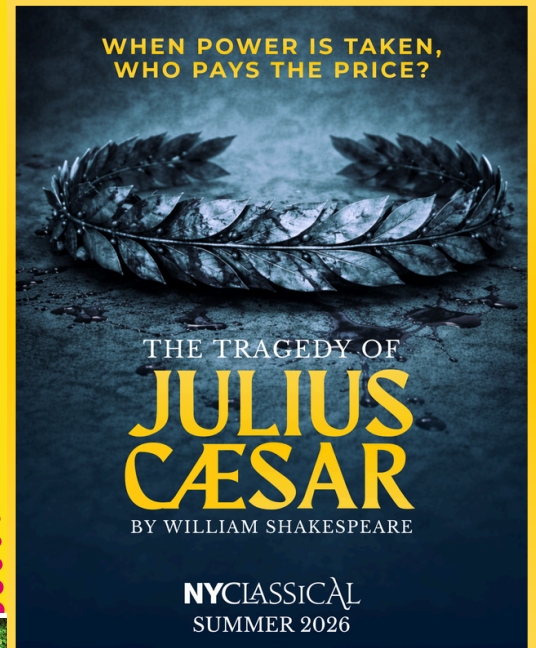
Rome had a Roman Republic. Then they lost it. It didn't happen overnight, but slowly, through fear, ambition, and people who thought they were doing the right thing. Shakespeare wrote Julius Caesar in 1599 but this can happen today. When power is taken, who pays the price?

SET THE STAGE

Rome, 44 BCE. Julius Caesar returns from war as a hero. Some senators fear he wants to make himself king, and kings aren't allowed in a republic. So they do the unthinkable: they assassinate him to save the republic. It doesn't work. Civil war follows. The Senate loses power. Rome becomes an empire. The thing they feared most happens anyway because of what they did to stop it. Nobody in this play thinks they're the villain. That's what makes it so unsettling.

ROME'S SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

Though Rome's system of government had some elements of democracy, it was a republic run largely by wealthy elites. Power was concentrated in the Senate, a small class of aristocrats and landowners, rather than in the general public. When the senators said they were protecting the republic, they meant protecting their own power as much as anything else. Keep that in mind as you watch.



WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Who actually holds power vs. who holds the title?
- How do the conspirators make assassination sound like duty?
- Watch the crowd before and after Antony speaks. What changes?
- Which systems exist to protect the republic and do they hold?



CONTACT: [JULIUS@CIVICISSEXY.CO](mailto:julius@civicsissexy.co)

WHO'S WHO

Most powerful man in Rome. Never officially becomes king.

**Ask yourself:
Does he need to?**

JULIUS CAESAR

Honorable, conflicted, genuinely believes he's protecting Rome.

Watch what his good intentions cost.

BRUTUS

Caesar's loyal friend. One speech. Entire crowd flips. Pay attention to how he does it.

Pay attention to how he does it.

MARK ANTONY

The architect of the conspiracy. Smart, strategic, and driven by something beyond principle.

What is it?

CASSIUS

FROM ROME TO RIGHT NOW

Test Ideas. Challenge Assumptions. Join the Conversation.

POWER WITHOUT A CROWN

Caesar holds enormous power, commands fierce loyalty, and makes the institutions around him feel inadequate without ever officially crossing a line. Think of a figure today—political, cultural, corporate, anywhere—who occupies a structurally similar role. Who comes to mind? What does their power look like and what keeps it in check, if anything?

DID THEY SAVE THE REPUBLIC?

No. The conspirators triggered civil war, the collapse of the Senate, and ultimately the rise of the Roman Empire, the very thing they were trying to prevent. Shakespeare doesn't tell you they were wrong, exactly. He just shows you what happened.


The question he's really asking: is there a right way to protect the republic? And what happens when good people get it wrong?



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VIRAL BEFORE THE INTERNET



Mark Antony's funeral speech is one of the greatest examples of rhetorical manipulation in all of literature. He doesn't argue facts. He tells a story, repeats key phrases, uses irony, and makes the crowd feel before they think. Within minutes, the same people who accepted Caesar's assassination are calling for the conspirators' blood. Think of a speech, a viral moment, a media event where public opinion shifted fast and dramatically. What was it? What moved people, and what does that tell you about how persuasion actually works?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

On Power

- Caesar never becomes king, but people treat him like one. What's the difference between formal authority and real power — and which one matters more?

On Institutions

- The Senate was designed to protect the Roman Republic. It failed. What institutions in your community or country are supposed to do the same, and are they?

On Intentions

- Brutus believed he was saving Rome. When does protecting the Republic cross into undermining it?

On Fragility

- Rome's republic didn't collapse overnight. It eroded. What are the early warning signs, and are any of them familiar?



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SPIN THE CROWD

Both Brutus and Antony address the Roman public after Caesar's assassination. Brutus argues necessity. Antony argues betrayal. Pick one side. Write their argument as if it were a post today. 280 characters or less. Think about what to emphasize, what to leave out, and how to make someone feel rather than just inform them. Notice what you had to cut. That's rhetoric (and it's more powerful than you think).

YOUR ROLE IN WHAT COMES NEXT

Julius Caesar ends in collapse. But you're watching it in 2026, in a park, in a democracy that is yours to shape. The forces in this play aren't ancient history. Power, persuasion, crowd psychology, political violence are still live wires. Shakespeare left the question unanswered because it doesn't just belong to Rome. It belongs to every generation that comes after. Including yours. What will you do with what you just saw?



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SCAN ME



CONTACT: [JULIUS@CIVICISISSEXY.CO](mailto:julius@civicsissexy.co)