

# 12.2.2 Lesson 6

## Introduction

In this lesson, students read and analyze Act 2.1, lines 1-93 of *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare (from “What, Lucius, ho! — / I cannot by the progress of the stars” to “Not Erebus itself were dim enough / To hide thee from prevention”). Students first analyze a soliloquy in which Brutus nervously ponders reasons for joining the conspiracy against Caesar. Throughout the lesson, students explore Brutus’s internal conflict, including how it contributes to Brutus’s development as a character. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: How does Brutus’s statement “It must be by his death” (line 10) reflect his reasons for killing Caesar?

For homework, students read Act 2.1, lines 94-205 of *Julius Caesar* (from “I think we are too bold upon your rest” to “For he will live and laugh at this hereafter”), box or circle unfamiliar words, and look up their definitions. Additionally, students respond briefly to the following question: How does Cassius exercise power through language?

## Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
RL.11-12.3	Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
Addressed Standard(s)	
W.11-12.9.a	<p>Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</p> <p>a. Apply <i>grades 11-12 Reading standards</i> to literature (e.g., “Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics”).</p>
L.11-12.4.c	<p>Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on <i>grades 11-12 reading and content</i>, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.</p> <p>c. Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, its etymology, or its standard usage.</p>
L.11-12.5.a	<p>Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</p> <p>a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text.</p>

## Assessment

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**Assessment(s)**

Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson. Students respond to the following prompt, citing textual evidence to support analysis and inferences drawn from the text.

- How does Brutus's statement "It must be by his death" (line 10) reflect his reasons for killing Caesar?

**High Performance Response(s)**

A High Performance Response should:

- Analyze the statement "It must be by his death" (line 10) (e.g., The statement "It must be by his death" indicates that Brutus sees no alternative to killing Caesar.).
- Explain how the statement "It must be by his death" (line 10) reflects Brutus's reasons for killing Caesar (e.g., When Brutus says, "It must be by his death" (line 10), he demonstrates his conviction that the only way to prevent Caesar from becoming a tyrant is to kill him. Over the course of the soliloquy, it becomes clear that Brutus wishes to act pre-emptively, and that he is more concerned with what Caesar might become than with what Caesar is. Brutus compares Caesar to a dangerous snake when he says, "it is the bright day that brings forth the adder" (line 15), and wonders how power "might change his nature" (line 13). Later, Brutus compares the killing of Caesar to that of a poisonous snake "in the shell" (line 36), suggesting again that he believes that he is acting to prevent tyranny. In this way, Brutus's statement "It must be by his death" (line 10) introduces an idea that he develops over the course of Act 2.1: although he regrets it, there is no alternative to killing Caesar if tyranny is to be avoided.).

## Vocabulary

**Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)**

- \*spurn (n.) - strike out (literally, kick)
- adder (n.) - the common venomous viper of Europe
- \*round (n.) - rung (of a ladder)
- \*base degrees (n.) - lower rungs or steps
- lest (conj.) - for fear that
- augmented (adj.) - enlarged in size, number, strength, or extent
- \*exhalations (n.) - meteors

**Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)**

- None.

**Additional vocabulary to support English Language Learners (to provide directly)**

- disjoins (v.) - separates
- remorse (n.) - a feeling of being sorry for doing something bad or wrong in the past

- Words defined in the explanatory notes are marked with an asterisk.

## Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
<b>Standards &amp; Text:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standards: RL.11-12.3, W.11-12.9.a, L.11-12.4.c, L.11-12.5.a</li> <li>Text: <i>Julius Caesar</i> by William Shakespeare, Act 2.1: lines 1-93</li> </ul>	
<b>Learning Sequence:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda</li> <li>2. Homework Accountability</li> <li>3. Whole-Class Dramatic Reading and Discussion</li> <li>4. Quick Write</li> <li>5. Closing</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 5%</li> <li>2. 10%</li> <li>3. 70%</li> <li>4. 10%</li> <li>5. 5%</li> </ol>

## Materials

- Herbert Wise's 1979 BBC version of *Julius Caesar* (33:22-38:38) (optional)
- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer to 12.2.1 Lesson 1) (optional)

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## Learning Sequence

How to Use the Learning Sequence	
Symbol	Type of Text & Interpretation of the Symbol
10%	Percentage indicates the percentage of lesson time each activity should take.
no symbol	Plain text indicates teacher action.
	<b>Bold text indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.</b>
	<i>Italicized text indicates a vocabulary word.</i>
►	Indicates student action(s).
☞	Indicates possible student response(s) to teacher questions.
ⓘ	Indicates instructional notes for the teacher.

### Activity 1: Introduction of Lesson Agenda

5%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standard for this lesson: RL.11-12.3. In this lesson students read Act 2.1, lines 1-93 from Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar* and analyze how Brutus's internal conflict contributes to his development as a character. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson.

- Students look at the agenda.

### Activity 2: Homework Accountability

10%

Instruct students to share and discuss the vocabulary words they identified for homework (L.11-12.4.c).

- Students may identify the following words: *spurn*, *adder*, *round*, *base degrees*, *lest*, *augmented*, and *exhalations*.
- Differentiation Consideration:** Students may also identify the following words: *disjoins* and *remorse*.
- Definitions are provided in the Vocabulary box in this lesson.

- Students are held accountable for their responses to the homework questions during Activity 3: Whole-Class Dramatic Reading and Discussion. Questions answered for homework are marked with an asterisk (\*).

### Activity 3: Whole-Class Dramatic Reading and Discussion

**70%**

Transition to a whole-class dramatic reading. Assign students the roles of Brutus and Lucius. Post or project each set of questions below for students to discuss. Instruct students to continue to annotate the text as they read and discuss (W.11-12.9.a).

- If necessary to support comprehension and fluency, consider using a masterful reading of the focus excerpt for the lesson.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posting or projecting the following guiding question to support students in their reading throughout the lesson:

#### What motivates Brutus in this excerpt?

Instruct the assigned readers to stand and read Act 2.1, lines 1-22 of *Julius Caesar* (from “What, Lucius, ho! — / I cannot by the progress of the stars” to “I have not known when his affections swayed / More than his reason”) while the rest of the class follows along. Then, instruct students to Turn-and-Talk about the following questions.

#### What can you infer about Brutus’s state of mind based on lines 1-9?

- Brutus is awake at an unusual hour. While he is alone on stage, Brutus says, “I would it were my fault to sleep so soundly” (line 4). Brutus may be unable to sleep because he is preoccupied thinking about something or he feels troubled.
- If necessary, explain to students that when a character speaks to himself or herself at length, it is called a *soliloquy*.

#### \* What does Brutus mean by “It must be by his death” (line 10)?

- “It must be by his death” (line 10) means that killing Caesar is the only way to prevent him from becoming king.

#### How does Brutus explain his motivation for “spurn[ing] at [Caesar]” (line 11) in lines 10-14 of his soliloquy?

- Student responses may include:
  - Brutus says he has “no personal cause” (line 11) to oppose Caesar. Instead, Brutus says he may oppose Caesar “for the general” (line 12), or the well-being of Rome.

This suggests that Brutus does not have any personal resentment toward Caesar but rather is concerned for the welfare of Rome.

- Brutus wonders how being crowned “might change [Caesar’s] nature” (line 13), indicating that he is considering action not based on anything that Caesar has done, but rather on what Caesar might do.

**How does Shakespeare use metaphor to develop Brutus’s idea that “It must be by his death” (line 10)? (L.11-12.5.a)**

- Brutus uses an extended metaphor of an adder, a dangerous snake, to describe the potential danger of Caesar becoming king, saying, “it is the bright day that brings forth the adder” (line 15). Given power on a “bright day,” Caesar may become an “adder” or a dangerous snake (line 15). Brutus says that making Caesar king is like “put[ting] a sting in him” (line 17) that he may “do danger with” (line 18). That is, if the people make Caesar king, he will have power to hurt them later. This metaphor suggests that Brutus believes that the potential danger of Caesar becoming king is so great that “wary walking” (line 16), or extreme caution, is necessary to avoid such a situation.
- If necessary, explain to students that in an *extended metaphor*, an author continues to use or develop a single metaphor over the course of a longer passage of text.

**How does Brutus describe Caesar in lines 20-22 of his soliloquy? How does this description relate to Brutus’s reasons for killing Caesar?**

- Brutus says, “I have not known when [Caesar’s] affections swayed / More than his reason” (lines 21-22), suggesting that Brutus believes Caesar is reasonable and does not deserve to be killed based on anything Caesar has already done. Brutus is less concerned with anything that Caesar has done than with how he might change.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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Instruct the students playing Brutus and Lucius to read Act 2.1, lines 22-36 (from “But ’tis a common proof / That lowliness is young ambition’s ladder” to “grow / mischievous, / And kill him in the shell”) while the rest of the class follows along. Instruct students to Turn-and-Talk about the following questions.

**\* How does Shakespeare use metaphor to show Brutus’s concern about Caesar in lines 22-36 of the soliloquy? (L.11-12.5.a)**

- Student responses may include:

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- Brutus describes what happens when people are humble but ambitious. He uses the metaphor of a ladder. When the climber gets to the top of the ladder, the climber “[l]ooks in the clouds” (line 27) and scorns the lower steps on the ladder. This example represents people who are humble until they achieve success or obtain power. Once people are successful or powerful, they seek more power and lose their humility. After explaining what happens to someone who climbs the ladder, Brutus says, “[s]o Caesar may” (line 28), which demonstrates his belief that Caesar might be humble at first, but become hungry for more power after he is king.
- Brutus uses the metaphor of a serpent’s egg to describe how Caesar might become dangerous, and explain why it might be necessary to kill Caesar. Brutus compares Caesar to a serpent’s egg that “would, as his kind, grow / mischievous” once it hatched (lines 34-35). He means that just as the egg would produce a dangerous snake, making Caesar a king would cause Caesar to become dangerous. This is why Brutus considers “killing him in the shell” (line 36), or killing Caesar before he can become king.

**Paraphrase the sentences, “So Caesar may. / Then, lest he may, prevent” (Act 2.1, lines 28-29).**

- Caesar may become a tyrant when he becomes powerful. In case that happens, let us act to stop him.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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Instruct the students playing Brutus and Lucius to read Act 2.1, lines 37-63 (from “The taper burneth in your closet, sir” to “’Tis good. Go to the gate; somebody knocks”) while the rest of the class follows along. Instruct students to Turn-and-Talk about the following questions.

**How does the letter Lucius gives to Brutus advance the plot?**

- The letter advances the plot because it convinces Brutus to take action against Caesar. After reading the letter, Brutus makes Rome “promise”) to “speak and strike” (line 59) against Caesar.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** For context about the letter Lucius hands to Brutus, consider directing students to the following excerpts:
  - Act 1.2, lines 327-334, in which Cassius describes his plan to write false letters to Brutus
  - Act 1.3, lines 147-169, in which Cassius and Cinna discuss the plan to leave the letters for Brutus

**What does Brutus's response to the letter suggest about Cassius?**

- Even though the letter is a fake forged by Cassius, Brutus believes the letter is authentic and that Rome needs his help. He says, "If the redress will follow, thou receivest / Thy full petition at the hand of Brutus" (lines 60-61). This passionate reaction shows how Cassius has been able to use language in the letter to manipulate Brutus.

**What does Brutus's response to the letter suggest about Brutus's opinion of himself?**

- Brutus's response shows that he views himself as a noble man with a responsibility to protect Rome. He says, "Shall Rome stand under one man's awe?" (line 54). He also cites his family heritage when he says, "My ancestors did from the streets of Rome / The Tarquin drive when he was called a king" (lines 56-57). When he believes Rome is in peril, Brutus believes he, like his ancestors, has the duty and the ability to protect Rome.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

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Instruct the students playing Brutus and Lucius to read Act 2.1, lines 64-93 (from "Since Cassius first did whet me against Caesar, / I have not slept" to "Nor Erebus itself were dim enough / To hide thee from prevention") while the rest of the class follows along. Instruct students to Turn-and-Talk about the following question.

**\* What do Brutus's reflections in lines 64-93 suggest about his state of mind?**

- Student responses may include:
  - Brutus's reflections show that he is tormented by internal conflict over his decision to join the conspiracy against Caesar. He begins by remarking, "Since Cassius first did whet [him] against Caesar / [He has] not slept" (lines 64-65), indicating that he has been agonizing over his decision and unable to sleep.
  - Brutus uses similes that develop his inner turmoil. First, he describes the time between Cassius's first approach to him and the act of killing Caesar as "[l]ike a phantasma or a hideous dream" (line 68). He develops this further with by comparing his state of mind to "a little kingdom, [which] suffers then / The nature of an insurrection" (lines 71-72). By evoking the image of a kingdom torn apart by civil war, Brutus implies that he is at war with himself.

- Brutus imagines his “genius,” or attendant spirit, as being “in council” with his body and mind, or “mortal instruments” (lines 69-70). This suggests that he is physically and mentally torn apart by his indecision.
- Brutus’s reflections also show his profound anguish towards the act of killing Caesar in lines 84-93, as he personifies the conspiracy and addresses it directly. He imagines the conspiracy as having a “dang’rous brow” (line 85) and “monstrous visage” (line 88), which it “sham’st” (line 85) to show, even by night, since not even a “cavern” (line 87) can hide its ugliness. By evoking the conspiracy as a dark and ugly creature, Brutus expresses his deep concern and sense that the conspiracy is dishonorable and shameful.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

- To support comprehension and fluency, consider showing Herbert Wise’s 1979 BBC version of *Julius Caesar* (33:22-38:38).

### Activity 4: Quick Write

**10%**

Instruct students to respond briefly in writing to the following prompt:

**How does Brutus’s statement “It must be by his death” (line 10) reflect his reasons for killing Caesar?**

Instruct students to look at their annotations to find evidence. Ask students to use this lesson’s vocabulary wherever possible in their written responses.

- Students listen and read the Quick Write prompt.
- Display the prompt for students to see, or provide the prompt in hard copy.

Transition to the independent Quick Write.

- Students independently answer the prompt using evidence from the text.
- See the High Performance Response at the beginning of this lesson.
- Consider using the Short Response Rubric to assess students’ writing. Students may use the Short Response Rubric and Checklist to guide their written responses.

### Activity 5: Closing

**5%**

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to read Act 2.1, lines 94-205 of *Julius Caesar* (from “I think we are too bold upon your rest” to “For he will live and laugh at this hereafter”). Direct students to box any unfamiliar words and look up their definitions. Instruct them to choose the definition that makes the most sense in context, and write a brief definition above or near the word in the text (L.11-12.4.c).

To support comprehension, instruct students to respond briefly to the following question:

**How does Cassius exercise power through language?**

Ask students to use this lesson’s vocabulary wherever possible in their written responses.

- Students follow along.

## Homework

Read Act 2.1, lines 94-205 of *Julius Caesar* (from “I think we are too bold upon your rest” to “For he will live and laugh at this hereafter”). Box any unfamiliar words and look up their definitions. Choose the definition that makes the most sense in context, and write a brief definition above or near the word in the text.

Respond briefly to the following question:

**How does Cassius exercise power through language?**

Use this lesson’s vocabulary wherever possible in your written responses.