

12.2.2 Lesson 10

Introduction

In this lesson, students read and analyze Act 3.1, lines 1-91 of *Julius Caesar* (from “The ides of March are come” to “Fly not; stand still. Ambition’s debt is paid”), in which the conspirators assassinate Caesar. Students participate in an evidence-based discussion and explore Shakespeare’s structural choices to stage the death of the title character abruptly halfway through the play. Students also consider the relationship between the events in the scene and the full title of the play, *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: How does Shakespeare’s treatment of Caesar’s death relate to the full title of the play, *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*?

For homework, students review and expand their notes and annotations in preparation for the 12.2.2 Mid-Unit Assessment.

File: 12.2.2 Lesson 10 Date: 2/13/15 Classroom Use: Starting 2/2015

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Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
RL.11-12.5	Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
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>

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 Shakespeare's treatment of Caesar's death relate to the full title of the play, *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*?

High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

- Explain how Shakespeare treats Caesar's death (e.g., Caesar's physical death occurs in the middle of the play and over the course of only two lines).
- Discuss the meaning of the title (e.g., the implication that Julius Caesar will be a central character; the implication that the action of the play will include conventional elements of tragedy, such as a reversal of fortune, and the resolution of conflict through the death of the tragic hero).
- Analyze how Shakespeare's treatment of Caesar's death relates to the meaning of the title (e.g., By killing his title character so early and so abruptly, Shakespeare challenges the meanings implied by the title. Caesar's death is neither the climax of the play nor the resolution that the title suggests that it will be. Caesar is attacked and dies in the space of two lines, emphasizing the importance of the events surrounding the death even more than the death itself. Moreover, the timing of these events at the beginning of the third act of the play, and in the middle of a scene, suggests that in spite of Brutus's promise that "[a]mbition's debt is paid" (line 91), Caesar's death will not bring the resolution that characterizes the death of a tragic hero.).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)

- amiss (adj.) - improper; wrong; faulty
- suit (n.) - appeal
- cur (n.) - low, bad or disliked dog
- enfranchisement (n.) - admission to the privileges of citizenship; liberation
- firmament (n.) - sky
- unassailable (adj.) - not able to be attacked, doubted or questioned

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

- None.

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

- enterprise (n.) - a project or activity that involves many people and that is often difficult
- thawed (adj.) - melted
- spaniel (n.) - a type of small dog that has long ears and a soft coat
- tyranny (n.) - a government in which all power belongs to one person

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards: RL.11-12.5, W.11-12.9.a • Text: <i>Julius Caesar</i> by William Shakespeare, Act 3.1: lines 1-91 	
Learning Sequence: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda 2. Homework Accountability 3. Whole-Class Dramatic Reading and Discussion 4. Quick Write 5. Closing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5% 2. 10% 3. 65% 4. 15% 5. 5%

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Materials

- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer to 12.2.1 Lesson 1) (optional)

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.
	Bold text indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.
	<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.11-12.5. In this lesson, students explore Shakespeare's structural choices about how to order events, and how the events in this excerpt relate to the meaning implied by the play's full title, *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*. Students engage in a whole-class dramatic reading and discussion, and complete a brief writing assignment to close the lesson.

- Students look at the agenda.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

10%

Instruct students to take out their responses to the previous lesson's homework assignment. (Read and summarize Act 2.3 and Act 2.4. Develop 2-3 discussion questions focused on how the interactions between characters advance the plot.)

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Instruct students to form pairs and share their summaries and questions. Instruct each pair to share with the class the question and answer that best supports their understanding of the text.

- Student summaries may include:
 - In Act 2.3, Artemidorus is alone on stage, reading a letter that he plans to give to Caesar as he passes by. The letter warns Caesar of the plot against him and names the conspirators.
 - In Act 2.4, Portia is very anxious about Brutus and tells Lucius to go to the Senate House to report on whether Brutus is well or not, and what Caesar is doing. The Soothsayer enters on his way to beg Caesar to listen to his warnings. Portia becomes even more afraid and tells Lucius again to go to the Senate and bring her word of Brutus.
- Student questions and responses may include:

How do Acts 2.3 and 2.4 advance the plot of the play?

- In Acts 2.3 and 2.4, it becomes clear that other characters, beside the conspirators, are aware of the plan to kill Caesar. In his letter, Artemidorus warns Caesar to “beware” of the conspirators, whom he lists by name (Act 2.3, line 1). Similarly, the Soothsayer plans to “beseech [Caesar] to befriend himself” (Act 2.4, line 34) by listening to his warnings. Portia, too, appears to be aware of the plot when she says, “O Brutus, / The heavens speed thee in thine enterprise” (Act 2.4, lines 46-47). This advances the plot because it shows both that the conspirators are close to acting on their plan, and also that the plan is no longer a secret, which raises the possibility that they may be discovered or prevented from carrying out the assassination.

What is Portia’s state of mind in Act 2.4? How does Shakespeare develop Portia’s state of mind?

- Student responses may include:
 - Shakespeare develops Portia’s agitated state of mind through her interactions with Lucius. Portia orders Lucius to “run to the Senate House” (line 1), but forgets to assign him any errand. In her agitation, she frequently commands him to “get thee gone” (line 2), asking him “[w]hy dost thou stay?” (line 3) and “Art thou here yet?” (line 11).
 - Shakespeare develops Portia’s state of mind through her frequent anxious asides that reveal her inner turmoil, as she pleads in lines 7-8, “O constancy,

be strong upon my side; / Set a huge mountain 'tween my heart and tongue,” and laments in lines 45-46, “Ay me, how weak a thing / The heart of woman is!” Later, she is convinced that Lucas has overheard her (line 48), which increases her anxiety.

- Shakespeare develops Portia’s anxious state of mind through her interactions with the Soothsayer, whom she questions about his plans to warn Caesar in lines 35-36. The Soothsayer’s reply raises Portia’s concern for Brutus, prompting her to “grow / faint” (lines 50-51).

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student questions and responses.

Activity 3: Whole-Class Dramatic Reading and Discussion

65%

Instruct students to form small groups. 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 this lesson.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posting or projecting the following guiding question to support students in their reading throughout this lesson:

How does Shakespeare stage Caesar’s death?

- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definition of *enterprise*.
 - Students write the definition of *enterprise* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

Transition to a whole-class dramatic reading. Assign students the roles of Caesar, Soothsayer, Artemidorus, Decius, Publius, Cassius, and Popilius in Act 3.1, lines 1-29 (from “The ides of March are come” to “He draws Mark Antony out of the way”). Have these students read for the whole class, and then instruct student groups to answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

How does Shakespeare create tension in lines 1-29?

- Student responses may include:
 - The presence of the Soothsayer builds upon his earlier appearances in the text in which he sought to warn Caesar to “[b]eware the ides of March” (Act 1.2, line 21).

His reappearance in this scene reminds the audience of this warning and, through his exchange with Caesar, highlights that the ides of March have arrived but “not gone” (Act 3.1, line 2). Taken together, the Soothsayer’s appearances create tension by highlighting the day as a critical one for Caesar, and reminding the audience that this day has arrived.

- Shakespeare creates tension through Popilius Lena’s remark to Cassius: “I wish your enterprise today may thrive” (Act 3.1, line 14). Popilius Lena’s remark confirms for the audience what Shakespeare has already suggested in Acts 2.3 and 2.4: the conspirators’ plan is no longer a secret, and it is possible that the conspirators may not be able to carry out their plan. Cassius fears that “[the conspirators’] purpose is discovered” (Act 3.1, line 19), and tells Casca that they “fear prevention” (line 21).
- Brutus’s observation that “[Popilius Lena] makes to Caesar” (line 20) builds tension by showing that Popilius Lena is standing with Caesar and talking to him, possibly revealing the conspirators’ plot.
- The different responses of Cassius and Brutus also contribute to the tension in these lines. Whereas Cassius panics, telling Casca to be “sudden” (line 21), and threatening to “slay [him]self” (line 24), Brutus tells him to “be constant” (line 25), observing Popilius Lena’s movements and the fact that “he smiles, and Caesar doth not change” (line 27). These different responses highlight tension between the two leaders of the conspiracy and illustrate the differences between their characters; whereas Brutus is calm and confident, Cassius is anxious and insecure.

How does Shakespeare develop Caesar’s character through Caesar’s interactions with those around him?

- Student responses may include:
 - Shakespeare develops Caesar’s character as arrogant; he taunts the Soothsayer, saying, “[t]he ides of March are come” (line 1), even though the day is not over. He also ignores Artemidorus, asking whether he is “mad” (line 10).
 - Caesar seems to be concerned with his image: he wants to present himself as noble and unselfish, and so he tells Artemidorus, “What touches us ourself shall be last served” (line 8), suggesting that Caesar will deal last with matters that affect him personally.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Assign students to read the roles of Popilius, Cassius, Brutus, Decius, Cinna, Caesar, Metellus, and Casca. Instruct students to read Act 3.1, lines 30-85 for the class (from “Where is Metellus Cimber? Let him go” to “*Et tu, Brutè?* - Then fall, Caesar”), and then answer the following questions in their groups before sharing out with the class.

Provide students with the definitions of *amiss*, *suit*, *cur*, *enfranchisement*, *firmament*, and *unassailable*.

- Students may be familiar with some of these words. Consider asking students to volunteer definitions before providing them to the group.
 - Students write the definitions of *amiss*, *suit*, *cur*, *enfranchisement*, *firmament*, and *unassailable* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *thawed* and *spaniel*.
 - Students write the definitions of *thawed* and *spaniel* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

How do Caesar’s interactions with the conspirators in lines 34-81 further develop his character?

- Student responses may include:
 - Caesar’s interactions with the conspirators demonstrate his arrogance. Responding to Metellus Cimber’s suit on behalf of his brother, he refers in line 41 to “the blood of ordinary men” that might be moved by flattery, but tells Metellus Cimber, “Be not fond / To think that Caesar bears such rebel blood / That will be thawed from the true quality / With that which melteth fools” (lines 43-46). Through this response, Caesar suggests that he is better than “ordinary men” (line 41), by implying that even his “blood” (line 44) is of a higher quality, making him above flattery. He treats Metellus Cimber disrespectfully, comparing him to a dog when he says, “I spurn thee like a cur out of my way” (line 51). He refuses to accept what he terms Metellus Cimber’s “bend[ing] and pray[ing] and fawn[ing]” (line 50), telling him that “Caesar doth not wrong” (line 52).
 - Caesar’s behavior suggests that he is ambitious; he implies that he holds a unique position among men. Caesar compares himself to the North Star, claiming that he is “constant as the Northern Star” (line 66). This develops his notion that he is unique because, as Caesar puts it, the North Star has “no fellow in the firmament” (line 68). Caesar believes that he holds a similar elevated status in relation to other men, claiming that “in the number [of men] I do know but one / That unassailable holds on his rank, / Unshaked of motion; and that I am he” (lines 74-76). His

comparison of himself to Olympus also suggests that he is claiming a god-like position for himself (line 81).

What does Caesar’s reaction to Brutus in lines 57-85 suggest about his relationship with Brutus?

- Student responses may include:
 - Shakespeare shows the respect and trust that Caesar has for Brutus. Brutus initially approaches Caesar in a submissive manner, kneeling before him and saying, “I kiss thy hand, but not in flattery, Caesar” (line 57), to which Caesar responds with surprise, asking, “What, Brutus?” (line 60). Caesar’s surprise indicates that Caesar is not used to Brutus approaching him in this manner. When Caesar points out to Decius, “Doth not Brutus bootless kneel?” (line 83), he implies that if an appeal from Brutus does not move him, then nothing will. This implication, along with Caesar’s surprise at Brutus’s submissive manner, suggests that Caesar respects Brutus and does not expect flattery from him.
 - Shakespeare develops the relationship between the two men through Caesar’s shock at Brutus’s participation in the conspiracy. When Brutus stabs Caesar, Caesar remarks “*Et tu Brutè?* - Then fall, Caesar” (line 85), suggesting both how unexpected Brutus’s betrayal is to Caesar and how powerful an impact it has upon him. The words “Then fall, Caesar” (line 85) indicate the shock of Brutus’s betrayal is so great that Caesar is no longer able to resist the conspirators’ attack and so submits and dies.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider posing the following scaffolding questions:

How does Brutus approach Caesar?

- Brutus approaches Caesar in a respectful, even submissive manner: he kneels and kisses his hand (line 57).

How does Caesar respond to Brutus’s initial approach to him?

- Caesar responds with surprise, saying, “What, Brutus?” (line 60), as if he is not used to Brutus approaching him in such a way. Although he does not grant Brutus’s request, he points out to Decius, “Doth not Brutus bootless kneel?” (line 83), implying that Brutus commands Caesar’s respect and consideration.

How does Caesar respond to Brutus’s participation in the assassination?

- Caesar is shocked and dismayed, exclaiming, “*Et tu, Brutè?* - Then fall, Caesar” (line 85), suggesting that he trusted Brutus.

What structural choices does Shakespeare make about the placement and length of Caesar’s death scene? What effect does Shakespeare create through these structural choices?

- Student responses should include:
 - Caesar’s death occurs midway through a scene and midway through the play itself.
 - Caesar dies very quickly and abruptly. The murder is very sudden and takes place within the space of two lines (lines 84-85).
 - Shakespeare creates an effect of surprise, because he kills his title character quickly and suddenly halfway through the play, leaving the audience to wonder how the play will continue.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Assign students to read the roles of Cinna, Cassius, and Brutus. Instruct students to read Act 3.1, lines 86-91 for the class (from “Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead!” to “Fly not; stand still. Ambition’s debt is paid”), and then work in groups to answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definition of *tyranny*.
- Students write the definition of *tyranny* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

What do the conspirators tell bystanders to do in lines 86-91? What do these commands suggest about the conspirators’ motivations for killing Caesar?

- Student responses should include:
 - The conspirators tell bystanders to run through the streets and shout out the news that, as Cinna puts it in line 86, “Tyranny is dead”; Cassius orders, “Some to the common pulpits and cry out / ‘Liberty, freedom and enfranchisement’” (lines 88-89).
 - These commands suggest that the conspirators want to emphasize the motivations behind the murder and its beneficial consequences rather than the murder itself.

They are trying to convince the people that Caesar's death was a necessary and noble act in the name of "[l]iberty, freedom and enfranchisement" (line 89).

What does Brutus mean when he says in line 91, "Ambition's debt is paid"?

- Student responses may include:
 - Brutus means that Caesar's ambition led to his death.
 - Brutus is reassuring bystanders that there will be no more bloodshed and suggesting that Caesar's death has resolved the conflict in Rome; Rome's problems came from Caesar's ambition, to which his death put an end.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct students to answer the following question in their groups before sharing out with the class.

- Consider reviewing the elements of *tragedy*, which students discussed in 12.2.2 Lesson 1.

To what extent do the events leading up to Caesar's death fulfill conventional elements of tragedy?

- Student responses may include:
 - *Julius Caesar* fulfills conventional elements of tragedy because it features a flawed tragic hero in Julius Caesar, who suffers a reversal of fortune. Caesar's appearances in the play show him to be arrogant and ambitious. He compares himself to the "Northern Star" (Act 3.1, line 66) and to "Olympus" (line 81), suggesting that he views himself as unique and god-like. This ambition is the primary motivation for the conspirators to kill him, and so, because of this flaw, Caesar suffers a reversal of fortune, as he goes from "triumph" (Act 1.1, line 56) to death.
 - The death of Julius Caesar seems to resolve the main conflicts in the play. Brutus's conclusion that "[a]mbition's debt is paid" (Act 3.1, line 91) implies that the conflict between Caesar and the patricians that has driven the play so far—the conflicts between Caesar and the conspirators, and within Brutus—have been resolved.
 - *Julius Caesar* does not fulfill conventional expectations of tragedy. Although Caesar is portrayed as flawed and he suffers a reversal of fortune as a result, his character

is portrayed negatively, as arrogant and unfeeling. He dismisses Calphurnia's fears in Act 2.2 as "foolish" (Act 2.2, line 110) and claims, "Danger knows full well / That Caesar is more dangerous than he" (Act 2.2, lines 47-48). As a result, his death does not inspire pity and fear in the audience, because he is not portrayed as a sympathetic character. Moreover, because he is killed so abruptly, Caesar has no moment of recognition in which he comes to understand the conflicts surrounding him, and the role his own flaws played in his death.

- *Julius Caesar* goes against conventional expectations of tragedy because instead of being the climax of the play, his death occurs abruptly midway through the play, in the middle of a scene that carries on without him. This suggests that the conflicts that have so far driven the play are not the central conflicts, and that, despite Brutus's claim that "[a]mbition's debt is paid" (line 91), there will be no swift resolution, as events develop further and new conflicts arise.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Activity 4: Quick Write

15%

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

How does Shakespeare's treatment of Caesar's death relate to the full title of the play, *The Tragedy of Julius 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 review and expand their notes and annotations in preparation for the 12.2.2 Mid-Unit Assessment.

Distribute copies of the 12.2.2 Mid-Unit Assessment prompt:

Is Caesar’s death a “sacrifice” or a “butchery”?

Read the 12.2.2 Mid-Unit Assessment prompt and explain that students will write a multi-paragraph analysis in response to the prompt.

- Students follow along.

Homework

Review and expand your notes and annotations in preparation for the 12.2.2 Mid-Unit Assessment.