

## INTRODUCTION

### **Life of Shakespeare**

William Shakespeare or 'the Bard' as people fondly call him is believed to be born on or about 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1564 at Stratford - on - Avon, Warwickshire. He was the son of Mary and John Shakespeare. His father was a prosperous tradesman who became the Mayor of the town too.

Our understanding of William Shakespeare's childhood in Stratford is primarily speculative because no legal records are found. However, it is probable that he studied at the local grammar school or King's New School where he was taught Latin and Arithmetic. At 14, he was taken from the school to help the family under a financial misfortune. We do not know for sure what he actually did to help his family's financial crisis.

Shakespeare was married to Anne Hathaway, eight years elder to him, the daughter of a well to do yeoman of Shottery at the early age of nineteen. Three children were born to them- the eldest daughter Susannah and the twins- Judith and Hamlet.

Shakespeare had to run away from his home town, it is believed, to escape from a legal entanglement of 'deer poaching' on the woods of Charlecote Hall. Roughly, about 1587, he was noticed to pursue his fortune at stage, first as an actor and then as a playwright too, in London. By 1592, he was well known as a successful author. Almost 24 years hard work in London brought him great fame and wealth. He became a shareholder in two of the leading theatres of London namely The Globe and The Blackfriars. He retired to Stratford between 1610 and 1612, where he owned the largest house of the town known as 'New Place'. Shakespeare died on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1616 due to his broken health.

Shakespeare's biography proves that he was a practical man of the world. He reached London poor and friendless but he left it rich and respected. He earned

every penny with his own hard work and genius. His writings exhibit his creative imagination, sound common sense and a large and varied familiarity with the world. He lived in the age of Renaissance in Europe. The intellectual environment in which he lived and worked was charged with new ideas, and was immensely stimulating. Shakespeare was pre-eminently endowed with extra ordinarily assimilative mind to turn everything he came across in a universal experience which he dubbed into word.

### **Shakespeare's Works**

Shakespeare's literary excellence rests on his 37 plays, two narrative poems- '*Venus and Adonis*' and '*Lucrece*', and a sequence of 154 sonnets. He wrote for the stage of London over some 24 years, beginning about 1588 and ending about 1612. The authenticity of some of his dramas is doubtful and sometimes challenged too. Shakespearean critics mostly agree to subdivide his creative 24 years into four periods and if we see his plays in order of their production, we can also follow the evolution of his genius and dramatic art.

1. The First Period (1588- 1593) - In the works of this period, we observe little depth of thought and characterization, and the art is rather immature. However, the dialogues are rhymed, the use of blank verse is stiff and there is a constant use of pun, conceit and other figures of speech. The plays written in this period include the three parts of *Henry VI*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*, *Richard III* and a single Romantic tragedy- *Romeo and Juliet*.

2. The Second Period (1594-1600) – Defying the influence of earlier masters, Shakespeare begins to rely on his own independence technique and genius. His observation and knowledge of the world becomes wider, which he exhibits in the motives and passions of his characters. The characterization and thought bears the testimony of his deeper understanding of dramatic art. His dialogues written in free and flexible blank verse, are soaked with the weight of thought, sans its earlier stiffness. The works of this period include some of his great comedies and chronicle plays like *Richard II*, *King John*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Henry IV part one and two*, *Henry V*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*.

3. The Third Period (1601-1608) – In this period, Shakespeare's dramatic power, his intellectual power and his power of expression are at their highest. This is the period of his great masterpiece tragedies and serious comedies. He portrays the evil, sinful and flawed side of his protagonists and even his comedies are sombre. The tone of his plays of this period remains grave and serious. The great plays of this period are- *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus* and *Timon of Athens*.

4. The Fourth Period (1608- 1612) – The period is marked with the decline of Shakespeare's dramatic powers. His characterization lacks depth and passion and he is often careless in construction. However, the focus from evil is shifted and the poetic justice prevails to let the good win ultimately. Three plays namely- *Cymbeline*, *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale* are considered to be written solely by him, where as *Pericles* and *Henry VIII* are believed to be completed by his friend and fellow dramatist Fletcher.

### **Classification of His Plays**

Shakespeare's 37 plays can be divided into six groups: comedies, tragedies, tragi-comedies, histories, Roman plays and pure Romances. His most famous comedies include- *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Taming of The Shrew*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. His plays- *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, *Love's Labour's Lost* etc. are considered to be his best tragic-comedies. Among his tragedies, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet* are considered to be his masterpieces. Most of his romances belong to the last period of his career and among them- *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*, *Cymbeline*, *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale* are counted. Shakespeare wrote many historical plays on the lives of English kings like- *Richard II*, *Richard III*, the two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V*; and lastly *Henry VIII*. Living in the late renaissance, Shakespeare was influenced to write plays on Roman history too. His major Roman plays in English are – *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Cariolanus*. This classification includes only the most famous works of William Shakespeare.

## **Julius Caesar : Sources of the Play**

One of the results of renaissance in England was the growth of interest in classical life and literature. The historical knowledge of ancient Greece and Rome was eagerly welcomed. Sir Thomas North translated Plutarch's – '*Parallel Lives of Noble Greeks and Romans*' in 1579. Actually Sir North translated it from a French translation by Amyot, and he wrote it in such a fluent prose that Shakespeare often followed it even verbally. For his play- '*Julius Caesar*', Shakespeare used the lives of Caesar, Brutus and to an extent that of Antony. He may have also used slightly Appian's '*History of the Civil War*' (translated in 1578) for Antony's famous inciting speech to the crowd.

## **Shakespeare and History**

Shakespeare followed the main outlines of Julius Caesar's life and times but he amplified, omitted or reconstructed at his own will too. He had a precious gift of imaginative reconstruction, the power of creating a convincing atmosphere and people who are life like, though they belong to a vanished world. He concentrated on the common elements of life to all people in all times. His portrayal of Roman artisans is like the Elizabethan working men and this made his play all the more congenial to his spectators. The events described in the play occurred over a period of more than two years, but the playwright had the constraint of confining the story in a limited time frame, therefore, some speeding up of events was usual in a play based on history. He also had to sustain the interest of his audience. Therefore, he ignored the dull patches of ordinary life. Shakespeare ignores, for example, the meeting of Senate on the day after Caesar's murder, and takes us straight forward to the funeral speech of Brutus and Antony which actually took place several days later. Almost a month passed in the events that occur between Scene I and Scene III of Act I. There was an interval of twenty days between the two battles at Philippi. For a better understanding of the Caesar's life and times, a chronological summary is provided to give the historical facts most relevant to the play.

B.C.

100        Birth of Julius Caesar

52-50     Pompey becomes most powerful, but Roman Republic still holds.

49 civil war between Pompey and Caesar; Pompey defeated.

48 Caesar kills Pompey at Pharsalus.

47 Caesar wins at Zela and Asia Minor

46 Caesar defeats Pompeians in Africa

45 Caesar defeats Pompeians in Spain and introduce various reforms in Rome

44

- Caesar enters Rome in Triumph on January 26
- Rejects crown at the Lupercalia held on February 5.
- 60 republicans conspire and assassinate Caesar on 15<sup>th</sup> March in the Senate.
- The Senate pardons the act of killing Caesar on 17<sup>th</sup> March
- Antony's funeral speech on 20<sup>th</sup> March
- Brutus and Cassius evacuate Rome with the other conspirators hounded by public fury incited by Antony's speech.
- Octavius arrives Rome
- Antony besieges Brutus in Mutina

43

- The Senate declares war against Antony.
- Octavius wins at Mutina
- Octavius breaches the Senate and joins hands with Antony and Lepidus
- Brutus wins Macedonia and Cassius Syria.
- Brutus and Cassius assemble in Asia (Minor) to wage war against Octavius and Antony

42

- Octavius and Caesar cross to Greece
- Campaign of Philippi
- Brutus wins in the first battle but Cassius commits suicide.

- Brutus is defeated in the second war fought after twenty days at Philippi. Brutus also commits suicide

31

Octavianus Caesar defeats Antony in the battle of Actium and becomes the most powerful master of Roman world.

For a better understanding of the position of Julius Caesar and his work for Rome as well as some knowledge of the breakdown of Republican system of government in Rome is necessary which may further be studied from the books on Roman history.

## **Synopsis of the Play**

### **Act 1, Scene 1**

The story opens on a street in Rome, where two tribunes, Flavius and Marullus, disperse a crowd that has congregated to celebrate the return of the greatest ruler of the day, Julius Caesar. The tribunes, fearful of Caesar's ever-increasing power, rebuke the assembled crowd for their shortsightedness and fickle loyalties. Marullus reminds the cobblers and carpenters that Caesar has conquered another Roman, the noble Pompey. They succeed in dispersing the crowd by their hate speech. Flavius and Marullus remove the decorations that cover the public statues put in the welcome of Caesar.

### **Act 1, Scene 2**

Caesar passes through a public square to celebrate the Roman festival of Lupercalia <sup>1</sup>. Caesar is accompanied with his wife Calpurnia, Mark Antony, senator Cicero, republican sympathizers Brutus, Cassius, Casca, Decius, Flavius, Marullus, and Brutus' wife Portia. Caesar asks Antony to touch Calpurnia in a fertility rite.

As the music and merriment begins, Caesar hears someone shout his name. Hushing the crowd, he asks the voice to speak again. A soothsayer comes into view and warns Caesar to "Beware the ides of March", but Caesar ignores his prediction by saying: "He is a dreamer; let us leave him; pass" .

Caesar and the adoring crowd move on to the festival, but Brutus and Cassius stay behind. They discuss Caesar's thirst for power and his desire to turn the republic into a dictatorship. Cassius is already prepared to assassinate Caesar to save Rome from tyranny, and he attempts to convince Brutus that the murder

would be justified. Although Brutus reveals that he has also been wary of Caesar, but he does not immediately wish to involve himself in Cassius's plot. Rather, Brutus agrees to ponder all that Cassius has said and meet with him again to "answer such high things".

Caesar and his entourage return, and Caesar shares with Antony that he mistrusts Cassius. Antony assures Caesar that Cassius is a noble and trustworthy Roman incapable of treachery, but Caesar remains unconvinced. Caesar and his train leave but Casca remains behind. Brutus pulls him by the cloak to converse with him. Casca tells Brutus and Cassius about the festival, and how Antony offered Caesar a crown three times and three times he refused it. But in Casca's opinion, Caesar only refused the crown to please the crowd. In fact, the people so loved the gesture that they "uttered up such a deal of stinking breath ... that it almost choked Caesar; for he swooned and fell down at it". Casca finishes recounting Caesar's actions at the festival and, after declining a dinner invitation from Cassius, bids the men farewell.

Cassius feels Casca's report gives them more evidence to suspect Caesar's desire to become king. Brutus asks to meet Cassius again the next day and leaves him alone. He ponders over the chances that Brutus will agree to join the plot or not. Cassius feels that his arguments have not been thoroughly convincing, and it is apparent that Caesar loves Brutus and would reward his loyalty with great wealth and power. Thus Cassius concludes that he must help his own cause with a little trickery. He will fabricate a petition, pretending, it is from the angry citizens, demanding Caesar's deposition, and he will throw it in Brutus' window.

### **Act 1, Scene 3**

Scene three opens amidst a great storm in the dark night. Thunder shakes the foundations of Rome and lightning slices through the night sky. Casca appears with his sword drawn and sees Cicero coming towards him. Casca speaks of the omens he has witnessed of the stormy night, including wild beasts roaming the Capital and men on fire. Cicero hardly pays much attention to the predictions and hurries home to be out of the wind and rain. Casca next encounters Cassius, who uses the storm as a means to recruit Casca for his plot:

Another conspirator named Cinna arrives and Cassius tells him that Casca is their newest confidant. Then Cassius instructs Cinna to throw the petition into Brutus' window and meet him and the other conspirators at Pompey's theatre.

### **Act 2, Scene 1**

Brutus, unable to sleep, walks through his orchard awaiting morning. He

ponders over his conversation with Cassius, divided between his love for Caesar and his fear that Caesar's infinite power will destroy the Roman Republic. His servant Lucius brings the false petition that Cinna has planted in the house. Brutus reads the letter and, just as Cassius had hoped, it arouses Brutus' passions. The conspirators arrive at Brutus' house and Lucius leads them to the orchard. Not knowing if Brutus has decided to join them, the group exchanges pleasantries until Cassius takes Brutus aside. When the two rejoin the group, Brutus asks for the hands of the conspirators as he agrees to lead them in the assassination plot. As they begin to plan the murder, Brutus insists that they do not harm Antony otherwise their course will seem too bloody.

Before they leave Decius offers to ensure that Caesar will be in the Capitol the next day, the fifteenth of March. They will commit the murder by the eighth hour.

Just as the men leave, Brutus' wife Portia comes to find her husband. She is perplexed by Brutus' strange behaviour and begs him to make her acquainted with his grief. Brutus hears a knock at the door and promises Portia to reveal the cause of his grief later. He delicately orders her to hurry back to bed. Lucius enters with Ligarius, another conspirator who promises Brutus that he will do anything Brutus asks, and they leave together to commit the act.

### **Act 2, Scene 2**

Calpurnia, Caesar's wife has 'troubled sleeping'. She has heard of the beasts roaming the Capitol and other strange occurrences, and begs him not to go to the Capitol. After much reluctance, Caesar agrees to stay home, but just as he does so, Decius arrives to escort Caesar to the senate-house. When Caesar informs Decius that he will not go because of Calpurnia's request, Decius chides him for yielding to his wife's whims. Decius adds that the senate has concluded that they will today give Caesar a crown, and Caesar gives into vanity, agreeing to accompany Decius to the Capitol.

### **Act 2, Scene 3**

Meanwhile, on a street near the Capitol, a scholar named Artemidorus has discovered the plot to murder Caesar and has written the names of the conspirators on a paper which he plans to hand to Caesar as he passes by.

### **Act 2, Scene 4**

Portia is standing on the street outside her house, frantically worried about Brutus. She orders Lucius to the senate-house to report on Brutus. Portia sees the soothsayer. He tells her that he has come to once again warn Caesar. He leaves to take his position along the procession route and Portia, weak with worry and fear, goes back inside.



### **Act 3, Scene 1**

Caesar and his train approach the Senate. He sees the soothsayer in the crowd and confidently declares, "The ides of March are come" . "Ay, Caesar; but not gone" , replies the soothsayer. Artemidorus is also on the street and he pleads with Caesar to read his scroll. But Caesar ignores him and enters the Senate. Cassius approaches him with a request to overturn a previous ruling and let a banished countryman Cimber return home. Caesar answers with a flavoured speech, informing Cassius that "I was constant Cimber should be banish'd/And constant do remain to keep him so" .

Now the conspirators gather around Caesar and he sees his trusted friend Brutus among them. They pull out their swords and stab Caesar. With his dying breath, Caesar addresses Brutus, "Et tu, Brute? Then fall, Caesar!".

Caesar falls lifeless upon the pedestal of Pompey's statue. Cinna rejoices, crying, "Liberty, Freedom! Tyranny is dead!" . Those who have witnessed the assassination flee the Senate and Trebonius reports to Brutus and Cassius that Antony has fled to his house in shock and people run through the streets, "As it were doomsday." Brutus tells the other assassins to bathe their hands and swords in Caesar's blood and walk outside, proclaiming peace, freedom, and liberty.

A servant brings a message from Antony: if he is allowed to come to see Caesar's body and receives a satisfactory explanation of why they have committed the murder, he promises to give his loyalty to Brutus. Brutus agrees and the servant leaves to fetch Antony. Brutus seems confident they will find an ally in Antony but Cassius deeply fears him. Antony arrives and volunteers to die with his noble ruler, but Brutus tries to convince him. Brutus also tells Antony that he also loves Caesar and assures Antony that he will reveal the reason why he killed Caesar as soon as they have appeased the people of Rome. Antony asks to take Caesar's body to the market-place and deliver a eulogy. Cassius objects, but Brutus assures him that he will speak before Antony and, "show the reason of our Caesar's death". Brutus agrees to Antony's requests and the assassins depart, leaving Antony alone with the body of Caesar. Antony vows to seek revenge on Brutus and his cohorts by launching a civil war:

The servant of Caesar's grandnephew, Octavius, enters the Senate and weeps over the body. Antony orders him to return to Octavius Caesar and tell him what has happened, and warn him that he must not yet return to Rome.

### **Act 3, Scene 2**

Brutus takes his place at the pulpit and Cassius goes into the crowd to separate those who wish to hear Brutus speak from those who refuse to listen. Brutus addresses the Plebeians with a convincing speech, assuring them that Caesar's murder was necessary to preserve their freedom.

The crowd rallies behind Brutus and when Antony arrives, he has to yell to make himself heard. Brutus asks the people to listen to Antony and he begins, masterfully crafting a speech to his end: "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears/I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him." He goes on to call Brutus and the other assassins "honourable men", but gradually and subtly Antony turns the crowd against Brutus with his rhetorical skill of oratory.

Antony has managed to change the minds of the Plebeians, and he produces Caesar's will, which includes a generous gift to the people of Rome. But Antony tells them he cannot read the will because it will inflame them. The crowd insists he read the will and soon they are calling the assassins murders and traitors. The people run through the streets, screaming "Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay! Let not a traitor live!" . They rush to burn the homes of Brutus and his conspirators.

A servant arrives to tell Antony that Brutus and Cassius have fled the city and that Octavius is in Rome and waits at Caesar's house. Antony hurries to meet Octavius.

### **Act 3, Scene 3**

Out for blood, the angry mob swarm the streets of Rome. They come upon Cinna the poet, who happens to have the same name as one of the assassins. The frenzied mass does not care if they have the wrong Cinna: someone must pay for the crime. He begs for his life: "I am Cinna the poet, I am Cinna the poet!". But his cries are useless as the mob tears him to pieces.

### **Act 4, Scene 1**

Antony meets with Octavius and their henchman Lepidus to decide who must be murdered, to ensure they regain power. They have a steadily growing list, on which is Lepidus' own brother, Antony's nephew, and dozens of Rome's senators. They make plans to organize their troops to combat the army being raised by Brutus and Cassius near Sardis in Asia Minor.

### **Act 4, Scene 2**

At Brutus' camp, Lucilius returns to report on the activities of Cassius, who is gathering forces a short distance away. Lucilius feels that Cassius has not been as warm as on previous visits, and Brutus takes this to be a sign that Cassius is

"a hot friend cooling". When Cassius arrives, he accuses Brutus of wronging him, and Brutus leads him into his tent where they can speak in private.

### **Act 4, Scene 3**

When they are alone in Brutus' tent, Cassius chides Brutus for punishing an officer for taking bribes even after Cassius had favoured him. Brutus accuses that Cassius himself is said to be withholding funds. Cassius is shocked and outraged and offers his sword to Brutus. Brutus apologizes and they reconcile, but Cassius is deeply troubled by Brutus' accusations. A poet arrives and scolds the two generals for fighting. Cassius finds the poet amusing, but Brutus dismisses him. Brutus then tells Cassius that his strange behaviour is the result of learning that Portia has committed suicide.

Titinius and Messala arrive with news that Octavius and Antony have put to death one hundred senators, including Cicero. Messala also reports that Portia has died. Brutus gives a calm response to the sad news, which greatly impresses Messala. Brutus turns his attention back to the war and suggests that they march to Philippi. Cassius disagrees, feeling it better that the enemy seek them out. But Brutus persists and Cassius gives in.

Cassius retires for the evening and Brutus calls two of his servants, Claudio and Varro, to stay with him through the night. The boys quickly fall asleep and Brutus starts to read. The ghost of Caesar appears before Brutus and tells that they will meet again at Philippi and vanishes.

### **Act 5, Scene 1**

Act five opens on the plains of Philippi. Octavius and Antony celebrate their good fortune that Brutus and Cassius have foolishly come down from the hills. Octavius demands to lead the more important army division, despite being his inexperienced. Brutus and Cassius arrive with their men, and the opposing leaders hold a brief conference. The exchange, short and bitter, ends with Octavius and Antony storming away.

In a moving speech Cassius tells Messala that he fears the upcoming battle. Although Cassius is not superstitious, he cannot help but notice that the two eagles who accompanied the army on their long trek from Sardis have now flown away and in their place hover ravens, crows, and kites, who make "a canopy most fatal."

Cassius asks Brutus about his plans if they should lose the battle. Brutus rejects suicide, calling it "cowardly and vile", but he also insists that he will never return to Rome as a prisoner. Before they rally the troops, Cassius and Brutus bid a solemn farewell to one another:

**Act 5, Scene 2**

The battle begins. Brutus sees an opportunity to strike Octavius' forces, which appear to be weakening, and he sends Cassius orders to attack immediately.

**Act 5, Scene 3**

On a hill in another part of the battlefield Titinius, a soldier and friend to Cassius, warns his commander that Brutus gave the word to attack prematurely, and Antony's men have them surrounded. Pindarus, Cassius's servant, rushes in with the news that enemy troops are in the very tents of Cassius's headquarters. He begs Cassius to flee for his life. Cassius refuses and sends Titinius to make certain that they are not Brutus' men that have entered his camp. Pindarus ascends the hill to report on Titinius' movement and sees him arrested.

Cassius knows that he too will soon be captured by Antony and Octavius, and will certainly be dragged through the streets of Rome in chains. He orders Pindarus to help him commit suicide. Pindarus holds the sword steady. Cassius impales his chest on the sword, saying "Caesar, thou art revenged/Even with the sword that kill'd thee."

Pindarus flees as Titinius returns with Messala. Titinius was not captured by Antony -- Pindarus has made a terrible mistake. They come to tell Cassius that Brutus has defeated Octavius' troops, but, instead, they find Cassius's body. Messala leaves to inform Brutus, and Titinius laments the loss of his dear friend. Titinius takes Cassius' sword and kills himself. Brutus arrives and sees the bodies of Cassius and Titinius and wails.

Brutus then announces that he plans another siege against Antony now.

**Act 5, Scene 4**

Antony proves too strong and Brutus is forced to retreat. He orders his men to remain fighting on the field. Lucilius pretends to be Brutus and is captured.

Antony sees that they have the wrong man, but he praises Lucilius' bravery and spares his life.

**Act 5, Scene 5**

Brutus and his few remaining servants gather at a rock. He asks Clitus and then Dardanius to kill him to avoid capture, but they refuse. He then implores Volumnius as a friend to help him commit suicide. But Volumnius too refuses. As the enemy troops draw near, Clitus, Dardanius, and Volumnius flee and Brutus remains behind with another servant, Strato. He convinces Strato to hold the sword for him as he runs upon it. With his final words Brutus addresses Caesar: "Caesar, now be still."

Antony and Octavius arrive and find Brutus' body. Antony, knowing that Brutus was a valiant defender of Rome, delivers a tribute befitting so honest a man: "This was the noblest Roman of them all"

Octavius sends Brutus' body to his own tent until they can arrange a proper funeral and the play comes to a close.

### **The Main Characters of The Play**

**Julius Caesar** – Julius Caesar is considered to be the greatest Roman commander and the most imposing personality in Roman history. He returns to Rome in triumph after a successful military campaign against Pompey. Many Senators are wary of Caesar becoming a dictator of the Roman republic. However, Caesar seems to show no such inclination as he declines the crown several times. Yet Caesar too, like all great men, has his own share of flaws. He succumbs to his increasing personal idolization among his native people. He is brave, bold and ambitious and in the glorious pageant of his welcome, he ignores ill omens and threats against his life, believing himself to be as eternal as the North Star. He becomes a prey to his own credulity and good will, and his trusted senators stab him to death in the very Senate hall of Rome.

**Brutus** – Brutus is a firm supporter of the republic in Rome who believes strongly in a government based on the votes of senators. Brutus and Caesar are great friends, but Brutus is made to believe by the enemies of Caesar that Caesar aspires to possess infinite powers and to be a dictator. Making use of Brutus's firm sense of honour, Caesar's enemies succeed to manipulate him into believing that Caesar must die in order to preserve the republic in Rome. Torn between his loyalty to Caesar and his allegiance to the state, Brutus decides to prioritise to the matters of state as he idealises Roman virtue. While the other conspirators act out of envy and rivalry, only Brutus truly believes that Caesar's death will benefit Rome. He joins the conspirators and his sword too stabs Caesar with others to assassinate Caesar. On the funeral of Caesar, Antony incites the mob of Rome to hound and force the conspirators to flee. Later, Caesar's ghost haunts Brutus. Actually it's his sense of guilt that ultimately makes him defeated from the combined powers of Octavius and Antony. By

committing suicide to save his honour, he becomes the tragic hero of the play ultimately.

**Antony** – The character of Marc Antony in Julius Caesar dramatically transforms throughout the play. He is a trusted follower to Caesar and a common reveller in the beginning, but by the end, he is a power hungry, vengeful, cold hearted member of the Second Triumvirate. What prompts this dramatic change of character in Antony? A number of things, chiefly the death of Caesar, and the power he gains in the Second Triumvirate.

In Act I and II, the characters of the play see Antony as little more than a foolish, gamesome, reveller. Antony is nothing more than a friend of Caesar. Brutus dismisses him as a threat to the conspiracy saying "for he is well given / to sports, to wildness, and much company"(II. i. 188-189). The other conspirators are quick to agree that "there is no fear in him"(II. i. 190.). Caesar too, like the others, does not think much of Antony, other than as a friend. He shows surprise in one instance and says "See! Antony, that revels long a-nights, / is notwithstanding up"(II. ii. 116-117.). Everyone sees Antony as a young partier and not worth much thought. They, however, misjudge Antony as they soon find it out.

In Act III, Antony is seen as scheming after he comes to know of Caesar's assassination. Rather than foolishly staying on the spot of murder and yell at Brutus and the other conspirators, he sends a servant ahead to see if it is safe, and chooses his words carefully. He is careful to convince at least Brutus that he is a friend. He, the 'foolish' reveller, outwits Brutus and receives permission to speak at Caesar's funeral. In his soliloquy at the end of the scene, he shows that he has forethought and has a direct course of action. He is already able to predict that "domestic fury and fierce civil strife" will run rampantly through Italy after his speech. He is plotting revenge, and is very emotional in this act. In scene two, the cunning Antony uses his emotion to his advantage in his funeral speech. His rhetorical ability to turn the crowd to his side is remarkable. His statement, "I am no orator, as Brutus is" becomes all the more ironic. Antony's use of irony in his speech is ingenious. The success of Antony's speech and the pure madness of the crowd utterly discredit Antony's reputation as a foolish reveller.

In Act IV and V Antony is seen as the powerful leader of the second Triumvirate. As Lord Acton said "power doth corrupt, but absolute power doth corrupt absolutely," Antony has clearly been changed by the power he now possesses. Rather than the emotionally distraught man seen in the previous act, we see him now a non-feeling leader. He casually sentences his nephew to death hardly having any emotion. He then turns around and says Lepidus "is a slight unmeritable man." The once caring Antony now even speaks ill of his "friends". Antony seems to change again when his final goal of revenge is achieved with the death of Brutus. He is less bent on blood then and confers upon Brutus a funeral praise by saying that Brutus was indeed a good man and killed Caesar with the noblest of intentions- "This was the noblest Roman of them all".

Antony is one of the most constantly evolved characters of the play. He changes from a foolish reveller to a vengeful follower to a cunning leader and by the end of the play, he becomes one of the most powerful characters in the play.

**Cassius** - A talented commander and old comrade of Caesar, Cassius envies the fact that Caesar has become godlike in the eyes of the Romans. He manipulates Brutus and makes him believe that Caesar nurtures the ambition to become dictator and he must die for the welfare of Rome. He manages to plant forged letters in the house of Brutus claiming that the Roman people support the death of Caesar. Impulsive, ambitious and unscrupulous, Cassius has no illusions about the way the political power is wielded. A shrewd opportunist, he proves successful but lacks integrity. He is ultimately forced to commit suicide when he is misinformed of Brutus' defeat.

**Octavius** - Octavius is Julius Caesar's adopted son. He had been abroad at the time of Caesar's murder, returns to Rome and is appointed the successor to Caesar. He joins hands with Antony and sets off to fight Cassius and Brutus to revenge Caesar. Antony tries to control Octavius, but he follows his adopted father's example and emerges as the authoritative figure. He paves the path for his vision of the most spectacular Roman empire eventually.

**Casca** - A public figure who opposes to Caesar's rise to power. Casca relates to Cassius and Brutus how Antony offered the crown to Caesar three times and

how each time Caesar declined it. He believes, however, that Caesar is the consummate actor, befooling the public into believing that he has no personal ambition.

**Calpurnia** - Caesar's wife. Calpurnia is highly superstitious. She deeply believes in omens and portents. She is a dedicated wife and very much attached to Caesar. She warns Caesar against going to the Senate on the Ides of March, since she has had terrible nightmares and heard reports of many bad omens. Nevertheless, Caesar's bold and ambitious nature ultimately leads him to disregard her advice.

**Portia** - Brutus's wife; the daughter of a noble Roman Cato, who took sides against Caesar. Portia, accustomed to being Brutus's confidante, is upset to find him so reluctant to speak his mind when she finds him troubled. Brutus later hears that Portia has killed herself out of grief that Antony and Octavius have become so powerful. .

**Cicero** - A Roman senator renowned for his oratorical skill. Cicero speaks at Caesar's triumphal parade. He later dies at the order of Antony, Octavius, and Lepidus.

**Lepidus** - The third member of Antony and Octavius's coalition. Though Antony has a low opinion of Lepidus, Octavius trusts his loyalty..

**Decius** - A member of the conspiracy against Caesar. Decius convinces Caesar that Calpurnia misinterpreted her dire nightmares and that, in fact, no danger awaits him at the Senate. Decius leads Caesar right into the hands of the assassins.