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STUDENT GUIDE

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with any questions, concerns, or more fascinating Shakespeare trivia
Queen Elizabeth I died in 1603, so it’s pretty safe to say people were concerned for the Queen’s health in 1599. But not for the reasons you’d think. The problem was, by 1599, Lizzie was 66 and obviously not having an heir to pass the crown to after her death—which, let’s face it. Reaching 66 in the 17th century? Kind of a big deal considering the average life expectancy was only around 35. So, rightfully, the English people were growing concerned with who would end up with the crown: many were fearing a similar themes present in CAESAR: fear of civil war, a tyrant rising to power, England falling into chaos. Scholars believe Shakespeare wrote CAESAR to parallel modern day angst in England. Talk about knowing your audience.

1599 marked a big year for the Lord Chamberlain’s Men. (That was the name of the company of players for whom Shakespeare wrote and occasionally acted). Their new theatre, The Globe, opened up to delighted audiences. Though historians aren’t entirely sure, JULIUS CAESAR is on the short list for first show to have performed in the new space. (The other strong contender is HENRY V). A tourist from Switzerland has the honor of locking in an exact performance date at the Globe on September 21; historians still debate whether the Globe opened in the summer of 1599 or postponed to September. If September is correct, CAESAR was first!

CAESAR, CAESAR, CAESAR! He may be the title character, but he’s hardly onstage. The character of Brutus has over four times as many lines as Caesar.

ABOUT THOSE FAMOUS LINES... "Beware the Ides of March." "Et tu, Brute?" These words were simply a creation of Shakespeare, not history. He wasn’t far off, though. Brutus WAS one of the main conspirators and is believed to have landed a blow to Caesar’s thigh, but history does not note Caesar having said these famous words. And "beware...? Kind of right. According to history, "The Ides of March are come," is accurate. But the real story, according to historian Barry Strauss, among others, is this: During the Lupercalia Fertility Festival, which falls on the Ides of February, Caesar visited a soothsayer named Spurinna who could read the future in the organs of an animal sacrifice; Caesar offered up a bull in which Spurinna found no heart. "This was bad. Very bad. Like, ‘hey, friend, your life is in serious danger for the next 30 days.’ So fast forward thirty days, ‘The Ides of March are come,’ says a hubristic Caesar. ‘Aye, they have come, but not gone,’ warns the soothsayer. Caesar shrugs this off as he heads to the Senate.

A TIME OF UNREST.

PLUTARCH’S LIVES This is the common title for Thomas North’s translation of “Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans” (the full title). This is the primary source material for many of Shakespeare’s works, including CAESAR. It is a collection of 23 biographies, 19 parallel comparisons of great names from Roman and Greek times as well as 4 stand alone biographies. Caesar is paralleled with Alexander the Great.

It wasn’t just Brutus and Cassius running the show, there was a third, Decimus. In the play, he is a minor character named Decius. Decimus is the guy who ultimately convinced Caesar to go to the Capitol on the Ides after he decided to stay home.

TERRIBLE TRIO
So he fiddles with the facts a little bit. The fact is, William Shakespeare knew how to write a great story. Like any Hollywood blockbuster, JULIUS CAESAR is more “Based on a true story;” not a literal historical account. Shakespeare even makes mistakes: he writes in lines about doublets and hats. Neither of these things were around in Roman times. But hey, at the end of the day, people liked JULIUS CAESAR so much that Shakespeare used it as a pop culture reference in his monster hit HAMLET. In Act 3, Hamlet asks Polonius about his years as a thespian while at University, Polonius replies, “I did enact Julius Caesar: I was kill’d i’ th’ Capitol; Brutus kill’d me.”

"Beware the ides of March." Caesar is a historical figure, we know how this one is gonna end; so, the play wastes no time and jumps right into the action by introducing us to the key players, the Conspirators: Cassius, Brutus, Decius, Casca and a few others. We also meet the fearless Julius Caesar, with his arrogance on full display for all to see. Act 1 is full of whispers in dark rooms discussing dangerous matters.

In Act 2, the whispers become words. The conspirators debate the merits of their decision as they ultimately choose to move forward with the plot. Both Brutus and Caesar are chastised by their wives for similar reasons. And Caesar decides to go to the Senate despite his wife’s pleas, the priests warnings, and the soothsayers earlier warnings of the ides of March.

"The ides of March are come," Caesar mocks the soothsayer. "Ay, Caesar, but not gone," replies the man. Shortly thereafter, Caesar is stabbed on the steps of the capitol, proclaiming in disbelief, "Et tu, Brute? Then fall, Caesar." The conspirators try to calm an alarmed public while deciding who is on their side and who is not. At Caesar’s state funeral, things begin to go bad for the conspirators when they allow Mark Antony the final funeral oration and he turns the populace against the conspirators.

In Act IV, the whispers from Act 1 have now led to war between the conspirators and the new Triumvirate. Brutus and Cassius have a long, emotional fight, and we eventually learn that Brutus’ wife has committed suicide. The two sides prepare for war and the Ghost of Caesar visits Brutus during the night.

On the plains of Philippi, our play concludes with the two armies facing off. Marc Antony talks of tactics, whilst Cassius observes omens. Outmaneuvered and making mistakes, the conspirators take their own lives rather than face capture. Marc Antony notes that only Brutus was honorable and acted for the common good and ends the battle.

DID YOU KNOW?

Is the word for a custom, event, or object to a period to which it does not belong. The mentioning of doublets in Ancient Rome is anachronistic.
DRAMATIS PERSONAE

(The Latin way of saying the Cast of Characters)

THE CONSPIRATORS
Marcus Brutus (Brutus)
Cassius
Casca
Decius Brutus
Cinna

JULIUS CAESAR

TRIUMVIRS AFTER CAESAR’S DEATH
Octavius Caesar
Mark Antony

(Lepidus makes number three as in ‘tri’...but he didn’t make the cut of our show)

BRUTUS

LOYAL TO BRUTUS AND CASSIUS AFTER CAESAR’S DEATH
Titinius
Messala
Strato
Pindarus

CITIZENS
Flavius
Marullus
Cicero
Calpurnia (JC’s wife)
Soothsayer
Cinna the Poet
Cobbler
Carpenter

ANTONY

CASSIUS

This isn’t the whole cast...or even Shakespeare’s whole story. We’ve condensed 5 acts of awesomeness into one action-packed hour of JULIUS CAESAR. If you like the performance, read the whole play! We cut out a LOT of beautiful text and people like Brutus’ wife, Portia. They have a big scene together and we’ve written her completely out of our version because we wanted our story to be more plot driven instead of character driven. Do yourself a favor and curl up with a nice copy of the play. It’s great.
The Story of 3 Brothers, 2 Assassinations, and a Statue.

So, back in 1864, the people of New York decided to erect a statue of William Shakespeare in Central Park to honor the 300th anniversary of his birth. But, there was no GoFundMe in 1864. How in the world could the funds be raised for this awesome idea?

SEND IN THE BOOTH BROTHERS!

During this period of New York theatre, a trio of brothers—Edwin, John Wilkes, and Junius Jr.—were respected actors. They agreed to a benefit performance of JULIUS CAESAR at the Garden Theatre on November 25 to raise funds for the statue. This is the only time the three brothers appeared onstage together.

BUT WAIT!

DOES THIS GUY SEEM FAMILIAR?

You know, the guy who famously assassinated President Abraham Lincoln while he was taking in a theatrical performance at Ford’s Theatre in Washington D.C. on April 14, 1865...basically the Ides of April, a mere 5 months after the CAESAR benefit performance. He was reported to shout “Sic semper tyrannis” (Latin for “Thus always to tyrants,”) afterward; this phrase is believed to have been said by Brutus at Caesar’s assassination.

DID YOU KNOW?

Edwin was the finest actor of the Booth brothers. His wheelhouse? Shakespeare. He is thought to have been the finest Hamlet of the 19th century. The Booth Theatre in New York which opened in 1913, is named after him.

THAT’S RIGHT!

That is THE John Wilkes Booth.
QUICK FACT

If there are two things to say about Caesar they’re this:
1. He was a great writer and speaker.
2. He was a fearless conqueror.

VENI; VIDI; VICI.

This is Latin for “I came; I saw; I conquered.” Caesar penned this as a response to a very quick victory in 47BCE and is a perfect example of his style: it’s swift, eloquent, and perhaps arrogant? Or is it honorable and true? THIS is part of the Caesar divide.

HISTORICAL DOCUMENT OF THE PLAN:

Okay, this is obviously not a real document, but the plan is very real. In total, historians believe Caesar to have received 23 wounds (Shakespeare ups that to 33). It is believed that Casca’s blow hit Caesar’s chest, Decimus (our Decius) struck the ribs, Cassius landed a slash across Caesar’s face while Brutus is believed to have hit the thigh.

THE PLAN

1. Tillius Cimber will approach Caesar to plead for his exiled brother.

2. Cimber will hold Caesar by the toga.

(The signal: Cimber will pull Caesar’s toga off his shoulder.

3. Make sure everyone is in place in the circles.

Casca gets the first hit.

OOPS!

During the attack Cassius accidentally slashed Brutus’ hand.

The number of Senators involved in the conspiracy to kill Caesar. It was reported they formed two large circles around him before implementing the plan.
This troupe of six will perform all of the characters in the show! Instead of a brief bio, these six were asked the following: 1. Did you like Shakespeare in high school? If not, when did you get on the Shakespeare bandwagon? 2. Who are your favorite Shakespearean characters and/or what are your favorites in Shakespeare’s canon? 3. Who inspires you as an actor and why? 4. Tell me a silly or interesting fact about yourself!

**MEET THE PLAYERS**

**BRADLEY BEAMON**
Brutus, Cobbler, Cinna the Poet, Servant
I didn’t hate Shakespeare in High School but I didn’t spend a ton of time reading his works either. It was about my Sophomore year of College when I really dove into the Bard.

So tough. My favorite characters are a three-way tie between Sebastian from Twelfth Night, Brutus in Julius Caesar, and Prospero in the Tempest. For my favorite works, it’s also a three-way tie: Julius Caesar, King Lear, and King John.

My family (Mom, Dad, Sister—in—Law, Brother, and Girlfriend) is a major inspiration for me, because we’re all artists in our own way. I’ve also been inspired by my friend and mentor, Michael Kary, as well as many acting greats throughout history.

I have shaved my head for two different roles in my lifetime! And let me tell you, it gets chilly up there.

**BRANDON CARACO**
Casca, Octavius, Titinius, Servant
I wasn’t a fan until my senior year in 2015 when we read Macbeth. Previously I just understood Shakespeare but didn’t enjoy it. What I liked about Macbeth was watching the main character go to the dark side on his quest for power as well as the supernatural/magical elements. This Harry Potter fan sure loved that.

My favorite Shakespeare characters would have to be either Macbeth (obviously), the villainous Iago from Othello, or the witty Mercutio from Romeo and Juliet.

An actor who inspired me is Christian Bale. I admired his work as Batman in The Dark Knight trilogy so much so that Batman became my favorite hero. I respect his ability to transform his body and voice for his roles and how much energy he brings to his characters.

I’m from Southern California but moved to Arizona when I was 15. Being from California, I love beaches and have a great love for nature.

**JUSTUS BURKITT**
Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, Cicero
I loved it! By the time I started High School, I had been performing in Shakespeare plays for about 7 years. I started very young!

My favorite Shakespeare play is King Lear! As for characters, some of my favorites include Caliban from The Tempest, Beatrice from Much Ado About Nothing, and Cassius from (you guessed it) Julius Caesar.

My mom was the first actor to inspire me, and a lot of what I’ve learned comes from her. Beyond that, I’ve been influenced by so many great performances that it’s hard to narrow it down. One that comes to mind is Michael Clarke Duncan in The Green Mile. No actor has ever made me cry harder than he did in that movie.

One time I appeared on the TV show Westworld as a dead body!

**ALEX OLIVER**
Cassius, Carpenter, Plebian
I thought I did! I always read the leads when we studied the plays in class, but it wasn’t until I saw Shakespeare performed in college that I truly fell in love with his language and plays.

My favorite character in Shakespeare is Kent from King Lear; he is loyal, noble, and clever. He does everything he can to assist his king, even in disguise. I also love Festus from Twelfth Night, a fool with a sharp wit, but also a kindness you don’t see in Shakespeare’s other fools.

I’ve never had a specific role model in acting. Rather, I am continually inspired by the work my friends and fellow artists do every day. Everyone’s great effort putting together a show inspires me to do the best work I can every single day.

I am the only person in my family with red hair! Also the first play I was ever in was in my 4th grade production of Peter Pan, and I played Peter Pan!

**DEANNA MCMANAHAN**
Marulus, Decius, Messala, Plebian
I got into Shakespeare in High School. Reading Romeo and Juliet for English and doing scenes from Midsummer and Hamlet. I liked it but I didn’t fall in love until College.

Cleopatra. I know she is not exclusively a Shakespearean character but I love Antony and Cleopatra; she is a dream role. I adore Macbeth, Twelfth Night, Othello the list goes on and on!

My fellow performers. Nothing motivates me and inspires me more than passionate, talented co-workers.

I have a big background in musical theater and have run musical cabarets in both Florida and Arizona!

**NATALIE ANDREWS**
Flavius, Soothsayer, Cinna, Calpurnia, Pindarus, Strato
I loved Shakespeare in high school because I had a director and teacher who helped me understand the language and uncover the clues and meanings embedded in the text. The first time I really read and performed a Shakespeare play, it felt like I was in on some secret or cracking some code: the words still feel so relevant to me.

This question is so hard because I love the variety in Shakespeare’s characters and how they complement each other. If I had to choose favorites I’d pick Lady Macbeth, Juliet and Puck.

This changes constantly but right now, I am really inspired by Lauren Gunderson, who is actually a playwright. I love how she fuses Shakespearean themes into new scripts that speak to modern life. I am also really digging Donald Glover’s work recently because he is incredibly prolific as a writer, musician and actor and his work is witty, poignant, and defies expectations and genres.

My elbows don’t straighten. My family calls it “having crooked elbows,” and has resulted in many a frustrated dance teacher cry at me: “Natalie, straighten your arms!”