

Contents

INTRODUCING SHAKESPEARE 1

- About This Translation 1
- Line Counts 3
- Source of the Play 3
- Shakespeare's Life 4
- Shakespeare's Language 5
- Shakespeare's Theatre 7
- Stage Directions 8
- Transitions 9
- Solo Speeches 9
- Teaching Suggestions 10
- Additional Teaching Suggestions 10

SUMMARIES OF ACTS AND SCENES 12

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION 17

STAGING *JULIUS CAESAR* 24

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY 28

APPENDICES AND GLOSSARY 31

- I. Guide to Pronouncing Proper Names in *Julius Caesar* 32
- II. Shakespearean Time Line 35
- III. A Brief Look at Shakespeare's Source 37
- Glossary 39

INTRODUCING SHAKESPEARE

There is an aura of unreality about the plays of Shakespeare, and students feel this, although they may not be able to express their reactions precisely. They may say that Shakespeare's language is "too flowery" or that people in real life don't talk the way these characters do. And this is true. The people one meets in real life are not nearly as articulate as the characters in Shakespeare. It would probably be unbearable if the people one met at the bank and the supermarket, in school or during meetings spoke unrelievedly in the style of the great poets.

Shakespeare's characters lack the foggy-mindedness found in everyday life; they are concentrated and fully in command of their verbal resources. Shakespeare's is a world in which the brain and the heart and the tongue are directly connected. It's perhaps a world that doesn't exist, but what an interesting world it is, one in which people have fully realized their potential—for good and for evil. To have imagined such a world and to have put it on paper is Shakespeare's achievement. And it is why he is read and performed today.

Making Shakespeare's world accessible to students is the reason for this edition of *Julius Caesar*, a facing-pages translation with the original text on the left-hand side and a translation into contemporary English on the right. The translation of *Julius Caesar* is not meant to take the place of the original. After all, a translation is by its very nature a shadow of the original. This translation is an alternative to the notes usually included in modern editions. In many cases these notes interfere with the reading of the play. Whether alongside or below the original text, they break the rhythm of reading and frequently force the reader to turn back to an earlier page or jump ahead to a later one. Having a translation that runs parallel to the original, line for line, allows the reader to move easily from Elizabethan to contemporary English and back again. It's simply a better way to introduce Shakespeare.

Also, this translation is suitable for performance, where no notes are available to the audience. Admittedly, a well-directed and well-acted production can do much to clarify Shakespeare's language. And yet, there will be numerous references and lines whose meanings are not accessible on a first hearing. What, for instance, does Caesar mean when he asks Casca, "Doth not Brutus bootless kneel?"

ABOUT THIS TRANSLATION

Since 1807, when Charles and Mary Lamb published *Tales from Shakespeare*, adaptations of Shakespeare's plays have attempted, more or less successfully, to

broaden the audience for these plays—or perhaps, to restore to Shakespeare the full audience he had known in the seventeenth century. These days prose paraphrases of the original are offered to students. Insofar as they succeed, these paraphrases offer a kind of literal rendering of the original, largely stripped of metaphor and poetry. To read them by themselves, without reference to the original, would make you wonder why Shakespeare is still popular.

The translation in this edition aims to retain the feel and the rhythm of the original, but at the same time to be immediately comprehensible to modern audiences and readers, so that they can experience Shakespeare in much the same way the Elizabethans did. That means preserving the sound and the spirit of the original.

Here, for example is a passage taken from the second act of *Julius Caesar*. Brutus, in a soliloquy, ponders the justice of killing Caesar:

It is the bright day that brings forth the adder,
And that craves wary walking. Crown him that,
And then I grant we put a sting in him
That at his will he may do danger with.

The first line presents little difficulty, but the trouble begins in line two with *crave*, usually used today to indicate an intense desire for something. Also, the antecedent for *him* may need clarification.

To be effective and authentic, a translation into contemporary English should not only be immediately clear, but should have the ring of Shakespeare. The original and the modified parts should meld so seamlessly that, if you did not have the original at hand, you might think you were reading it:

It is the sun that makes the vipers hatch,
And calls for careful walking. Give Caesar a crown,
And then, I grant, we put a sting in him
So that, whenever he wishes, he may harm us.

Here, for comparison, is another approach to translating Shakespeare. Although clear to a modern reader, it does not have the feel and the sound of Shakespeare:

A bright day brings out the snakes,
And so you need to walk carefully.
If we crown him, that will give him such power
Over us that he can hurt us whenever he pleases.

This second translation is contemporary, not only in vocabulary, but in sound and style. It is easy to read, but it lacks the spirit of Shakespeare's work.

SOLO SPEECHES

There is another difference between the plays of Shakespeare and most modern ones: the solo speeches. These are the asides and the soliloquies in which a character reveals what is on his or her mind. Contemporary dramatists seem to feel that the solo speech is artificial and unrealistic. Oddly enough, modern novelists frequently use a variety of the solo speech. Some critics feel that this convention has given the novel extra power and depth, allowing writers to probe deeply into the motives of their characters. One thing is certain—Shakespeare’s plays without the solo speeches would not be as powerful as they are.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

There are several ways in which this edition of *Julius Caesar* can be used with students, but perhaps the most effective is to assign a long scene or several short scenes in the translation for reading as homework. Then, in going over this material in class, use the original. This way much valuable time can be saved. Students no longer have to struggle with understanding the basic story, and you can devote your time to providing insights and in-depth appreciation of the play.

For some students, of course, the original text will still represent a formidable obstacle. In those cases, you may want to use the translation as the basis of classroom presentation with carefully selected passages from the original to illustrate the points you are making. The great advantage of this edition is its flexibility in a variety of teaching situations.

ADDITIONAL TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

1. A kind of theatre game many directors use to help their actors understand the complexities of the characters in a drama like *Julius Caesar* is called “Collage.” To adapt it to classroom use, assign each student a character in *Julius Caesar*. It doesn’t matter if more than one student has the same character as long as they don’t confer. Each student must choose a color for the background, using colored paper or quickly coloring in a background. The color, of course, represents the character as the student perceives him or her. Most students are aware of the theories of colors and how they affect us, but even without such formal knowledge students are generally adept at choosing a color that suggests what their character is like.

Next, using magazines or newspapers or even simple drawings, each student creates a collage of objects, shapes, and scenery that together present all the student understands about the character he or she has been assigned.

SUMMARIES OF ACTS AND SCENES

ACT ONE

Scene 1

Flavius and Marullus, two tribunes or protectors of the people's rights, scold a group of workers for taking the day off. A cobbler explains they are celebrating the triumphant return of Caesar. When Marullus reminds them that they are honoring the slayer of their former hero Pompey, the workers disperse, and the tribunes agree to do what they can to check the people's enthusiasm for Caesar lest he become a tyrant.

Scene 2

Music plays as Caesar leads the procession to the place where the traditional Feast of the Lupercal race will be run. Mark Antony is to run in the race, and he is reminded by Caesar to touch Calpurnia with the strap he carries. Caesar is alluding to the Roman belief that a barren woman touched by the strap of a Lupercal runner will become fertile. A soothsayer warns Caesar to beware the ides of March (the middle of the month), but Caesar calls the man a dreamer. As Caesar moves on ahead, Brutus and Cassius remain behind, and Cassius tries to enlist Brutus against Caesar. When Caesar returns, he voices his mistrust of Cassius saying he has a "lean and hungry look." Later, when asked by Brutus and Cassius what all the shouting had been about, Casca explains that three times Antony has offered a crown to Caesar, and three times Caesar has refused it. Casca adds that Caesar swooned or fainted after refusing the crown a third time, but still Brutus and Cassius are suspicious that Caesar is ambitious to be king. They agree to meet again and discuss the problem, and Cassius gloats that he can convince Brutus to side with him.

Scene 3

Thunder and lightning and strange occurrences frighten the population. Several men who fear Caesar's rule meet and decide to go to Brutus and ask him to join in the conspiracy to stop Caesar. They prepare the way by having Cinna plant messages purportedly from Roman citizens where Brutus will find them, so that he will think he is being urged by the general public to act on their behalf against Caesar.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

ACT ONE

1. Why are the two Tribunes so angry with the workmen they encounter in the streets of Rome?

Comment: They are upset with the workers for taking the day off to celebrate the triumph of Caesar over their former hero Pompey. The Tribunes further fear that Caesar's popularity will lead to his being crowned as emperor and to the end of democracy in Rome.

2. What holiday is being celebrated at the time Caesar returns to Rome? Why is this holiday important to Caesar?

Comment: The Romans are celebrating the feast of Lupercal (the Lupercalia), an annual festival in honor of Lupercus, the god Pan. The rites connected with it had the dual purpose of purification and fertilization. The particular rite alluded to was the running of a race by young noblemen who carried leather thongs. Young noblewomen often stood where they could be struck by the thongs, in the hopes that if they were pregnant, they would have an easy delivery, and if barren, they would be made fertile. Caesar, having no direct heir, wanted his wife to become pregnant.

3. What is Caesar's reaction to the soothsayer's warning about the ides of March?

Comment: Caesar calls the soothsayer a dreamer and passes him by. Of course, Caesar cannot allow himself to appear frightened by or concerned with the warning before his men or the public.

4. What is the relationship between Brutus and Cassius?

Comment: They are brothers-in-law. They have been close friends for some time but lately Cassius has detected a coolness in Brutus' attitude toward him. Brutus explains this as the result of his own preoccupation with some inner turmoil.

Cassius sees in Brutus' troubled state of mind an opportunity to persuade Brutus to join with him in eliminating Caesar.

5. We learn that Mark Antony has offered the crown to Caesar three times and Caesar has refused three times. Why is Brutus still worried that Caesar will become a tyrant?

Comment: Brutus has also heard a report that Caesar swooned or fainted after refusing the crown, and that he came away sadly from the assembly. Brutus fears that Caesar's refusal of the crown was all for show, and that later he will accept or even seize the throne.

**APPENDIX I:
GUIDE TO PRONOUNCING PROPER NAMES IN *JULIUS CAESAR***

Aeneas	ē-NĒ-ŭs
Artemidorus	ÄR-te-mĭ-DŌ-rŭs
Ate	Ä-te
Brutus	BRŌŌ-tŭs
Calpurnia	kāl-PĒR-nĭ-ŭ
Casca	KÄS-kŭ
Cassius	KÄS-i-ŭs
Cato	KÄ-to
Cicero	SĪS-ŭ-ro
Cinna	SĪN-ŭ
Claudius	KLŌ-dĭ-ŭs
Clitus	KLĪ-tŭs
Colossus	kō-LŌS-ŭs
Decius	DĒ-shŭs
Erebus	ĔR-ē-bŭs

GLOSSARY

The following terms are taken from the translation of *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*. Act, scene, and line numbers are given in parentheses after the terms.

- Aeneas** (act 1, scene 2, line 118): legendary hero who carried his father Anchises from the burning city of Troy and subsequently sailed to Italy and founded Rome
- alchemy** (act 1, scene 3, line 165): medieval science concerned with turning lesser metals into gold
- Ate** (act 3, scene 1, line 290): Greek goddess of discord and destruction
- bird of night** (act 1, scene 3, line 26): owl
- Brutus** (act 1, scene 2, line 165): Lucius Junius Brutus who, in legend, drove out the ancient kings of Rome and helped found the Republic of Rome, and from whom Brutus claimed descent
- Cato** (act 2, scene 1, line 307): an orator and a statesman, he fought for Pompey in the civil war and committed suicide to avoid capture by Caesar; he was Portia's father
- Cicero** (act 1, scene 2, line 192): leading orator and statesman of Rome
- colossus** (act 1, scene 2, line 142): giant bronze statue of the sun-god Apollo whose legs, according to legend, spanned the harbor at Rhodes; one of the seven wonders of the world
- Cry Havoc** (act 3, scene 1, line 292): the order to kill without mercy, an order that only a king could give
- dogs of war** (act 3, scene 1, line 292): identified in Shakespeare's *Henry V* as famine, sword, and fire
- drachmas** (act 3, scene 2, line 247): silver coins; seventy-five drachmas was a large sum
- Erebus** (act 2, scene 1, line 87): dark region between earth and Hades, the underworld of classical mythology
- falling sickness** (act 1, scene 2, line 258): epilepsy, a disorder of the central nervous system, often marked by convulsive attacks
- Feast of Lupercal** (act 1, scene 1, line 68): originally, a festival in honor of Lupercus (the god Pan), protector of flocks and herds; later, the festival adopted by Rome to ward off evil spirits