

10th Standard - English

Julius Caesar Summary

The extracts given in this chapter cover an important part of William Shakespeare's play Julius Caesar in five Acts. These cover mainly those parts in which Julius Caesar is murdered by the conspirators, including Brutus, famous for his uprightness. These also show how Antony turns the tables against them in a very clever manner.

Something unusual seen by Caesar and dreamed by his wife
The opening scene is of Caesar's house. Caesar is to go to the Senate where he is going to be crowned. Caesar says that there has been a great disturbance on the earth and in the sky tonight. Calpurnia, Caesar's wife, has cried three times in her sleep that they murder Caesar. Calpurnia enters.

What that unusual is !

Calpurnia asks Caesar that he shall not go out of the house today. But Caesar says that the troubles shall vanish when they see Caesar's face. But Calpurnia is serious. She reasons out why Caesar should not go out. She has been frightened by what the watchman has seen as some unnatural acts. A lioness has given birth to her cubs in the streets. Graves have opened up and thrown the dead out. Fearful warriors have been seen fighting in the clouds. Blood has been seen falling upon the Capitol. Horses have neighed and dead men have groaned. Calpurnia is terribly afraid because of these ill-omens.

Caesar's reaction and Decius Brutus's entry

But Caesar does not fear because of these fearful things. He says that cowards die many times before their deaths. The brave die only once. Caesar finds it humorous if he stays at home as per the wish of Calpurnia. Decius Brutus enters to fetch Caesar to the senate- house. Caesar tells him to tell the senators that he won't come to it. But Brutus wants to know the reason. Caesar tells him that Calpurnia saw in her dream Caesar's statue with hundred spouts. Blood poured forth from them. Many Romans bathed their hands in it with a smile.

Brutus's new meaning

Hearing this, Brutus skilfully and cleverly gives a new twist to this dream. He calls it auspicious. He states that the Romans' bathing their hands in Caesar's blood signifies that Rome shall be greater and powerful. His blood shall be a thing of great respect. Besides this if Caesar doesn't go, the senators' minds may change to make him a king. This affects Caesar and he gets ready to go to the senate- house.

Scene at the Capitol—Caesar's murder

The scene now shifts to the Capitol. Cimber, as per the plans of the conspirators, bends low before Caesar. He pleads for his brother who has been banished by Caesar. Caesar says that if Cimber flatters for his brother, he would spurn him like a dog because he can't recall his brother as per the laws. Brutus requests on Cimber's behalf. Cassius, the conspirator, also pleads. But Caesar doesn't move. He says that he is like the northern star. He shall remain constant like it in his decision about Cimber's brother. At this, all the conspirators stab Caesar. When Brutus also stabs, Caesar says out of shock, Et tu, Brute ! ("You, too, Brutus" !)

Mark Antony enters

The conspirators cry out 'Liberty, freedom and enfranchisement'. Mark Antony enters. He is shocked to see mighty Caesar dead. He is greatly moved at this murder. He pleads before the conspirators to kill him also as it is the best time for him to die with Caesar. But Brutus replies that they can't kill him as they have murdered Caesar for the well-being of Rome. Cassius tells Antony that he is as dear to them as others.

Antony's new move

Antony observes the situation and at once starts flattering them. He offers peace with the conspirators but begs to be pardoned by Caesar's dead body in doing so. Cassius asks Antony about his allegiance. Antony replies cleverly that he is with them though he was swayed from the point by looking down on Caesar's dead body.

Permission to Antony

Antony has other plans. He seeks permission from Brutus to produce Caesar's body to the market-place and perform the funeral rites thereafter. Brutus agrees to it.

However, Cassius asks Brutus not to permit him because the people may be moved against them by Antony's speech. But Brutus says that he will speak first and tell the people why they murdered Caesar. Cassius says that he doesn't like all that. Brutus tells Antony not to blame them for Caesar's death in his funeral speech. All the conspirators go out.

Antony's warning for the future

Antony asks to be pardoned by Caesar's dead body calling it as the 'bleeding piece of earth' and conspirators as 'butchers'. He curses the conspirators that they killed 'the noblest man'. He forecasts that civil war shall be there in Italy. Blood and destruction shall be common. Seeing that mothers shall shudder in fear. Caesar's ghost shall wander for revenge and the dead shall cry for burial.

Speech by Brutus, Antony etc

The scene shifts now to the market-place. Brutus, Antony etc, are there with Caesar's dead body. There have gathered lots of people to hear them speak. Brutus tells the people why they killed Caesar for the well-being of the country. He also tells that Caesar had become ambitious and had to be assassinated. The people approve of what they have done to Caesar.

Antony's speech

Now it is Antony's turn to address the people. He says to the Romans that he has come there not to praise Caesar but to bury him. He very cleverly tells them that if Caesar was ambitious he has rightly been murdered. He calls Brutus and others 'honourable'. He says that Caesar brought many captives to Rome. He thrice refused the crown on the Lupercal. Was he ambitious? The people now realize that Caesar was not ambitious as pointed out by Brutus.

About Caesar's will

Antony continues his speech to the Roman people. He says that if he moves the hearts of the people to mutiny, he would do Brutus wrong. But he won't do so. But he has Caesar's will in his hands. He doesn't read it because the people shall dip their handkerchiefs in Caesar's blood after hearing it. They would beg a hair of Caesar as a legacy because Caesar has left everything of his to the people. The people now insist that Antony should read Caesar's will.

Showing of Caesar's will

Antony asks the people to make a ring round Caesar's body and shed tears and he would show them his will. He says that Caesar wore that mantle when he won the Nervii but Cassius ran his dagger through it. Brutus was Caesar's angel and he too stabbed him out of sheer ingratitude.

Mob getting sentimental

The people get sentimental looking at Caesar's wounds. Antony calls for revenge through slaying, killing, burning etc. But the next moment he taunts saying that he should not incite them as the conspirators have done the honourable deed.

Mob gets angry

Antony admits that he does not have wit, worth and good utterance like that of Brutus. But he speaks plainly. This shall put a tongue in every wound of Caesar and every stone of Rome shall mutiny. The people are now enraged and they say that they shall burn the house of Brutus. They now are in Antony's total favour and get ready to rebel against the conspirators. But Antony reminds them of Caesar's will. They wait to hear about it.

Mob is incited

Antony now reads the will. He says that Caesar has given in his will seventy-five silver coins to every Roman. He has given the people his private gardens, orchards etc, on the side of Tiber river. This is enough to fire the hearts of the people. They say that a great man like Caesar shall never come. They decide to bury Caesar's body in the holy place. They then rise to burn the traitors' houses.