

SHAKESPEARE - 18BEN61C

UNIT II

JULIUS CAESAR

ACT I

- The streets of Rome are thronged with people of all classes.
- They are all anxious to witness Caesar's triumphant return to the city after defeating Pompey.
- Their holiday mood is rudely interrupted by the tribunes, Marullus and Flavius.
- Marullus chides the commoners and bids them run to their houses.
- The citizens slink away and the two tribunes resolve to strip from the statues of Caesar all decorations.
- The tribunes are against Caesar because he wants to become the king.
- The Roman tradition was republican government by the people.
- So, the tribunes want to uphold against the royal ambitions of Caesar

- The tribunes have hardly set off on their self-appointed task.
- Caesar enters in procession, a soothsayer calls upon him to beware of the Ides of March. But, Caesar dismisses him as a dreamer.
- Cassius and Brutus linger in conversation. Cassius poisons the mind of Brutus against Caesar.
- Casca is left alone and he resolves to throw in at Brutus' window, papers hinting at what Rome expects of him. He contrasts Caesar's ambitions with how much the name of Brutus is valued in them.
- Cassius feels that he can win over Brutus to join the plot he has in mind.

- Casca and the senator Cicero meet at night in a street in Rome.
- There is a violent storm raging with thunder and lightning.
- Casca is really agitated by the storm and the portents accompanying it. He tells Cicero that the gods are bent on destroying the world.
- Casca has seen a slave with burning arms who remained unscorched, a rampant lion near the Capitol, and owls hooting and shrieking at midday in the market place.
- Cicero asks Casca whether Caesar is going to the Capitol the next morning, and Casca confirms that he has sent word “he would be there tomorrow”.
- Cassius tells Casca that the raging elements give warning to Rome that it has allowed one man to become too powerful.

- Cassius regrets that the people of Rome have become willing slaves to Caesar's ambitions.
- Casca is pleased, since Brutus sits high in all the people's hearts and his support will add virtue to their plot against Caesar.
- Casca, Metellus Cimber, Brutus and Trebonius become a part of the conspiracy.
- This scene is important because of the supernatural occurrences.
- An atmosphere of horror is produced in the play.
- The conspiracy has progressed.

ACT- II

- Brutus gives way to his troubled thoughts. In a soliloquy, Brutus expresses an extreme horror of the idea of kingship.
- He has no personal grudge against Caesar, but he feels that Caesar's death will be for the general good of Rome.
- The conspirators, led by Cassius and Casca enter.
- Cassius has suggested that they take a mutual oath of faithfulness, but Brutus does not agree.

It is enough for him that they are true Romans and that their cause is just.

- Brutus tells them to bear themselves fresh and merrily and not to allow their expressions to reveal their intentions.
- Brutus is then Joined by his Wife, Portia.
- She claims her right as a wife to know what has been troubling her husband.
- But he fails to tell the conspiracy against Caesar.
- The Thunder and Lightning are continuing as Caesar enters a room of his house.
- His Wife Calpurnia had bad dreams portending his murder.

- She urges him not to venture forth that morning.
- She tells him that there have been reports of horrid sights in the streets of Rome.
- Graves have yielded up their dead and ghosts have squealed, the groans of dying men have been heard, and blood has been dripping on the walls of the Capitol.
- But Caesar tells that he does not fear death, which is inevitable.
- Decius is able to convince Caesar to go to the senate.
- Ashamed at having even listened to Calpurnia's foolishness, Caesar calls for his stately robes as a senator.
- Antony arrives to conduct him to the Capitol.
- Caesar may be self-willed but he is humane and has gracious manners.

- In a street near the Capitol, Artemidorous stands reading a paper he has written, which contains details of the conspiracy and names of the plotters.
- He tells that there is a chance that he will outfit his enemies.
- Caesar proudly refuses to read the paper, because Artemidorous tells him that its subject is a personal matter.
- He will deal with the state matters first.

Act - III

- Caesar is followed by the conspirators.
- Metellius Cimber begs Caesar to recall his brother, Publius Cimber from banishment.
- The other conspirators also plead for him, but Caesar arrogantly refuses to hear them.
- It is now time for the conspirators to strike Caesar.
- Casca stabs Caesar and the others plunge their daggers into him.
- Brutus stabs him and Caesar falls muttering, “you too, Brutus” and dies.

- Then the conspirators decide to go to the public platforms and proclaim “liberty, freedom and enfranchisement”.
- Brutus and Cassius try to quell the tumult by shouting that liberty has been preserved by the death of the ambitious Dictator.
- Brutus calls upon his fellow- conspirators to bathe their hands in the Dictator’s blood.
- Antony asks to be assured of safe conduct if he returns to the Senate House to be told why Caesar deserved death.
- Brutus instructs the servant to tell Antony to come to them; he shall be satisfied and depart unharmed.
- Antony is filled with the deepest sorrow on seeing Caesar’s dead body.

- Antony gets the permission of Brutus to speak at Caesar's funeral.
- He foretells that their deed will bring all the horrors of civil war upon Rome.
- A messenger comes and announces the arrival of Caesar's nephew, Octavius Caesar in Rome.
- Brutus tells the citizens that he killed Caesar because he loved Rome more.
- The citizens want to crown Brutus in the place of Caesar.
- Now, Antony delivers his oration and appeals to the emotions of the people.
- There are cries of rage from the assembled citizens, who denounce Brutus and his men as treacherous villains.
- Octavius enters Rome and at the same time Brutus and Cassius fly from the city.
- The citizens in fury slay Cinna, the poet. They mistake him for Cinna, the conspirator.

ACT- IV

- Antony has now joined Octavius Caesar and Lepidus. An army has been raised under the three generals against the conspirators.
- Lepidus is used as a mere tool by the other two.
- Brutus and Cassius complain of wrongs suffered at the hands of the other.
- Cassius offers his sword to Brutus to kill him. At last he reconciles with Cassius. Both admit their faults.
- Brutus tells Cassius of the death of Portia.
- Brutus, accompanied by his servant, Lucius and his friend, Lucilius, greets Titinius and Pindarus, who have just arrived from Cassius' camp located nearby.

- Messala brings reports that Antony and Octavius are advancing with a mighty power in the direction of Phillipi.
- Brutus endeavours to find in music and reading a little relief from the cares which distress him.
- He is disturbed by the appearance of Caesar's ghost.
- The ghost tells him that it will meet him at Phillippi.
- The appearance of the ghost adds to the tension and excitement.
- It contributes to the atmosphere of horror in the play.

ACT- V

- In the battle of Phillippi, Brutus and Cassius decide what to do in the event of defeat.
- They converse on the topic of suicide.
- The battle begins. Brutus has success against Octavius.
- But, the forces of Cassius have been defeated by Antony.
- Cassius sends Titinius to find the exact position of the battle.
- He then asks Pindarus, a slave to report to him what he sees there.
- Titinius is surrounded by friends who rejoice at the victory of Brutus over Octavius.

- But, Pindarus mistakes the friends for enemies .
- He reports to Cassius that Titinius has been taken prisoner.
- Cassius believes that Titinius is dead. He asks Pindarus to stab him.
- Titinius, returning safe and finding Cassius dead kills himself.
- Brutus finds them both dead and resolves to make one more attempt to win the day.
- He hurries to the battlefield to try his fortune.
- Failing again, he begs three followers to kill him. But, they refuse to kill him.

- Brutus turns to Strato and induces him to hold the sword and Brutus runs on his sword.
- His last words before he dies call on Caesar's spirit to be still since it has been avenged.
- Antony eulogizes Brutus. He was the noblest of all the conspirators.
- Octavius gives orders for Brutus' funeral service with due honour.
- Octavius goes off with Antony to decide which of their men deserve special awards for their part in the great victory.