



Julius Caesar¹

*Background:

Did Julius Caesar know he was going to be assassinated? Was there a single killer or were dozens of men involved? What were the reasons for the assassination? What events led to the death of the great Julius Caesar? You will answer these questions as we look back at one of history's greatest crimes. Using evidence gathered from the crime scene, testimony of those involved, and later historical writings we will explain a 2,000 year old murder.



***How We Read Sources In History: You should think about the following three things when reading sources: Context, Message, Significance...CMS!**

C: Context – When, and by whom was the source created? Any potential bias by the author?

M: Message – What does the source say? What are the main ideas? What is the author trying to convey?

S: Significance – What is the importance of this source for helping you understand the time period or event being studied? How does it help you answer the historical questions you are pursuing?

*Directions:

- Start by reading the questions below so you have an idea about what you should be looking at/for in the sources.
- Actively read the following 12 pieces of source information about the murder of Julius Caesar. Feel free to **mark the texts** and **write in the margins**.
- After reading each source, respond to the statement, “From this source we learn....” in the space provided.
- Continue until you have read all sources, then respond to the following questions.

***Questions (Answer in complete sentences on the back of this paper.) Be sure to integrate source material into your answers.**

1. What are some of the concerns people in these sources have about Caesar?
2. What happened to Caesar? Reconstruct as much of the timeline as possible using the sources.
3. Why do you think Caesar was assassinated?
4. How many Senators do you think were involved? Who specifically was involved? Why?
5. What evidence is there that Caesar knew the assassination was going to happen and why do you think Caesar ignored this information?
6. What happened as a result of the assassination?
7. Which sources seem the **most reliable** and **helpful**; which seem **least reliable** and **helpful**? Give reasons to support your thinking.

Answer the following questions after reading and analyzing the source information provided. Be sure to integrate source material into your answers.

1. What are some of the concerns people in these sources have about Caesar?
2. What happened to Caesar? Reconstruct as much of the timeline as possible using the sources.
3. Why do you think Caesar was assassinated?
4. How many Senators do you think were involved? Who specifically was involved? Why?
5. What evidence is there that Caesar knew the assassination was going to happen and why do you think Caesar ignored this information?
6. What happened as a result of the assassination?
7. Which sources seem the **most reliable** and **helpful**; which seem **least reliable** and **helpful**? Give reasons to support your thinking.

Source 1 – Senator Gistinius Testimony

“A few days ago we in the Senate offered the great Julius Caesar **deification**—we offered to make him a god! There was no greater honor we could possibly have given him. He had complete control of Rome and this honor would ensure that none in this world would ever challenge him.

However, when we presented him with this honor on the floor of the Senate, he refused to even stand from his chair to receive it! There is nothing one can imagine that would be more insulting. Here we were the Senate of Rome, honoring this man and he would not even rise to acknowledge it. He gave us no reason for his refusal. What were we to think? Obviously Caesar has no interest in the Senate. Clearly he intends to rule without even consulting us. Rome has been a republic for centuries but he wants to return us to empire. This man wouldn't even stand to recognize the honor we wanted to give him!”

From this source we learn _____

Source 2 – Plutarch, Roman Historian

“Caesar's refusal to stand for the Senate led to great controversy. Caesar was suffering from a type of mental illness and when he realized how he had offended them he stood up, drew back his toga to show his neck and yelled, ‘Kill me now, I won't resist!’

But afterwards he made his disease an excuse for his behavior, saying that those with his mental illness do not usually remain steady when they stand and speak to many people and that he would be greatly embarrassed if that happened. However, what he said was not true; actually he very much wanted to rise and receive the Senate, but one of his friends (as they say), or rather one of his flatterers, Cornelius Balbus, stopped him, saying, ‘Remember that you are Caesar and you should be seen as their superior.’”

From this source we learn _____

Source 3 – Two Warnings to Caesar

(The following note was found in Caesar's hand after his assassination. It was written by Calpurnia, Caesar's wife.)

“My Lord! You must not go to the Senate house today. I have had a terrible nightmare! In it you were lying dead on the floor. Please, I beg of you, stay home.”

(The following was told to Caesar by a fortune teller in Rome named Spurinna.)

“The oracles tell of blood on this day, the Ides of March. Caesar, you must be careful today.”
Caesar later laughed at Spurinna and called him a false-prophet because the Ides of March had come and nothing bad had happened to him. Spurinna replied, “They had truly come, but they had not gone.”

From these sources we learn _____

Source 4 – Testimony of Augustus Caesar (adopted son of Julius Caesar) after the Assassination

“Citizens of Rome, you have seen how corrupt and weak the Senate has become. They have murdered my uncle, the great Julius Caesar. You know that everything he did was for the people of Rome! It was he who protected us from the invaders while the Senators bickered among themselves. They were simply jealous that he accomplished in a short time what they could not do in many years.

You have made the right decision in appointing me leader. Rome needs an emperor who will protect her! I will not wait for the Senate to act. From now on decisions will be made quickly and with the authority that only a true Emperor can provide! Never again will Rome be weak. There will always be a Caesar to lead her!"

From this source we learn _____

Source 5 – Testimony of Tyrannus, Caesar’s Bodyguard

“Three days ago Caesar fired me along with his other bodyguards. He told us he would be traveling on his own. We insisted that he keep us around to protect him. I don’t know what he is thinking. Maybe he is beginning to believe that he truly is a god and nobody can hurt him anyways or maybe he is just simply tired of being followed all the time. This is especially strange, based on the threats that have been heard from Cassius.

One of the other guards told me he heard Caesar say that he didn’t want to live anymore because of his sickness. I don’t know if this is true or not, but either way it seems very odd. If Caesar simply wants his privacy I hope he will stay home because of all the whispers of conspiracy going around.”

From this source we learn _____

Source 6 – Marcus Brutus, one of Caesar’s Friends Who Betrayed Him

In the weeks before the assassination, graffiti was found on the tombs of Marcus Brutus’ ancestors. While it is unclear who wrote the messages it is clear they were intended for Brutus. Brutus and Caesar were very close and some people were speculating that Brutus may have in fact been Caesar’s son. Brutus was a well-respected Senator. If he chose to take part in the assassination, the conspiracy would gain a great deal of popular support. The following is the graffiti found on a Roman Tomb.

“CITIZEN BRUTUS. YOUR GRANDFATHER HELPED TO CREATE THIS GREAT REPUBLIC. WILL YOU SIT BY WHILE THIS MAN CAESAR DESTROYS IT? YOU MUST STAND AGAINST THIS TYRANNY. NO MAN SHOULD BE THE SOLE LEADER OF ROME. THE SENATE IS WHAT MAKES US A REPUBLIC! LIKE YOUR GRANDFATHER, YOU MUST STAND UP AND TAKE WHATEVER MEANS NECESSARY TO PRESERVE YOUR MOTHER, ROME. IF THAT MEANS CAESAR MUST BE KILLED, THEN SO BE IT!”

From this source we learn _____

Source 7 – Cassius

“Yes, it is true that Caesar pardoned me after the war (the civil war fought in Rome). We were fighting on opposite sides and, well.....he won. He ‘graciously’ allowed me back into the Senate to serve with him. At least, that is what he wanted people to think. If Caesar truly had forgiven me I would not have been passed by for a promotion not once, but twice.

I know that he was simply trying to buy my support. He wanted to keep me on his side because he knows that my position is right. The republic should live, not an Empire. If he thinks pardoning me will make me change my mind he is crazy. Caesar’s goal is to destroy the Senate and live as a king. This is Rome! We have no king! He doesn’t care about the people; he only cares about himself.

Good Romans, we cannot allow this man to destroy what our fathers have built. He must be stopped!"

From this source we learn _____

Source 8 – Testimony of a Roman Citizen Before the Assassination

"Dude, let me tell you...Caesar is THE MAN! He hooked all us poor people up with some serious cash. Those punk Senators were all-like, 'He's only doing that so the people will make him emperor' and stuff but I'm like, 'No way, Caesar is just cool like that.' All those Senators do is sit around and argue all day. How about those lazy fools try getting a real job and then see what's up? I work all day and I still ain't got enough to feed my kids.

Things are tough around here these days. These dang barbarians are always attacking and causing problems. I can't wait for Caesar to do his thing. He is the only who can possibly keep us safe and get Rome back on-track.

From this source we learn _____

Source 9 – Testimony of Luciano Garafano, Investigator

"I have conducted multiple simulations of Caesar's murder. We know from the autopsy that he suffered 23 knife wounds but strangely only 5 are described in detail. It is also interesting to note that Marcus Brutus was also wounded in the attack. We began by testing with 23 attackers. This led to complete chaos. There was simply no way for all 23 men to strike Caesar at the same time. So, this of course led to the question of how they might have timed their attacks to make it work. Were there waves of attackers perhaps with only a few men attacking at once and then more coming in? Or, possibly, was the conspiracy smaller than we believed?

If only a few were directly involved perhaps the others were used to hold back the rest of the Senators. This would make some sense, as many of the Senators had been appointed by Caesar and would have wanted to protect him. It is also possible, however, that with only 5 attackers things could have simply happened so fast that no one had a chance to stop it. However, if Brutus was involved in the attack personally this would imply there were many attackers because the confusion may have led to the wound on his hand."

From this source we learn _____

Source 10 – Nicolaus of Damascus, a Friend of Herod the Great (Roman Governor)

Nicolaus of Damascus wrote his account of the murder of Julius Caesar a few years after the event after traveling to Rome and interviewing people who were there when Caesar was killed.

"... Caesar's friends were alarmed by certain rumors and tried to stop him from going to the Senate-house, and so did his doctors because he was suffering one of his occasional dizzy spells (Caesar had epilepsy). His wife, Calpurnia, especially was frightened by dreams she had and was clinging to him to not allow him to leave that day. But one of the conspirators named Brutus, who was Caesar's friend, came up and said, 'What is this, Caesar? Are you the kind of man who pays attention to a woman's dreams and to the gossip of stupid men, and to insult the Senate by not going out today, even though they have honored you and have summoned you today?' This convinced Caesar and he left.

The Senate rose in respect for his position when they saw him entering. Those who were to have a part in the plot stood near him. Right next to him went Tillius Cimber, whose brother had been exiled by Caesar. Under a pretext of a humble request on behalf of his brother, Cimber approached and grasped the mantle of his toga, seeming to want to make a move with his hands upon Caesar. Caesar wanted to get up and use his hands, but was prevented by Cimber and became exceedingly annoyed.

That was the moment for the men to set to work. All quickly unsheathed their daggers and rushed at him. First, Servilius Casca struck him with the point of the blade on the left shoulder a little above the collar-bone... Caesar rose to defend himself, and in the uproar Casca shouted out in Greek to his brother. He heard him and drove his sword into Caesar's ribs. After a moment, Cassius made a slash at his face, and Decimus Brutus stabbed him in the side. While Cassius Longinus was trying to give him another blow, he missed and struck Marcus Brutus on the hand...

Under the mass of wounds, he fell at the foot on Pompey's statue. Everyone wanted to have some part in the murder so they all struck his body as it lay there, until, wounded thirty-five times, he breathed his last."

From this source we learn _____

Source 11 – Roman Coin

This coin was minted in 44 B.C., the year Julius Caesar was murdered. The inscription says CAESAR: DICT PERPETUO (Caesar, Dictator for Life). It shows Caesar wearing a laurel wreath on his head, a symbol of victory and peace. Roman emperors wore these instead of gold crowns so people wouldn't think of them as a king.

From this source we learn _____



Source 12 – Suetonius, a Roman Historian

"As he took his seat, the conspirators gathered around him as if to pay their respects, and strait-a-way Tillius Cimber, who had taken the lead, came nearer as though to ask something; and when Caesar gestured for him to go away, Cimber grabbed his toga on both shoulders. When Caesar cried, 'Why this violence!' one of the Cascas stabbed him from one side just below the throat. Caesar caught Casca's arm and stabbed it with his stylus (like a pen), but as he tried to leap to his feet, he was stopped by another wound. When he saw he was surrounded by people with daggers, he pulled his head into his robe and also covered his feet as he fell to the ground. He was stabbed with twenty three wounds, without saying a word, but let out a groan at the first stab. Some have written that when Marcus Brutus rushed at him, he said in Greek, 'You too, my child?'" All the conspirators ran away and he lay there dead for a while until finally three common slaves put him on a litter (a vehicle containing a bed or seat) and carried him home with one arm hanging down."

From this source we learn _____