***Julius Caesar -* Discussion Guide**

William Shakespeare wrote this play in 1599

The Play is Set in 44 BC

**Objectives**: Understanding the power of the spoken word.

Understanding Ethos, Pathos, and Logos

Cultural Literacy of a Classic Literature

**Directions**:” Mr. Ferg will discuss the first few acts of ***Julius Caesar*** and then we will focus on the major speeches in this play. There will likely be a Julius Caesar quiz that will include information/quotes discussed today. **Specifically pay attention to the quotes in bold type or anything that has a \* by it.**

**Leadership Theme**: One of the themes of this play is leadership. What are traits / characteristics of a good leader? Does a leader have to physically look like a leader? What relationship does one’s physical condition, and/or athletic ability may have on his or her leadership abilities. Refer to historical and current leaders who dealt with questions about their leadership abilities (e.g. Franklin D. Roosevelt and his battle with polio, Gerald Ford and his stumbles etc)?

**ACT 1**

***Note***: Caesar is returning home from winning more military victories. The first scene is the play is set on **February 15**, which is the “**Feast of Lupercal.”** This is an ancient Roman festival where animal sacrifices are made in the hopes of fertile agriculture and fertile women! Julius Caesar and his wife had been unable to have a child. During the “Feast of Lupercal” the men play a lot of sports/games. The scene begins with Antony (Caesar’s best friend) about to be in a running race… probably naked.)

**FLAVIUS**

Hence! Home, you idle creatures get you home. Is this a holiday?

**MURELLUS\***

Why would you celebrate it? What victory does he bring home? What foreign lands has he conquered and captive foreigners chained to his chariot wheels? **You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things! You hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome, didn’t you know Pompey?** Many times you climbed up on walls and battlements, towers and windows—even chimney tops—with your babies in your arms, and sat there patiently all day waiting to see great Pompey ride through the streets of Rome. And when you caught a glimpse of his chariot, didn’t you shout so loud that the river Tiber shook as it echoed? And now you put on your best clothes? And now you take a holiday? And now you toss flowers in the path of Caesar, who comes in triumph over Pompey’s defeated sons? Go home! Run to your houses, fall upon your knees, and pray to the gods to spare you the pain that you deserve for such ingratitude.

***Soothsayer***\* (Note: This is an example of foreshadowing.)

**Beware the Ides of March**!

**CAESAR\***

**He is a dreamer. Let us leave him. Pass**.

**BRUTUS**

Why are they shouting? I’m afraid the people have made Caesar their king.

**Cassius\***:

“**And since you know you can see yourself best by reflection, I’ll be your mirror and show you**.”

**CASSIUS**:

**Aye, do you fear it**? Then I have to assume you don’t want him to be king.

**Cassius:**

I’d rather not live at all than live to worship a man as ordinary as myself. I was born as free as Caesar. So were you. We both have eaten as well, and we can both endure the cold winter as well as he.

**CAESAR**\*

**Let me have men about me that are fat**;  
Sleek-headed men and such as sleep o' nights:  
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;  
He thinks too much: such men are dangerous

**CASCA**

I can’t really explain what I saw: it was mere foolery**; I saw Mark Antony offer him a crown**;--yet 'twas not a crown neither, 'twas one of these coronets;--and, as I told you, he offered him the crown once and he refused it. Then he offered it to him again; then he put it by again: but, to my thinking, he was reluctant to take his hands off of it. **And then he offered it the third time;** he put it the third time by: and still as he refused it, the rabblement hooted and clapped their chapped hands and threw up their sweaty night-caps and uttered such a deal of stinking breath because **Caesar refused the crown** that it had almost choked

**CASCA\***

If I told you that I understood Greek I’d be lying, but those that understood him smiled at one another and shook their heads; but, **for mine own part**, **it was Greek to me**. I could tell you more news too: Marullus and Flavius, for pulling scarfs off Caesar's images, are put to silence. Fare you well.

***Act I, SC*ENE III.** (***The night before the Ides of March****.)*

**CASCA**

Indeed, they say the senators tomorrow Mean to establish Caesar as a king; And he shall wear his crown by sea and land, In every place, save here in Italy.

**BRUTUS**

Our action will seem too bloody if we cut off Caesar’s head and then hack at his arms and legs too, Caius Cassius—because Mark Antony is merely one of Caesar’s arms. It’ll look like we killed Caesar out of anger and Mark Antony out of envy. Let’s be sacrificers but not butchers, Caius. We’re all against what Caesar stands for, and there’s no blood in that. Oh, how I wish we could oppose Caesar’s spirit—his overblown ambition—and not hack up Caesar himself! But, unfortunately, Caesar has to bleed if we’re going to stop him. **Noble friends, let’s kill him boldly but not with anger**. Let’s carve him up like a dish fit for the gods, not chop him up like a carcass fit for dogs. Let’s be angry only long enough to do the deed, and then let’s act like we’re disgusted by what we had to do. This will make our actions seem practical and not vengeful. **If we appear calm to the people, they’ll call us surgeons rather than murderers**. **As for Mark Antony—forget him. He’ll be as useless as Caesar’s arm after Caesar’s head is cut off**.

**CASSIUS:**

But I’m still afraid of him, because the deep-rooted love he has for Caesar—

**DECIUS\*:**

Don’t worry about that. If he’s reluctant, I can convince him. He loves to hear me tell him how men can be snared by flatterers, just like unicorns can be captured in trees, elephants in holes, and lions with nets. **When I tell him he hates flatterers, he agrees, just at the moment when I’m flattering him the mos**t.

Let me work on him. I can put him in the right mood, and I’ll bring him to the Capitol.

**Note: Today is March 15…The ides of March.**

**CAESAR\***

**Cowards die many times before their deaths. The brave experience death only once.** Of all the strange things I’ve ever heard, it seems most strange to me that men fear death, given that death, which can’t be avoided, will come whenever it wants.

**CAESAR**

The gods do this to test my bravery. Caesar should be a beast without a heart if he should stay at home today out of fear. And Caesar shall go forth.

**CALPHURNIA\***

Alas, my lord **your wisdom is consumed in confidence**. Please stay home today.

**METELLUS**

Is there no voice worthier than my own to appeal to Caesar to repeal the order that my brother be banished?

**BRUTUS**

*(kneeling)* I kiss your hand, but not in flattery, Caesar. I ask you to repeal Publius Cimber’s banishment immediately.

**CAESAR**

What, even you, Brutus?

**CASSIUS**

*(kneeling)* Pardon him, Caesar, pardon him. I fall to your feet to beg you to restore Publius Cimber to citizenship.

**CAESAR\***

I could be convinced if I were like you. If I could beg others to change their minds, begging would convince me, too. **But I’m as constant as the northern star**, whose stable and stationary quality has no equal in the sky. The sky shows countless stars. They’re all made of fire, and each one shines. But only one among all of them remains in a fixed position.

**CASCA\***

**Speak, hands, for me**!

**CAESAR\***

**Et tu, Brute?** Then fall, Caesar! *(he dies)*

**CINNA**

Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead! Run and proclaim it in the streets.

**CASSIUS**

Some should go to the public platforms and cry out, “Liberty, freedom, and democracy!”

**BRUTUS**

*(An* ***aside*** *to* CASSIUS*)* With your permission, I’ll stand on the platform first and explain the reason for Caesar’s death. What Antony says, I’ll announce, he says only by our permission and by our conviction that Caesar should be honored with all the usual and lawful ceremonies. It’ll help us more than hurt us.

**BRUTUS**

Mark Antony, take Caesar’s body**.** You will not blame us in your funeral speech, but will say all the good you want to about Caesar and that you do it by our permission. Otherwise, you’ll have no role at all in his funeral. And you’ll speak on the same platform as I do, after I’m done.

**ANTONY\***

**Oh, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth, that I am meek and gentle with these butchers! Thou art the ruins of the noblest man that ever lived in the tide of times**. I predict that a curse will fall upon the bodies of these men. And Caesar’s ghost, searching for revenge with the goddess*Ate* by his side, just up from Hell, will cry in the voice of a king, “Havoc!” and **unleash the dogs of war**!

***Brutus\****

**As Caesar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it;**

**as he was valiant, I honour him: but, as he was ambitious, I slew him.**

**There is tears for his love; joy for his fortune; honour for his valour;**

**and death for his ambition.**

***Antony\****

**Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;**

**I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.**

**The evil that mend do lives after them;**

**The good is oft interred with their bones;**

**Antony\***: “**This was the most unkindest cut of all**.”

**Citizens / Mob\***: “**Tear him to pieces; he’s a conspirator**.”

**Antony\***: “**I’m no orator**…**I have neither the cleverness nor rhetorical skill nor the authority**

**nor gesture nor eloquence nor the power of speech to stir men up**. **I just speak directly**.”

***Note***: Octavius Caesar (AKA Augustus Caesar), Lepidus, and Marc Antony vs. Cassius and Brutus

Later in the play, Brutus and Cassius are discussing battle plans. Translate these lines and explain what they mean and how they can relate to you today or to today’s times.

***\*There is a tide in the affairs of men,***

***Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;***

***Omitted, all the voyage of their life***

***Is bound in shallows and in miseries.***

***On such a full sea are we now afloat;***

***And we must take the current when it serves,***

***Or lose our ventures.***

At the end of the entire play, Antony refers to Brutus as “**the noblest Roman of them all**.” In all of their speeches and discussions, all the conspirators make themselves sound so noble: “I'm doing this for Rome,” “I'm doing this for my country” -- but they're actually doing it for themselves. Brutus is the one person who is doing this for the good of Rome rather than for selfish gains? How do we know this from the text of the play?

\****This was the noblest Roman of them all:  
All the conspirators save only he  
Did that they did in envy of great Caesar;  
He only, in a general honest thought  
And common good to all, made one of them.  
His life was gentle, and the elements  
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up  
And say to all the world 'This was a man!' (68-75)***