Julius Caesar: Act 3 Scene 1

Summary PDF and revision sheet · ICSE Class 10, Literature in English (Paper 2) · William Shakespeare LitGram

In one line: on the Ides of March the conspirators stab Caesar at the Capitol; Antony makes peace with them, wins Brutus's leave to speak at the funeral, and, alone, swears revenge and foresees civil war.

Place in the play: the turning point. Acts 1-2 lead up to the murder; from here on the play shows its price. ICSE Class 10 board exam: Acts 3, 4 and 5.

The scene in six stages

1. **Warnings ignored.** "The ides of March are come." / "Ay, Caesar; but not gone." Caesar will not read Artemidorus's warning paper.
2. **Suspense and the petition.** Popilius Lena alarms Cassius. Trebonius draws Antony away. Metellus Cimber pleads for his banished brother Publius; Caesar is "constant as the northern star".
3. **The murder.** Casca strikes first ("Speak, hands for me!"); Brutus last. "Et tu, Brute! Then fall, Caesar." Caesar falls at Pompey's statue.
4. **Hands in blood.** "Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead!" Brutus: "ambition's debt is paid". They bathe their hands in Caesar's blood.
5. **Antony's peace and Brutus's mistake.** Antony shakes every bloody hand and asks to speak at the funeral. Cassius objects; Brutus agrees on conditions.
6. **Antony alone.** "these butchers"; a curse, civil war in Italy, "the dogs of war". Octavius is within seven leagues of Rome.

Characters

Character	Remember
Caesar	Proud to the end; ignores warnings
Brutus	Honest idealist; poor judge of Antony
Cassius	Nervous but shrewd; fears Antony
Antony	Friendly in public, avenger in private
Casca	Strikes the first blow
Metellus Cimber	Petition for brother Publius
Trebonius	Draws Antony away
Artemidorus	Warning paper, unread

Brutus's conditions for Antony

1. Do not blame the conspirators.
2. Speak all the good you can of Caesar.
3. Say you speak by our permission.
4. Speak from the same pulpit, after Brutus.

Cassius: "You know not what you do". Antony: "I do desire no more."

Themes

Pride and fall · betrayal ("Et tu, Brute") · idealism against cunning · freedom or murder? · ignored warnings · the power of words.

Word meanings

Word	Meaning	Word	Meaning
schedule	written paper	bootless	in vain
suit	request, petition	Pompey's basis	base of Pompey's statue
puissant	powerful	misgiving	doubt, fear
spaniel-fawning	dog-like flattery	bay'd	cornered like a deer
enfranchisement	freedom, rights restored	Ate	goddess of revenge
firmament	the sky	Havoc	order to kill without mercy

Devices

Dramatic irony: Caesar boasts he cannot be moved, minutes before he falls. **Suspense:** Popilius Lena. **Hunting imagery:** "brave hart", "thy hunters". **Soliloquy:** Antony's speech over the body shows his true plan.

What examiners look for

- Drama extracts have five parts; in 2025 they carried 3, 3, 3, 3 and 4 marks.
- The 2025 examiners' report: students lost marks by ignoring words like "immediately after" and by not using "irony" or "sarcasm" when needed. Underline the key words of each part.
- Casca strikes first; Brutus last. Antony is absent at the murder. Brutus speaks first at the funeral, Antony second.
- "Et tu, Brute" = "You too, Brutus?"

Memory trick, S-P-K-H-F-A: Soothsayer, Petition, Killing, Hands, Funeral permission, Antony alone.

Extract practice with answers

1. **"I could be well moved, if I were as you" (Caesar). What happens immediately after this speech?** Cinna and Decius plead again; Casca cries "Speak, hands for me!" and strikes; the others follow, Brutus last; Caesar dies saying "Et tu, Brute!"
2. **How is "constant as the northern star" dramatic irony?** Caesar claims nothing can move him while the audience knows the daggers are ready; his pride peaks just before his fall.
3. **"Here is a mourning Rome, a dangerous Rome" (Antony). Why is Rome not safe for Octavius?** Caesar has just been murdered and the city is in panic; Octavius is Caesar's nephew and heir.
4. **Three predictions Antony makes over the body.** A curse on men; civil war in Italy; bloodshed so common that mothers will smile at it.
5. **Whose opinion of Antony was right, Brutus's or Cassius's?** Cassius's. Antony's funeral speech turned Rome against the conspirators.