

# Julius Caesar

Act: Three Scene: Two  
Character: Mark Antony

BBC

Off By Heart  
Shakespeare

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears!  
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.  
The evil that men do lives after them,  
The good is oft interrèd with their bones:  
So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus  
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious;  
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,  
And grievously hath Caesar answered it.  
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest —  
For Brutus is an honourable man,  
So are they all, all honourable men —  
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.  
He was my friend, faithful and just to me,  
But Brutus says he was ambitious,  
And Brutus is an honourable man.  
He hath brought many captives home to Rome,  
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill;  
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?  
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:  
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff;  
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,  
And Brutus is an honourable man.  
You all did see that on the Lupercal  
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,  
Which he did thrice refuse. Was this ambition?  
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,  
And sure he is an honourable man.  
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,  
But here I am to speak what I do know.  
You all did love him once, not without cause;  
What cause withholds you then to mourn for him?  
O judgement, thou art fled to brutish beasts,  
And men have lost their reason! Bear with me,  
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,  
And I must pause till it come back to me.



## Julius Caesar Notes and Activities created by the RSC

**Act:** Three **Scene:** Two

**Character:** Mark Antony

### About the speech

*Julius Caesar* is a political thriller in which characters fight over what is best for the public good. Two of the main political opponents in the play are Brutus and Mark Antony. Their disagreement stems from their different views of Julius Caesar as a ruler. Mark Antony believes Caesar is a good ruler. Brutus is convinced by other politicians that Caesar is becoming a tyrant. Because of this, Brutus and a group of conspirators surprise Caesar in the Senate and stab him to death.

At Caesar's public funeral, Brutus speaks to the crowd and convinces them that what he did was in the best interests of Rome. Afterwards Mark Antony delivers this speech, taking the opportunity to turn the tide of public support away from Brutus. He appears to compliment Brutus by saying he is "honourable" but in reality he is being sarcastic. The way in which he delivers this speech is very clever, using language to say one thing, but mean another.

### How actors work

*During rehearsals, directors and actors often investigate the background of the play and character they are bringing to life. Shakespeare often highlights events happening in Elizabethan England through the language, characters and plots of his plays. Understanding the context in which these plays were written will help you make interesting choices about how to perform a particular speech. Actors also connect the character they are playing with their own experiences and the world around them.*

### Performance Suggestions

There are many ways that you can perform the speech. In order to understand Mark Antony's character, directors and actors would discuss the sincerity of his delivery of this speech. Is he speaking from his heart, or merely using language to turn the crowd against his political enemies? Try saying this speech as if he is:

- sincerely mourning for Caesar
- getting the crowd worked up in order to make them turn against Brutus

In the speech Mark Antony is trying to convince a large group of people that Caesar's murder was wrong. In rehearsals, actors can explore the different tactics people use to try to convince someone about what they're saying. Try the following tactics while delivering this speech:

- being cool and collected
- being passionate and angry!
- overemphasising repeated words

*Take a look at the language of the speech and try mixing these different choices to see which ones work best for specific moments.*