

Chapter 14 : Julius Caesar

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1. Consult a dictionary and find out the difference between: (a) killing (b) murder (c) assassination

Answer

(a) Killing – to deprive of life in any manner

(b) Murder – killing of another human being

(c) Assassination – to murder by a surprise attack, especially for political purposes

2. Popular and powerful leaders have been assassinated in the past as well as in recent times. Can you name some of them?

Answer

Mahatma Gandhi
John F. Kennedy
Abraham Lincoln
Indira Gandhi
Rajiv Gandhi

3. Discuss in groups the reasons why the leaders you named in (2) were assassinated. Is assassination the end to a problem?

Answer

The above leaders were assassinated for political reasons or targeted by groups. These leaders were driven by truth, non-violence, patriotism but some anti-social elements didn't want them to establish a peaceful society, hence assassinated them. Assassination or violence is not an end to a problem rather it leads to more turmoil and unrest. Objectives and aims can be achieved peacefully rather than resorting to violence and more dangerous measures such as assassination.

5. Answer the following questions by ticking the correct options.

1. When Caesar says "Nor heaven nor earth have been at peace to-night" he sounds _____ (a) worried (b) angry (c) joyous (d) frightened

Answer

(a) worried

2. Caesar's reference to the senators as 'graybeards' shows his _____ (a) confidence (b) cowardice (c) arrogance (d) ambition

Answer

(c) arrogance

3. Decius Brutus changes Caesar's mind about going to the Senate by appealing to his _____ (a) ambition (b) vanity (c) greed (d) generosity

Answer

(a) vanity

4. The offer that Cassius makes to Antony after Caesar's assassination is that_____ (a) the conspirators would like to be friends with him (b) he may take Caesar's body to the pulpit and speak to the crowd praising Caesar for his achievements (c) his recommendations will be as strong as that of the conspirators while distributing the powers and benefits to friends (d) he may join the conspiracy against Caesar

Answer

(a) the conspirators would like to be friends with him

5. Cassius tries to stop Brutus from letting Antony speak at Caesar's funeral as he _____ (a) knows the Roman mob loves Caesar and Antony (b) knows Brutus is not a good orator (c) knows they should not have killed Caesar (d) knows Antony is a good orator who can sway the mob

Answer

(d) knows Antony is a good orator who can sway the mob

6. What prophecy does Antony make over Caesar's dead body? (a) Romans will see Caesar's ghost roaming on the streets (b) Rome will experience fierce civil war in which many people will die (c) Rome will be ruled by Ate (d) Roman women will smile at the death of Caesar

Answer

(b) Rome will experience fierce civil war in which many people will die

7. After listening to Brutus' speech, the Third Citizen says 'Let him be Caesar'. This clearly shows he _____ (a) has not understood Brutus' reason for killing Caesar (b) loved Caesar more than he loves Brutus (c) loves Brutus more than he loved Caesar (d) thinks Brutus killed Caesar to assume power.

Answer

(a) has not understood Brutus' reason for killing Caesar

8. When Antony calls the conspirators 'honourable men' his tone is _____ (a) admiring (b) flattering (c) angry (d) mocking

Answer

(b) flattering

9. Antony's reference to Caesar's conquest of the Nervii is to _____ (a) remind the mob of Caesar's greatness as a warrior (b) make the mob feel afraid of being attacked by the war-like race (c) make the crowd weep for Caesar who died at war (d) stop and collect his emotions as he is feeling very upset

Answer

(a) remind the mob of Caesar's greatness as a warrior

10. Antony's remark Mischief, thou art afoot, Take thou what course thou wilt! , shows him to be _____ (a) a ruthless manipulator (b) an honourable man (c) a loyal friend (d) a tactful man

Answer (c) a loyal friend

6. Answer the following questions briefly.

(a) How do the heavens 'blaze forth' the death of Julius Caesar?

Answer

Calpurnia sees ill-omens that predict the death of Caesar beforehand. The heavens predict the death princes and great kings. She saw a lioness giving birth on the streets, fierce warriors fighting a bloody fight and blood falling on the Capitol, ghosts shrieking and squealing in the streets, the dead coming out of the grave. All these were unnatural happenings and indicated bad omen. Thus heavens “blaze forth” the death of Julius Caesar. All this signalled that someone as powerful as Caesar was bound to suffer.

(b) What does Calpurnia try to convince Caesar of?

Answer

Calpurnia tries to convince Caesar of an ill-omen that she has seen her nightmares, which does mean a grave danger to Caesar’s life. She tries to convince Caesar not to go out as she fears he nightmares might turn true and Caesar might face danger for his life.

(c) Why does Calpurnia say Caesar's 'wisdom is consumed in confidence'? What does she mean?

Answer

Calpurnia says that Caesar's 'wisdom is consumed in confidence' because Caesar decides to go to the Senate ignoring all the signs which foretell him about danger. Calpurnia felt that Caesar had become overconfident and because of this he couldn't understand there was a threat to his life. Julius doesn't act wise and declines the idea of staying back because if he did so, he would be considered a coward.

(d) What does Calpurnia dream about Caesar? How does Decius Brutus interpret the dream?

Answer

Calpurnia dreamt that Caesar's statue spouted blood from a hundred places and many Roman people came and washed their hands in it. Decius Brutus interprets it as a lucky and fortunate dream. He says that Rome and Romans will get a new life. Great man shall gather around Caesar and stain their handkerchief in his blood. Distinguished men will get honour at his hands and everything relating to him will be held in utmost reverence.

(e) What are the arguments put forward by Decius Brutus to convince Caesar to go to the Capitol?

Answer

Decius Brutus, being a flatterer, interprets Calpurnia's dream as fair and fortunate one. Caesar's statue spouting blood from hundred places signifies his influence and reverence for him. He further says that the Senate has concluded to crown him. In case Caesar does not go to the Senate House that day, they may change their mind and he may miss such a golden opportunity to be the Roman king.

(f) Why is Decius more successful than Calpurnia in persuading Caesar?

Answer

Decius Brutus is a great flatterer. He is more successful in persuading Caesar than Calpurnia because his argument appeals to Caesar's pride. While Calpurnia wishes that Caesar stay at home after seeing horrible dreams, Decius Brutus interprets the dreams lucky and fortunate. According to him, they signify Caesar's power and influence. He gives Caesar's ego a boost. Caesar is totally carried away by his words and decides to go to the Capitol.

(g) What is the petition put before Caesar by the conspirators? How does Caesar respond to it?

Answer

The conspirators want that Caesar should call Publius Cimber home as he had banished him. They request him to review his earlier decision. However, Caesar is no mood to relent. He tells the conspirators that he is firm like a Pole Star. His heart will not be softened by bowing and stooping activities and if Mettellus Cimber continues such activities, he would turn him away like a street dog.

(h) Who says "Et tu Brute"? When are these words spoken? Why?

Answer

Caesar utters these words which mean, "You too, Brutus". These are uttered when Brutus stabs Caesar and Caesar is too hurt to see that even his dear friend Brutus could resort to such treachery.

(i) In the moments following Caesar's death what do the conspirators proclaim to justify Caesar's death?

Answer

After Caesar's death, the conspirators claim that with Caesar's death tyranny has ended in Rome. They shout slogans like 'Peace, Liberty, Freedom and Enfranchisement'. They say that although Caesar was a great man, he had become too ambitious.

(j) Seeing the body of Caesar, Antony is overcome by grief. What does he say about Caesar?

Answer

Antony is overwhelmed with grief on seeing Caesar's dead body. He exclaims that in spite of Caesar's conquests, glories, triumphs and spoils, he lies so "low". He offers to be killed and lie by Caesar's side whom he calls the choice and master spirits of this age and "most noble".

(k) Whom does Antony call 'the choice and master spirits of this age'? Why?

Answer

Antony calls the conspirators "the choice and master spirits of this age". He says this because they had just killed the leader of the Roman Empire.

(l) How do Brutus and Cassius respond to Antony's speech?

Answer

After listening to Antony's speech, Brutus assures him that even though the deed seems bloody, their intentions were worthy. Their pity for the common people of Rome overrode their pity for Caesar. Cassius offers Antony new position in the government.

(m) Why does Cassius object to allowing Antony to speak at Caesar's funeral? How does Brutus overcome this objection?

Answer

Cassius does not think it would be proper Antony should speak at Caesar's funeral as his speech may change the mind of the audience. But Brutus tells that Antony would only speak with their consent and he will speak first and his speech will enumerate reasons for Caesar's death.

(n) What are the conditions imposed by the conspirators before allowing Antony to speak at Caesar's funeral?

Answer

The conditions imposed on Mark Antony were that in his funeral speech he would not blame the conspirators, but speak all good things about Caesar. He had to speak from the same pulpit as Brutus and tell the people that he did so by the conspirators' permission.

(o) When he is left alone with the body of Caesar what does Anthony call Brutus and the others?

Answer

Antony curses the murderers and he seeks forgiveness for being polite to them. He calls them 'butchers' who killed the noblest of men.

(p) What prediction does Antony make regarding the future events in Rome?

Answer

Antony prophesies that Italy will be ravaged with civil war, violence and extreme blood shed will leave the earth full of dead bodies. Goddess of revenge will descend on earth with Caesar's spirit and the stench of dead bodies will fill the earth.

(q) What reasons does Brutus give for murdering Caesar?

Answer

Brutus tells that he killed Caesar because he had become ambitious and wanted to be the king of Rome. He killed Caesar for the betterment of Rome. He was also ready to lay down his life for his country. He honoured Caesar as long as he was heroic but when he became ambitious he killed him.

(r) Who says, "Let him be Caesar"? What light does this throw on the speaker?

Answer

The third citizen says "Let him be Caesar" after Brutus has finished his speech justifying Caesar's killing. Brutus in his speech proclaims that the public can kill him if he too becomes ambitious like Caesar. He has the same dagger for himself and he is willing to lay down his life for his country. The citizens are fully satisfied. They praise Brutus and show their sympathy for the act.

(s) Why is Antony's speech more effective?

Answer

Antony speech is more effective because it is genuine and full of emotions and feelings for Caesar. He very cleverly tells the crowd that Caesar was not ambitious rather he had refused the crown thrice. He enhanced the glory of Rome with his victories. He left 75 drachmas in his will to be given to every Roman. He left his gardens and property for the common use of the people. He tries to gain the sympathy of the people by showing Caesar's wounded body. The mob is filled with anger after Antony's speech and they rush to kill the conspirators.

(t) At the end of the scene what is the fate of Brutus and Cassius?

Answer

After Antony's speech, the mob is filled with anger. They rush to kill the conspirators. They burn their houses. Cassius and Brutus plan to face the enemy and discuss their strategy inside a tent. However, both start to quarrel violently but soon become friends. Cassius cannot handle defeat and commits suicide. The ghost of Caesar haunts Brutus. Brutus knows his end is near. He asks Starto to hold his sword, runs on it and dies.

10. Read the extracts given below and answer the questions that follow:

*1. Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear;
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come.*

- (a) Whom is Caesar speaking to? Why does he say these words?
- (b) What fears has the listener expressed?
- (c) What is the basis for the fears expressed?

Answer

- (a) Caesar is speaking to his wife Calpurnia. He speaks these words in response to Calpurnia's pleadings that he should not go out of the house as his life might be in danger.
- (b) Calpurnia has expressed a fear that the ominous signs during the night might mean that Caesar's life is in danger.
- (c) The bases of her fears are the unearthly events during the previous night and the strange dream which she had.

2. But here's a parchment with the seal of Cesar; I found it in his closet, 'tis his will: Let but the commons hear this testament— Which, pardon me, I do not mean to read— And they would go and kiss dead Cesar's wounds

- (a) Who speaks these words? Where is the speaker at this moment?
- (b) What are the contents of Caesar's will that he is referring to?
- (c) Why does the speaker read Caesar's will to the citizens?
- (d) What is the reaction of the listeners to the reading of the will?

Answer

- (a) Mark Antony speaks these words. He is in the market place pulpit.
- (b) Caesar has given seventy-five drachmas to every Roman. He has left all his walks, orchards on the side of the Tiber to the common men.
- (c) The speaker reads Caesar's will to the audience to play on their sympathy, and to make Caesar look like a great, benevolent ruler.
- (d) The listeners are convinced that Caesar was not ambitious. he was wrongly killed. After listening the will, they get incited and rush for the conspirators.

12. Questions for Further Study:

- (a) Why was the conspiracy to assassinate Julius Caesar hatched?

Answer

The conspiracy to assassinate Caesar was hatched to prevent him from being crowned the king of Rome. Brutus and Cassius had a grudge against Caesar and they wished to have the power in their hands rather than with Caesar.

(b) Was Caesar really ambitious? Find evidence from the play to support your answer.

Answer

Caesar was not ambitious at all. He brought many glories and victories to Rome and Romans. He was kind and sympathetic person. He refused the crown thrice. Caesar was very compassionate. He understood the plight of the poor. He promised seventy-five drachmas to every Roman.

(c) What was Cassius' motive for murdering Julius Caesar?

Answer

Cassius was jealous of Caesar's growing power and influence. In fact he didn't wish to see him as the great conqueror of the world. He didn't want that Caesar should rule the Romans and that is why he wished to murder him.

(d) Why was it essential for the conspirators to include Brutus in the conspiracy?

Answer

It was essential for the conspirators to give a stamp of legitimacy of their cause of murdering Caesar. Brutus was a man of noble ideas. Also he was very close to Caesar . But he fell to the dirty tricks of the conspirators to join them to kill Caesar.

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(e) What were the mistakes made by Brutus that led to the failure of the conspiracy?

Answer

Brutus allowed Antony to give Caesar a suitable funeral after giving a speech to the people at the Capitol. Second, his utter simplicity and belief in Antony. Third, leaving Antony alone with Caesar's dead body and mob. Fourth, his not heeding Cassius's fears in allowing Antony to speak to the people.

(f) Comment on Caesar's friendship with Antony.

Answer

Antony was a dear friend of Caesar. He did not agree with Brutus that Caesar was an ambitious person who wanted to rule over Rome. In fact he was ready to lay down his life for Rome. After Brutus' speech at Caesar's funeral, Antony delivers an emotional speech. He tells the mob that Caesar was not at all ambitious. He refused the crown three times. He said that Caesar had left 75 drachmas for every Roman. Antony appealed to the sentiments of the mob and even showed the wounded corpse of Caesar. The mob was so influenced by Antony's speech that they turned against the conspirators. Thus Antony showed his affection and respect for Caesar.

(g) Write a brief character sketch of Antony.

Answer

Antony is a noble personality. He has all the human virtues of love, sympathy, sincerity, integrity, solidarity, devotion etc. He is also a great orator and craftsman. He is extremely devoted to Caesar. He wishes that Caesar should be crowned the king. A clever man, Antony, is successful in fooling Brutus into believing that he is with the conspirators after the death of Caesar. He delivers an influential speech which makes the mob realize conspiracy behind Caesar's murder. He has genuine love and affection for Caesar and wishes to avenge his death. It is because of his speech, the conspirators are crushed.

(h) What is the role of Julius Caesar's ghost in the play, Julius Caesar?

Answer

The ghost of Julius Caesar appears twice in the play: once before Brutus when he is sleeping in his tent, it stood by his bed side and said nothing. The second time it appears in a battle at Philippi. The ghost appeared in front of Antonius and Octavius. It did not say anything. The purpose of the ghost was to make Brutus realize his mistake. He was carried away by emotions and joined hands with the conspirators. Caesar's death led to turmoil and unrest in Rome. Brutus is unhappy seeing all this and kills himself with his own sword.

(i) Why does Antony call Brutus 'the noblest Roman of them all'?

Answer

Antony's comment that Brutus is 'the noblest Roman of them all' is laced with sarcasm. Actually he wishes to tell the public that Caesar was not at all ambitious as pointed by Brutus but he does not say this immediately rather he cites instances and instigates audience slowly and logically. Antony is a great orator. He first calls Brutus the noblest Roman in order to gain attention and sympathy of the public. Slowly he tells the public that it was not Caesar's ambition but Brutus' personal grudge against Caesar that made him kill Caesar. Thus he is able avenge his friends' death as the mob after hearing Antony's speech turns against the conspirators.

(j) How do Brutus and Cassius meet their end?

Answer

Brutus wants that their forces should move to Philippi and attack the enemy. Cassius does not agree and leaves alone. On the plains of Philippi, Brutus and Cassius reach with their forces where there are the armies of Octavius and Antony. With the interference of Octavius their wrong doing comes to an end. Then the forces of Cassius and Antony fight in which Antony emerges victorious. Cassius could not accept this defeat and commits suicide. Brutus too is disheartened and kills himself with his own sword.