

Focus Question:

What happened to Julius Caesar on the Ides of March, and why?

Book Summary

Text Type: Fiction/Historical

The Ides of March tells the story of the assassination of Julius Caesar by a group of conspirators in 44 BC. Students will be engaged with this riveting story and the accompanying detailed illustrations. This book can also be used to teach students how to identify character point of view as well as to retell the events of a story in the correct sequence.

The book and lesson are also available for levels Z and Z1.



Lesson Essentials

Instructional Focus

- ☐ Retell story events to understand text
- ☐ Identify character point of view
- ☐ Describe information provided by a glossary
- ☐ Identify and use pronouns
- ☐ Place words in alphabetical order

Materials

- ☐ Book: *The Ides of March* (copy for each student)
- ☐ Character point of view, pronouns, alphabetical order worksheets
- ☐ Discussion cards
- ☐ Book quiz
- ☐ Retelling rubric

Vocabulary

Boldface vocabulary words also appear in a pre-made lesson for this title on VocabularyA-Z.com.

• Words to Know

Story critical: *assassinating* (v.), *conspirators* (n.), *dictator* (n.), *foreboding* (n.), *ides* (n.), *omen* (n.)

Enrichment: *acclamation* (n.), *aggrandize* (v.), *capitulated* (v.), *conclave* (n.), *dais* (n.), *legions* (n.), *liberate* (v.), *perpetuity* (n.), *propitious* (adj.), *protégés* (n.), *soothsayer* (n.), *tyranny* (n.)

- **Academic vocabulary:** *discuss* (v.), *document* (n.), *establish* (v.), *include* (v.), *issue* (n.), *problem* (n.)

Guiding the Reading

Before Reading

Build Background

- Place on the board a photograph of Julius Caesar and a map of Italy. Ask students to share any prior knowledge they have about either Caesar or Italy with a partner. Invite volunteers to share their prior knowledge with the class.
- Explain to students that Caesar was the famous dictator of Rome from 49 to 44 BC, who had many enemies, some of whom wanted to remove him from power. Explain that students will be reading about what happened to Caesar that ended his dictatorship in 44 BC.

Introduce the Book

- Give students their copy of *The Ides of March*. Guide them to the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers. Encourage them to offer ideas as to what type of book it is (genre, text type, and so on) and what it might be about.
- Show students the title page. Discuss the information on the page (title of book, author's name, illustrator's name).

Introduce the Reading Strategy: Retell

Explain to students that engaged readers stop now and then while they are reading to retell in their mind what has happened so far in the story. Stopping to retell the events of the story helps readers understand and remember what they are reading. Explain that when retelling a story or event, it is important that the details are explained in order, or sequence. Using a book that the class has previously read, demonstrate how to retell a story in correct order. Invite volunteers to help you with the retelling. Encourage students to use transition words such as *first*, *next*, *then*, and *finally* when retelling a story.

Guiding the Reading (cont.)

Introduce the Comprehension Skill:

Story elements: Identify character point of view

- Write the words *first-person point of view* and *third-person point of view* on the board. Review or explain that one way to understand the plot of a story is by thinking about the point of view the story is being told from. Explain that *first-person* and *third-person* are the two most common types of point of view.
- Explain that in a first-person story, the narrator is one of the characters and is telling the story as if speaking directly to the reader. The story therefore uses the pronouns *I* and *my* when the character is referring to him- or herself. Write the words *I* and *my* beneath the heading *first-person point of view* on the board. Point out that the tone of first-person stories is more intimate and inviting, as if the reader is having a conversation with the character in the story.
- Explain to students that in a third-person story, the narrator is not any of the characters but a detached observer who is describing the events in the story to the reader. The story therefore uses the pronouns *he*, *she*, *her*, and *him* to refer to the characters. Write the words *he*, *she*, *her*, and *him* under the heading *third-person point of view* on the board. Point out that the tone of third-person stories is more remote, as if the reader is watching and eavesdropping on the characters in the story.
- Read an excerpt from a book that is told in the first person and then an excerpt from a book that is in third person. Have students work in groups to identify who is telling each story. Invite volunteers to share their thoughts with the rest of the class.

Vocabulary

Have students turn to the “Words to Know” box on the copyright page. Discuss each word with students. Then, have students turn to the glossary on pages 19 and 20. Explain that the glossary provides definitions for the vocabulary words in the book. Point out the use of each content word and academic vocabulary word in the book, and then use each word in a different model sentence. Have students work in groups to create posters for these words. Have them include on each poster the word and its part of speech, the definition, the word in an example sentence, and a picture illustrating the meaning of the word.

Set the Purpose

- Have students read to find out more about what happened to Julius Caesar on the Ides of March. Write the Focus Question on the board. Invite students to look for evidence in the book to support their answer to the question.

- Have students make a small question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. These can be addressed in a future discussion.

During Reading

Text-Dependent Questions

As students read the book, monitor their understanding with the following questions. Encourage students to support their answers by citing evidence from the book.

- *Who is Julius Caesar?* (level 1) page 3
- *What caused Caesar to feel uneasy about attending the Senate?* (level 2) pages 4–5
- *Why does Brutus believe the conspirators have to complete their plan that day?* (level 1) page 6
- *How did Decimus use Caesar’s arrogance against him?* (level 3) page 7
- *What did the conspirators think would happen after they assassinated Caesar?* (level 3) multiple pages
- *How does Mark Anthony feel after entering the Senate? What does this lead him to do?* (level 3) pages 17–18
- *Do you think the conspirators fulfilled their goal? Why or why not?* (level 3) multiple pages

Text Features: Glossary

Explain that a glossary helps readers define the words that are in the book. Have students work in small groups to review the glossary on pages 19 and 20. Ask students: *How are the vocabulary words arranged in a glossary? Can you define the word perpetuity? On which page can you find the word ides? What part of speech is capitulated?* Have students review other vocabulary words in the book and discuss in groups where they would be found and how they know. Invite volunteers to share their thoughts with the rest of the class.

Skill Review

- Have students retell the story from the beginning to a partner. Listen to see whether they include the events in detail and in the correct order. Encourage students to use transition words such as *first*, *next*, *then*, and *finally* when retelling the story.
- Model identifying character point of view.
Think-aloud: *I know this story is about Julius Caesar and what happened to him on the Ides of March. When I read the story, I notice that when Julius Caesar is speaking, the authors use he said and he asked. I also see that when the authors are referring to Julius Caesar, they use the pronouns he and him. Therefore, I know this story is being told from the third-person point of view.*

Guiding the Reading (cont.)

- Have students work with a partner to cite specific examples from the text to support that this story is being told from the third-person point of view. Invite volunteers to share their answers with the class.
- Model how to complete the **character-point-of-view worksheet**. Have students change a scene from the story from third person to first person. Have students discuss how changing the point of view changes the overall feeling of the story.

After Reading

Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

Skill Review

Graphic Organizer:

Story elements: Identify character point of view

Review the character-point-of-view worksheet that students completed. Have students share their work with a partner. Invite volunteers to share with the rest of the class how they rewrote a scene from the story from third person to first person and how this changed the overall feeling of the story.

Comprehension Extension

Discussion cards covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided for extension activities.

Response to Focus Question

Have students cite specific evidence from the book to answer the Focus Question. (Answers will vary. Sample: *Julius Caesar was the dictator of Rome who was killed on March 15 by a group of conspirators who thought they were freeing Rome from his tyranny.*)

Comprehension Checks

- **Book quiz**
- **Retelling rubric**

Book Extension Activities

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics: Pronouns

- Explain or review that a *pronoun* is a word used in place of a noun. Pronouns can be helpful in sentences when the noun has previously been named. Write examples of pronouns on the board: *I, she, he, it, her, him, we, you, and they*. Write the following sentences on the board: *Julius Caesar was the dictator of Rome. Julius Caesar had many enemies.* Model how to replace the words *Julius Caesar* with a pronoun in the second sentence. (*He* had many enemies.)

- Have students turn to page 4 and point to the first sentence. Rewrite this sentence on the board: *Julius Caesar gazed from the balcony of his home overlooking the city of Rome, which spread out majestically before him, and mentally measured his route to the Senate House.* Have students work in groups to replace each noun with a pronoun. Invite volunteers to share their new sentences with the class. Remind students that pronouns are helpful if the noun has previously been named, otherwise they can cause confusion to the reader.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students turn to page 11 and reread the first paragraph. Then ask students to replace each noun with a pronoun. Have students write their new paragraph on a sheet of paper and share it with a partner.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the **pronouns worksheet**. If time allows, discuss their answers.

Word Work: Alphabetical order

- Write the words *tyrant* and *tyranny* on the board. Point out that the words begin with the same letter (*Tt*). Review the process of putting a list of words in alphabetical order. Remind students that if the first letter of two words is the same, they must compare the second letter of each word instead. If the second letter of each word is the same, they continue to compare the third letter of each word, and so on, until they find two letters that are different. Model how to list these words in alphabetical order.
- Write the words *propitious* and *protégés* on the board. Have a volunteer explain which word would appear first in alphabetical order and why.
- **Check for understanding:** Write the words *assassinate* and *assassination* on the board. Have the students write the words in alphabetical order and explain their thinking on a separate piece of paper. Discuss their answers with the class.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the **alphabetical order worksheet**. If time allows, discuss their answers.

Connections

- See the back of the book for cross-curricular extension ideas.