

Julius Caesar

A Reading A-Z Level Y Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,424

Connections

Writing

How was Julius Caesar's leadership influenced by his character and values? Write a response using facts from the book to support your answer.

Social Studies

Use a Venn diagram to compare the government of the Roman Republic with a modern system of government. Discuss your results with a partner.

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Julius Caesar



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Focus Question

How was ancient Rome changed by Julius Caesar's rule?

Words to Know

allied	embroiled
assassinated	legislative
campaigning	martyr
chaos	monarchy
corruption	orator
dictator	provinces

Front cover: An illustration depicts Julius Caesar crossing the Rubicon River in Italy on his return to Rome from Gaul.

Title page: A seventeenth-century work by French sculptor Nicolas Coustou shows Julius Caesar in military clothing.

Page 3: Artwork shows Julius Caesar leading his army across the Rubicon River in 49 BC.

Photo Credits:

Front cover: Julius Caesar crossing the Rubicon, Scarpelli, Tancredi/Private Collection/© Look and Learn/Bridgeman Images; title page: © Universal History Archive/REX Shutterstock; pages 3, 15 (bottom left): © Mary Evans Picture Library; page 6: © AndreaAstes/iStock/Thinkstock; page 7: © TonyBaggett/iStock/Thinkstock; pages 9, 15 (right): Vercingetorix throws down his arms at the feet of Julius Caesar, 1899, Royer, Lionel Noel/Musée Crozatier, Le Puy-en-Velay, France/Bridgeman Images; page 10 (left): © Jacek Wojnarowski/Dreamstime.com; page 10 (center): © Universal History Archive/Universal Images Group/REX Shutterstock; page 10 (right): Bust of Marcus Licinius Crassus, Roman/Louvre, Paris, France/Bridgeman Images; page 11: © dvarg/iStock/Thinkstock; page 12: © ClassicStock/Alamy; page 13: © SuperStock/SuperStock; page 14 (top left, top right): © De Agostini/G. Dagli Orti/REX Shutterstock; page 15 (top left): Julius Caesar, Roman/Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, Italy/Photo © Zev Radovan/Bridgeman Images

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Correlation

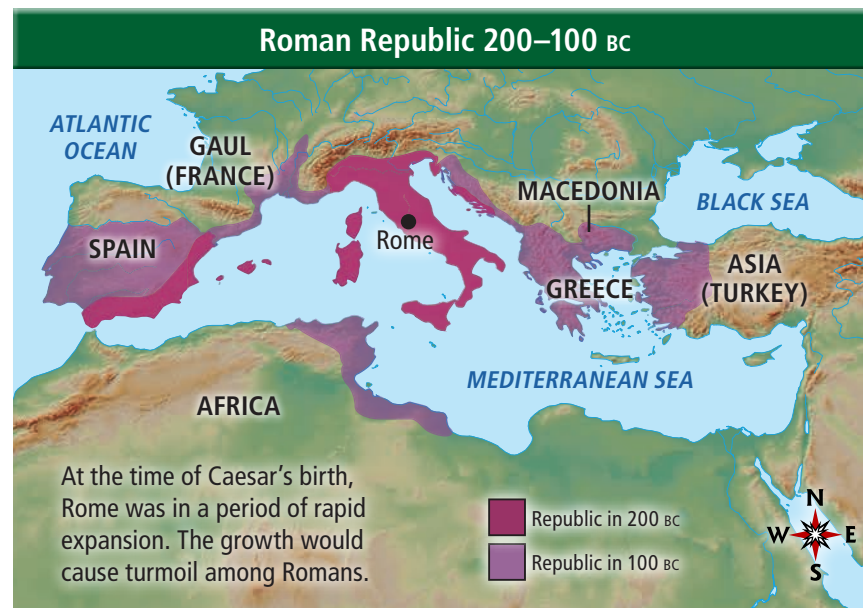
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Creator of the Roman Empire

Julius Caesar was born into a troubled world. The vast and powerful Roman Republic spread over many miles and contained many **provinces**, but it suffered from widespread **corruption**. The republic had been **embroiled** in civil war and unrest for years. Dangers also existed at home in Rome—especially for those engaged in politics.

Thrust into this world, Caesar dominated both the military and political arenas in his relatively short life. A brilliant man of enormous energy, he accomplished more than perhaps any world leader in history. Many languages and cultures, and some governments, connect to ancient Rome, and one of its greatest leaders—Caesar.

The World in the Time of Caesar

Rome began as a *city-state*—a political entity composed of a city and the surrounding countryside that supported it. Rome's neighboring city-states largely shared the same language, culture, and religion, but they were often at war with one another. By 250 BC, the dominant city-state of Rome controlled all of the Italian Peninsula. Emperors ruled the Kingdom of Rome. According to legend, in 509 BC, the Roman people rose up and expelled their last king, and the Roman Republic was born.

The people wanted no more kings. The Roman Republic's hatred of **monarchy** proved a very important part of the history of the Roman Empire. In the republic, citizens elected their own leaders, called *consuls*. Two consuls were elected every year to govern Rome, with help from a **legislative** body called the Senate. In the Roman Republic, the wealthy landowners, known as the *patricians*, and the lesser landowners and poorer people known as *plebeians* often argued.

The Republic of Rome expanded, and as it did, it set up provinces run by governors. A provincial governor could become very rich providing food and slaves for Rome. Unfortunately, corruption in provincial government was rampant.

Under this system, the upper-class patricians benefited far more than the plebeian citizens. The economy in Rome was in ruins. When the tension between rich and poor became too great, a bloody civil war began.

Caesar was born in the midst of this turmoil, on July 12 or 13, 100 BC, to an established and upper-class, yet not particularly wealthy or important family. Caesar's parents educated him well and probably prepared him for a career in politics.

When Caesar was sixteen, his father died abruptly. In that same year, Caesar married

Cornelia, the daughter of an important plebeian politician. Soon after, a man named Sulla rose to power in Rome. Sulla, a patrician, ordered the young Caesar to divorce Cornelia. Caesar refused, and by refusing he made his plebeian leanings clear.



A statue of Caesar stands where the Roman Senate once met. There are hundreds of statues of Caesar throughout Europe.



Caesar wearing a crown of laurel leaves

Caesar behaved honorably, but dangerously. Disobeying Sulla could result in arrest or even execution. To escape the threats of Rome, he joined the army and went off to fight in the provinces. Because he came from a patrician family,

Caesar's superiors made him an officer in the army. His early military experience was positive; he liked the men he commanded, and they admired and respected him. When he heard that Sulla died in 78 BC, Caesar returned to Rome and resumed working in politics.

Caesar excelled at negotiating Rome's treacherous political world, and he advanced rapidly. He **allied** himself with a popular military hero and politician named Pompey the Great. When Cornelia died in 69 BC, Caesar married Pompey's daughter, Pompeia. Caesar continued to flourish. In 63 BC, Romans elected him Pontifex Maximus, the high priest of the Roman religion. Two years later, he became the governor of a large Roman province in present-day Spain.

The Commander in Gaul

When he returned from Spain, Caesar ran for the government position of consul. In 59 BC, Romans elected him to that important office, much to the frustration of the patrician senators. He served for a year and was appointed governor of Gaul for a five-year term. In present-day northern Italy and France, Gaul gave Caesar a place to enlarge the military and plan expansion of the Roman Republic.

Beyond Gaul, a wild and untamed frontier stretched as far as any Roman knew. Caesar knew little of that land, yet the Gallic and Germanic tribes who occupied it loomed large in the Roman imagination. The famous Roman legionnaires, or soldiers, respected and feared them as fearless, masterful warriors. Others before Caesar had led armies beyond the frontier, but with little success. Some had even suffered terrible defeats when northern tribes invaded Roman territory.

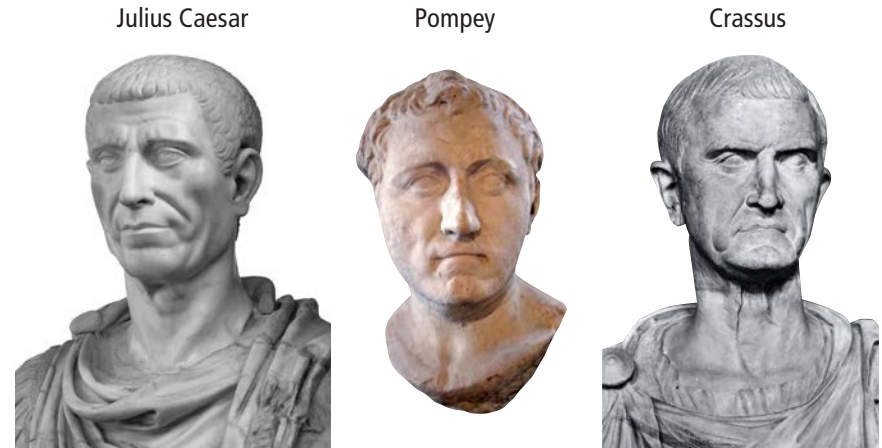
While the northern tribes were daunting, the Roman legions had far better organization. Their chain of command and communications enabled them to maneuver rapidly and effectively. The better-equipped Roman army in Gaul had another big advantage over its enemies—Caesar.

While in Gaul, Caesar managed and sharpened a fighting army such as the world had never seen. Many provincial governors treated their legions poorly and broke promises they made. Caesar never did so, and his men loved and respected him for it. Caesar fought side by side with his soldiers, and he ordered his other generals to do the same. A great **orator**, Caesar encouraged his sometimes outnumbered and terrified troops, inspiring them to new heights of bravery. Caesar's armies triumphed, and they and their leader became popular heroes in Rome.

Three outcomes indicate Caesar's success in Gaul. First, he united all of Gaul under Roman control. Monetary systems, government, and engineering greatly affected how Europe would grow. Second, he won the undying loyalty of his legions. Finally, all of his **campaigning** and success in Gaul made Caesar wealthy.



In a painting by Lionel Royer, a Gallic commander surrenders to Caesar.



Caesar was on good terms with both Crassus and Pompey, and was able to smooth their differences, creating a powerful alliance.

The First Triumvirate

Caesar was in Gaul for ten years, but all that time he remained a powerful political presence in Rome. He always had people—his allies—working in his interest there.

For a while, Caesar and Pompey remained close. After being elected consul in 59 BC, Caesar married his daughter Julia to Pompey, which further strengthened Caesar and Pompey's relationship. At the time, Caesar had another political ally named Crassus, who was one of the richest men in all of Rome. Pompey and Crassus had been political rivals, but Caesar cleverly united them. The three men worked as a team and had massive political power in Rome. They are now known as the First Triumvirate.

As time went on, though, Caesar's success in Gaul made the other two men jealous, and they saw him as a threat. They managed to maintain their alliance for a time, but when Julia passed away in 54 BC, the family link between Caesar and Pompey was broken. When Crassus was killed in battle the next year, the triumvirate was finished. Pompey withdrew from Caesar and made alliances with patrician members of the Senate who also felt threatened by Caesar's rise.

Do You Know?

One of Caesar's greatest achievements was reforming the Roman calendar. It had been a lunar calendar that accounted for 355 days. In most modern calendars, there are 365 days in a year. Before Caesar, leaders decided where to add the extra ten days, which let them manipulate important election dates and holidays.

Caesar worked with astronomers to create a new calendar that was based on Earth's movements around the Sun. Additional days were added to specific months, and the concept of the leap year was introduced.

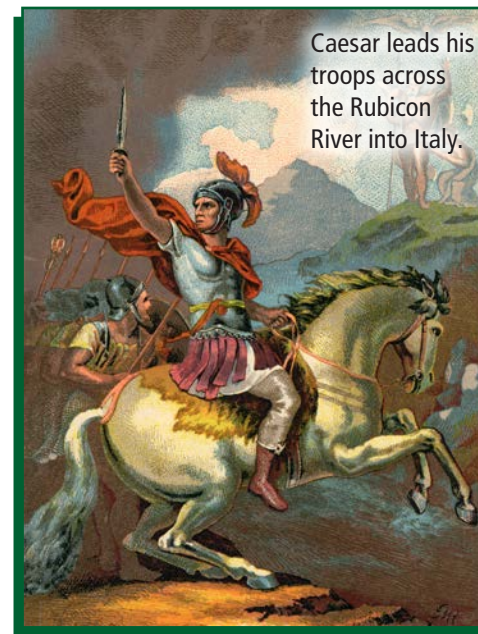


The month of July is named after Caesar.

Civil War

When Caesar's term was up in Gaul, he returned to Rome to run for consul again. He knew that bringing his armies with him would be considered an act of war, but he feared that if he returned alone, he would be arrested and possibly murdered. Knowing Pompey still had command of his own armies, Caesar was left with no choice. Therefore, hoping to fix the broken government in Rome, Caesar crossed the Rubicon River with his armies in 49 BC and marched into the capital.

Caesar believed he had the support of the citizens of Rome, but the result of his actions was a terrible civil war. Pompey brought his forces out

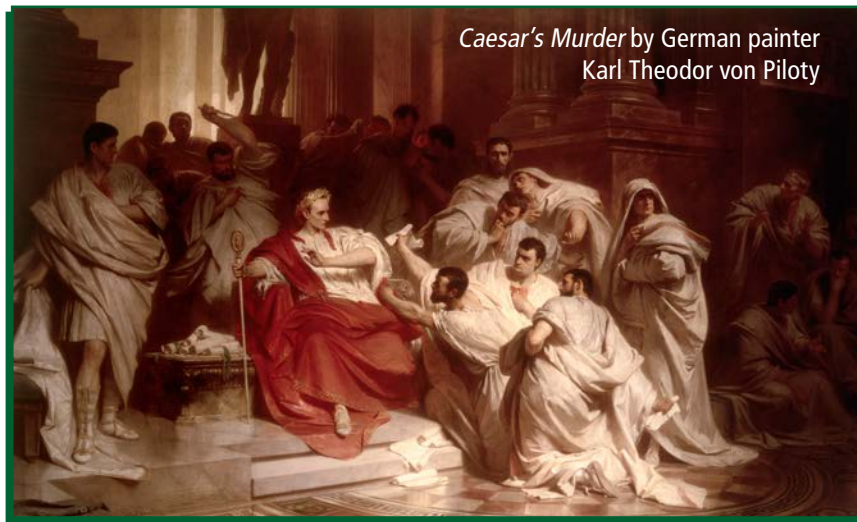


Caesar leads his troops across the Rubicon River into Italy.

to meet Caesar, but Caesar's battle-tested troops quickly dominated and chased them out of Italy. Caesar pursued and destroyed Pompey's army. Eventually, Pompey himself was killed.

Caesar returned to Rome a triumphant hero, but the government remained in crisis, and the Senate named Caesar **dictator**. Shortly before his death he was named dictator for life. Understandably, this greatly upset his opponents in the Senate. Rome was never supposed to be ruled by a king again, but in the Senate's eyes, that was what appeared to be happening.

In his short time as head of state, Caesar reformed the taxation system, began great public works, and granted Roman citizenship to many in the provinces. He was also very forgiving toward the many who had supported Pompey. This, combined with appearing as a king, led to Caesar's downfall. On March 15, 44 BC, the Ides of March, a group of senators **assassinated** Caesar.

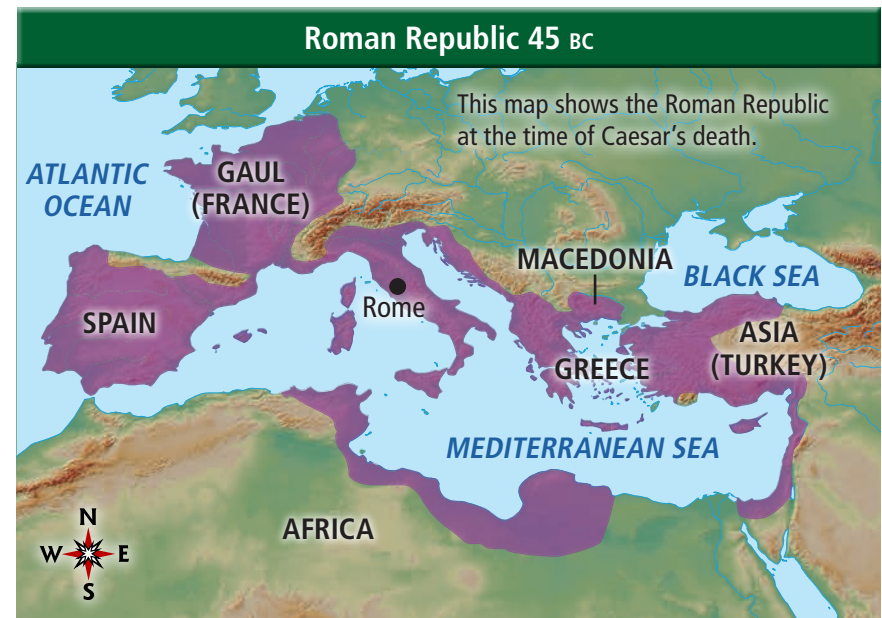


A coin dated 44 BC shows Julius Caesar with Venus on the reverse. Caesar's family claimed to descend from the goddess Venus.

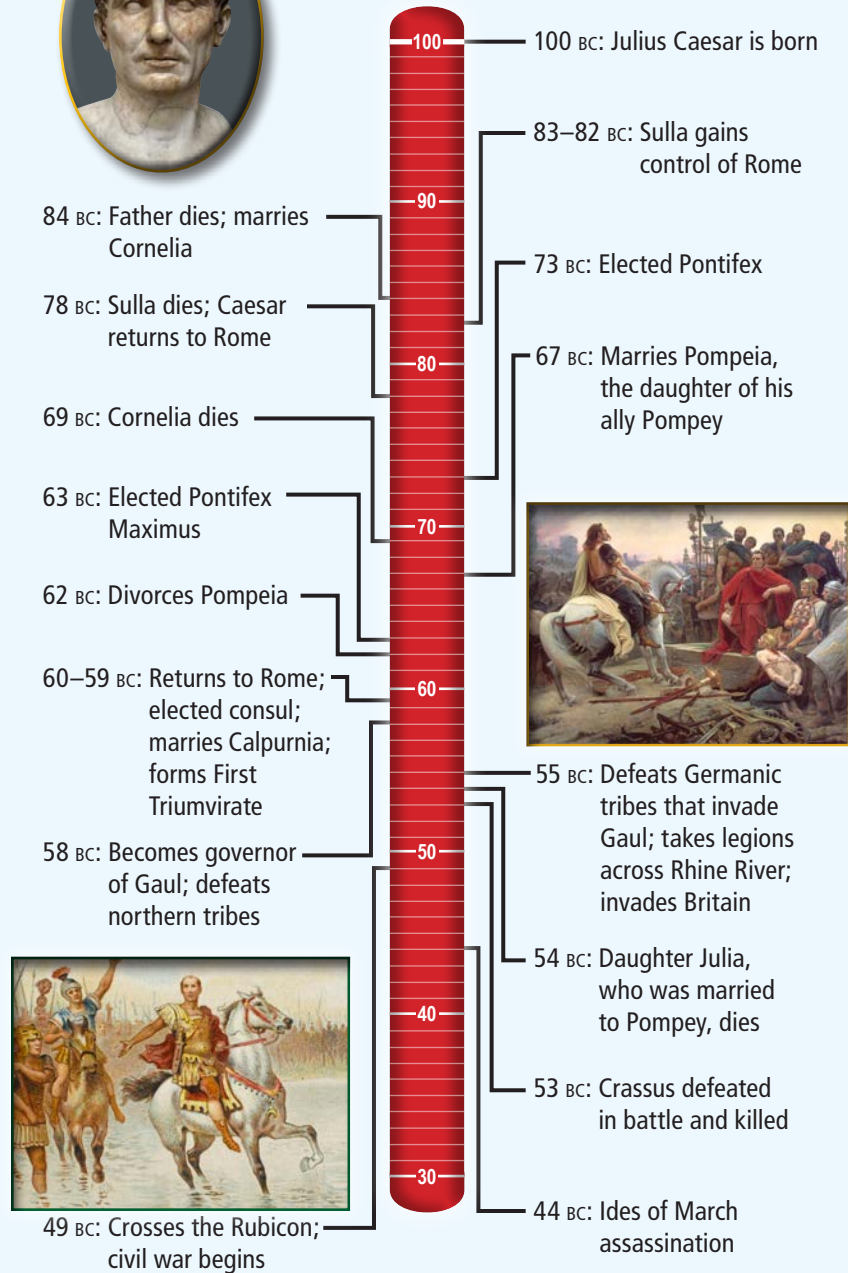
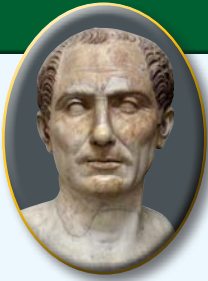
Caesar's Legacy

Upon his murder, Caesar instantly became a **martyr**, and in 42 BC he was declared a god. The immediate aftermath of his assassination was **chaos** and, tragically, more civil war ensued. When it was finally over, the Roman Empire was born.

The Roman Empire that Caesar put into motion carried on for centuries, shaping modern Europe and much of our world today.



The Life of Julius Caesar



Glossary

allied (<i>v.</i>)	joined with others for a common cause (p. 7)
assassinated (<i>v.</i>)	killed in a planned attack, often for political purposes (p. 13)
campaigning (<i>n.</i>)	the performance of a planned series of military actions (p. 9)
chaos (<i>n.</i>)	confusion; lack of order (p. 14)
corruption (<i>n.</i>)	dishonest or criminal behavior by those in power (p. 4)
dictator (<i>n.</i>)	a leader who rules with total power, usually by force (p. 13)
embroiled (<i>adj.</i>)	involved deeply in a conflict or difficult problem (p. 4)
legislative (<i>adj.</i>)	of or relating to the branch of government that makes laws (p. 5)
martyr (<i>n.</i>)	a person who suffers or dies because of his or her beliefs or actions (p. 14)
monarchy (<i>n.</i>)	a government ruled by a single nonelected person, such as a king or queen (p. 5)
orator (<i>n.</i>)	a public speaker, especially an eloquent one (p. 9)
provinces (<i>n.</i>)	territories or countries brought under Roman rule (p. 4)