

Julius Caesar



Biography Workbook Series

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JULIUS CÆSAR

(100-44 B.C.E.)

Rome solved the great political problem of the ancient world in the best practicable, if not in the best conceivable, way. To Julius Cæsar it fell to put the crowning stroke to that work. The several states of modern Europe have all contributed, though in different degrees, to political progress, and therefore no one of them has the unique importance and glory that belongs to Rome. For the same reason, no modern statesman stands on a level with Julius Cæsar. He remains, in Shakespeare's phrase, "the foremost man of all this world."

1. What famous English writer called Julius Cæsar "the foremost man of all this world"?

It was the high fortune of Rome that, in the principal crisis of its history, it possessed a citizen so splendidly endowed in intellect, character, and heart. Free to an extraordinary degree from the prejudices belonging to his age and country, with piercing and far-

sweeping vision, he saw as from some superior height, the political situation of his own time in its relation to the past and the future of the ancient world. If Rome had till then carried out the work of conquest with considerable method, and upon the whole, with steadiness, it had very inadequately satisfied the need for incorporation. Rome's oligarchical constitution, admirably adapted for the first task, could not easily reconcile itself to the second.

2. What word best describes Rome's government before Cæsar came to power?
 - a. Dictatorship
 - b. Monarchy
 - c. Oligarchy
 - d. Theocracy

In its best days, and while Carthage and Macedon were still formidable, the Senate had from time to time, prudently though grudgingly, extended the privilege of citizenship to some of the subject Italian states. But the great mass of Italians had only extorted it by rebellion during the boyhood of Cæsar. Outside Italy, the

conquered nations were still on the footing of subject allies, trampled upon and fleeced for the benefit of Rome, or rather of the Roman nobles and capitalists. If the great dominion was to be maintained in some tolerable degree of well-being for all its members, or even maintained at all, it was absolutely necessary that the so-called Republican constitution, always oppressive for the provinces, and now shamefully corrupt, should be replaced by personal government.

3. The Roman patricians were always eager to extend citizenship to Rome's conquered peoples.
- a. True
 - b. False

For a complete incorporation of the subject peoples was not to be expected from the suffrages of a dominant people, to even the poorest of whom, it would mean the cessation of highly prized privileges and immunities. The provinces would from the earliest moment of their subjection have welcomed such a change. The time was more than ripe for it when the Roman world lay at the feet of Sulla. Sulla had all the ability, self-reliance, prestige, and opportunity that were needed. But his moral nature was below the task. He had neither the insight, nor the sympathy, nor the noble ambition of Cæsar, and

he preferred to re-establish the senatorial oligarchy.

4. Why did Sulla fail to extend the franchise (citizenship) to Rome's provincials?

When Sulla crushed the Marian party (party of Gaius Marius), Cæsar had just arrived at manhood. Though of an old patrician house, he had yet a family connection with the democratic party, Marius having married his aunt. Cæsar himself had married a daughter of the democratic leader Cinna, and for refusing to divorce her he was proscribed by Sulla, but managed to keep in hiding till the storm was past.

5. Describe Julius Cæsar's two familial connections to the Populares (democratic party).

After the death of the great reactionist Sulla (78 B.C.E.), Cæsar seized every opportunity of reviving the spirit of the popular party—for instance, by publicly honoring the memory of Marius, bringing to justice murderers of the proscription, and courageously raising his single voice in the Senate against the illegal execution of Catiline's partisans (63 B.C.E.). Clearly seeing the necessity for personal government, at a time when his own services and distinctions were not such as to entitle him to aspire to it, Cæsar did his best to secure it for Pompey (then the foremost man in Rome), by strenuously supporting measures which virtually placed the empire at Pompey's absolute disposal for an indefinite period. A fairly good soldier, but a most vain, unreliable, and incompetent statesman, Pompey after five years let these powers slip through his hands.

6. Whom did Cæsar help bring to power?

- a. Jugurtha
- b. Marius
- c. Pompey
- d. Sulla

Cæsar was by this time thirty-eight (62 B.C.E.). He had steadily risen in influence and official rank. It was, no doubt, now that he

determined to take the great task into his own hands. He was the recognized chief of the popular party, which aimed at concentrating Republican government in the hands of a single person, as the only means of bridling the oligarchy. But this was not to be accomplished merely by popular votes, as many a democratic leader had found to his cost. Cæsar needed an army and a military reputation, and with rare patience he set himself to acquire both. By a coalition with Pompey—now obliged to treat Cæsar as an equal—he obtained the consulship (59 B.C.E.), which on its expiration entitled him to a great military command.

7. The Populares aimed at concentrating _____ Republican government in the hands of a/an _____.
_____.

- a. assembly
- b. hereditary chieftain
- c. single person
- d. troika

Roman generals had of late preferred to extend their conquests eastward, and to win comparatively easy and lucrative triumphs in Asia, over people who had possessed for long ages a type of civilization suited to them, and who therefore could never thoroughly assimilate Western manners and institutions. All this

time Gaul, lying at the gates of Italy, was neglected (only the district between the Cevennes and the Alps having been reduced), because the people were more warlike, and less booty was to be gained. Yet, till that conquest should be effected, Rome's work of civilizing the world was standing still. Nay, it was always menaced by northern invasions.

8. Why did Roman generals prefer to conquer Eastern lands, rather than lands in Europe north of Italy?

This field of action—the conquest of Gaul—Cæsar marked out for himself. He could prepare the means for assuming power at home, and at the same time render the highest service to his country and humanity. His ardent spirit, his incredible energy in all circumstances of his life, astonished his contemporaries. Time pressed, for he was no longer young. While he was absent from Rome, what revolutions might not mar his plans! Yet, ten

continuous years did he devote to this great task, which, if he had achieved nothing else, would make his name one of the greatest in history.

9. Ancient Gaul is roughly equivalent to what modern country?
- a. France
 - b. Germany
 - c. Great Britain
 - d. Spain

In those ten years, Cæsar conquered Gaul, from the Pyrenees to the Rhine and the British Channel. Cæsar conquered Gaul so thoroughly, and treated the Gauls so sensibly, that when the fierce struggle was over, Gaul frankly and even proudly accepted her new position. The culture, the institutions, even the language of the victors, were eagerly adopted. The grandsons of the men who had fought so gallantly against Cæsar, won full citizenship, took their seats in the Senate, and commanded Roman armies.

These ten years decided the future of the West, and therefore of humanity. It is not merely the central position and natural advantages of France, nor yet the admirable qualities of her people, which have made her throughout mediæval and modern history, the foremost of European states. It is even more the result of France's (Gaul's) rapid and

thorough acceptance of Roman civilization. This made France the heir of Rome. This enabled France, long afterward, to Romanize Germany and England in some degree, and as it were at second-hand, by the arms of Emperor Charlemagne and William the Conqueror.

10. How is France the heir of ancient Rome?

It had been arranged between Cæsar and Pompey, that during the absence of the former in Gaul, the latter should act with the popular party, and keep the nobility in the condition of impotence to which it had been reduced in the consulship of Cæsar. Partly from jealousy of Cæsar, partly from sheer incapacity, Pompey, after much vacillation and duplicity, finally allied himself with the nobles. Pompey was thinking that, with the nobles' aid, he would be able to crush his rival (Cæsar) and thereafter be supreme. The nobles, for their part, thought they would know how to deal with Pompey if once Cæsar was out of the way.

11. Imagine that you are Pompey. Would you ally yourself with the nobles in order to defeat your rival, Cæsar? Why or why not? Does your opinion change when you know that Pompey was married to Cæsar's only daughter, Julia Caesaris?

In the negotiations which preceded the civil war, Cæsar showed a moderation and fairness in striking contrast with the unscrupulous and headstrong violence of the nobles, who had not even formal legality on their side. But when he was finally summoned to hand over his province

and army to a nominee of the Senate, on pain of being declared a public enemy, and when the tribunes who had reversed the resolution of the Senate were obliged to fly for their lives to his camp, he suddenly crossed the river Rubicon, the boundary of his province, and marched on Rome (49 B.C.E.).

12. What river did Caesar cross, thereby declaring his intention to wage war against his enemies in Rome?

Cæsar had but one legion with him; the bulk of his army was far away in its Gallic cantonments. The forces of Pompey were overwhelmingly superior in numbers. But the rapid and daring advance of Cæsar prevented their concentration. He came, not merely the adored general of a veteran army, but the long-tried and consistent leader of the liberal party, who had never swerved from his principles, never betrayed his friends, never flinched from dangers. Fascinated by his success and encouraged by his clemency, towns everywhere opened their gates. Pompeian levies joined him, swelling Cæsar's army at every stage as he swept down Italy.

13. Why did Cæsar enjoy popular support?

Pompey, for his part, was not sorry to have a pretext for moving eastward toward the scene of his early triumphs, where his military prestige and his personal influence would cause all the client states to rally round him, and the sulky and suspicious nobles would find themselves overshadowed. So Pompey crossed the Adriatic, leaving the large veteran army in Spain, which was under his orders, to take care of itself. Thither Cæsar proceeded as soon as he had secured Italy, bent on making sure of the West before doing anything else. When the Spanish legions were beaten, he lost no time in following Pompey, who had found the respite all too short for drilling his large but raw force of Romans, and organizing the masses of Asians whom he had summoned to his standard.

14. Pompey fled to the _____.
a. north
b. south
c. east
d. west

In the campaign that ensued, the conqueror of the East—Pompey—fully maintained his old military reputation. But at length, driven by the clamor of the nobles to risk a pitched battle, he suffered a crushing defeat on the field of Pharsalia (48 B.C.E.). Flying to Egypt, still an independent kingdom, Pompey was assassinated by order of the government (Pharaoh Ptolemy).

15. Where was Pompey killed?

The beaten patrician party rallied again, first in Africa, then in Spain. Of the three years and nine months of life that remained to Cæsar, much the greater portion was spent at the head of his army. He, therefore, had not time to give any complete organization to his new government. But his intentions are clearly discernible in outline. Supreme power, legislative as well as executive, was to be vested in a single ruler, governing not by divine right, but as the representative of the community, and

in its interest. This was indeed an ideal by no means novel to Romans. Scipio had brooded over it. Gaius Gracchus had for a moment realized it. The oldest institutions and traditions told of it. It was the power of the ancient kings theoretically continued to, and in grave emergencies actually exercised by, the magistrates of the Republic during its best days. It had been increasingly overshadowed by the Senate.

The Senate was now to be reduced to its original consultative office. The functions of the executive had been gradually divided among several magistrates. They were now to be re-concentrated. Above all, annual election—the cherished institution of all oligarchies, open or disguised—was to be replaced by life-tenure, with power to name a successor. The subjects of Rome were to be admitted to citizenship, wherever and whenever fit for it. There is even reason to believe that Cæsar intended to move much faster in this direction than his successor did.

Rome itself, from the mistress of the Empire, was to become its capital and most dignified municipality. All old parties—Cæsar's own included—were to consider themselves at an end. "To the victors the spoils!" was a cry rebuked from the first. For the vanquished of Pharsalia there was not only amnesty, but admission to the

highest grades of the public service, if they would bury their old grudge and recognize the government. Pauperism among the lower class, and insolvency among the upper—ulcers not admitting of a radical cure—were treated with judicious palliatives. Taxation was reduced, expenditure was increased, and yet the balance in the treasury at Cæsar's death was tenfold what it had ever been before—a proof of the frightful waste and corruption from which the Roman world was rescued by the overthrow of the oligarchy.

16. Describe the type of government that Cæsar planned to establish for Rome.

Of the administrative work of Cæsar it is impossible here to give any adequate idea. A reform of the calendar served the West till 1582, and served Russia until the Russian Revolution. Other reforms included a recasting of the whole provincial administration, a codification of Roman law, a census of the Empire, a uniform gold coinage, a public library, a metropolitan police force, building regulations, sanitary regulations, an alteration of the course of the Tiber, which would have drained the marshes. All these grand projects, and more, some carried to completion, some only sketched out, teemed from the active brain of the great organizer, in the brief moments he could spare from military cares in these last months of his life—a devouring activity, an all-embracing capacity, such as perhaps never shone forth in man before or since. What Roman incorporation meant for the ancient world was at last revealed. The war havoc of seven centuries had found its justification.

17. Western Europe used the Julian calendar until 1582.
- a. True
 - b. False



The Ides of March—the day, March 15, 44 B.C.E., when Caesar was assassinated.

In the midst of this glorious and beneficent career, at the age of fifty-five, Cæsar, whose frank and fearless spirit disdained suspicion or precaution, was assassinated by a knot of rancorous, perfidious aristocrats, whom he had pardoned and promoted. Their purblind spite was powerless to avert the inevitable advent of monocracy. What they did effectually extinguish for more than a century, was the possibility of amnesty, conciliation, and mutual confidence.

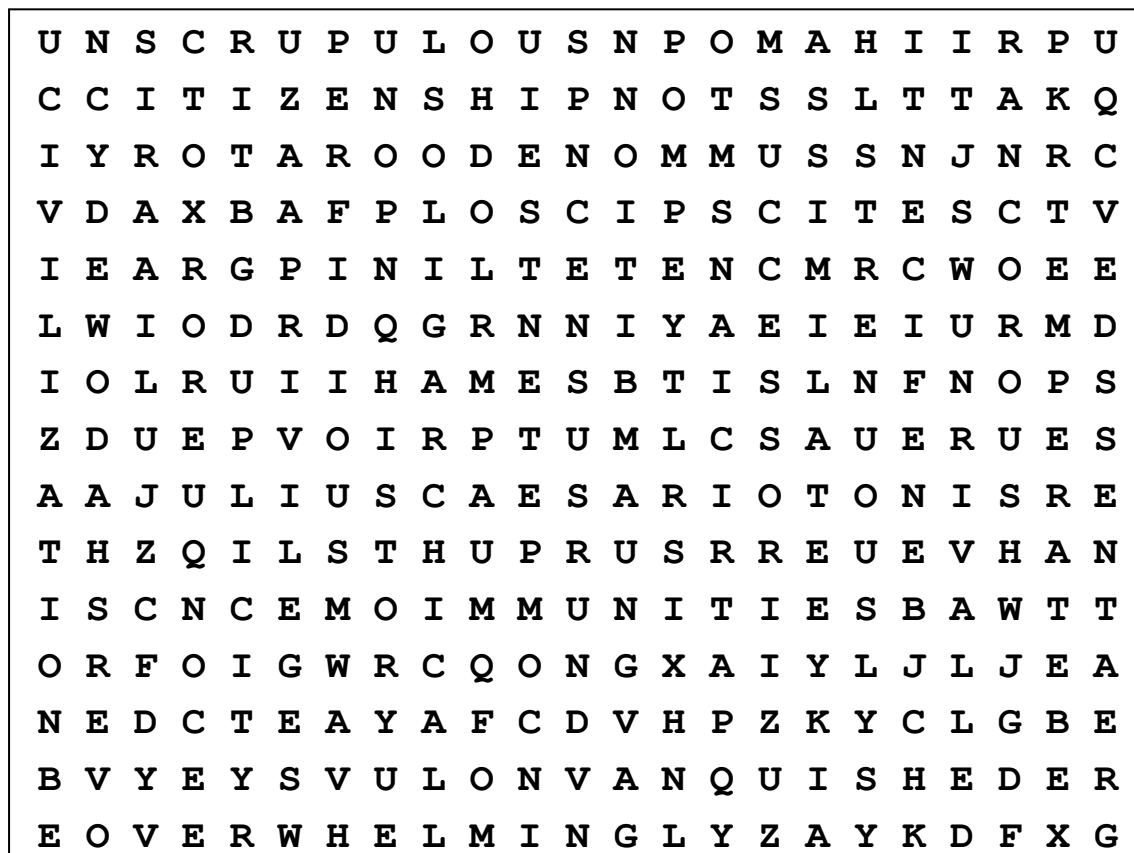
Careless as usual of historical truth, the great English poet William Shakespeare has glorified the murderers of Cæsar. Italian writer Dante Alighieri, never forgetting the moral responsibility of art, has reserved the lowest circle of hell for Brutus, Cassius, and Judas Iscariot.

It imports little to the greatness of such a one as Cæsar, to add that in an age of oratory he stood in the first rank of orators; that his historical writings are an unrivalled model of vigor, lucidity, and elegance; that he carried his scientific culture to a point very unusual among his countrymen; and that his personal prowess and feats of endurance were the admiration of veteran soldiers. Women loved him, and he loved them. Enjoying life thoroughly, he was temperate in all things. To no man has it been given to approach more nearly to the perfection of human nature—complete, evenly balanced, and self-controlled.

18. Looking back on Cæsar's life, what would you most like to emulate in your own life? What pitfalls would you most like to avoid?

[illegible]

Word Search Puzzle



ambition

assimilate

beneficent

census

citizenship

civilization

conqueror

duplicity

Gaul

greatness

history

immunities

incompetent

Julia

Julius Caesar

oligarchical

oratory

overshadowed

overwhelmingly

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