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## UNIT 8 STRUCTURE AND STYLE OF THE PLAY *JULIUS CAESAR*

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### 8.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this unit an attempt will be made to give you an idea of the structure of the play. After studying the unit with attention you should be able to:

- assess the importance of the structure of the play;
- outline the different stages of the play;
- identify the important events in the play; and
- understand the style used in the play.

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### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

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The story of the play *Julius Caesar* is derived from Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, published in Sir Thomas North's Translation in 1579. According to Janette Dillon in her article 'Julius Caesar' in her book *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare's Tragedies* 'Plutarch, a great writer of the first century A. D, was sympathetic to republicanism, a political position inherently challenging the absolute monarchy of the Elizabethan state'. Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* was first published in the First Folio of 1623. It was probably first staged a quarter of a century earlier in 1599. It was in this year that Thomas Plate, a Swiss visitor to London, saw the play in The Swan Theatre.

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### 8.2 STRUCTURE OF *JULIUS CAESAR*

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*Julius Caesar* has characteristics of both a history play and a tragedy. It follows the pattern that exists in Shakespearean History plays where social order in a society collapses giving rise to chaos. In history plays things begin to go wrong because people are either weak, ambitious, fallible or dislike authority. *Julius Caesar* is a historical play too as it deals with certain events which took place in ancient Rome in the years 45 B.C to 42 B.C. Most of the characters in the play are also historical. In this play Shakespeare has used his imagination and modified some historical events to meet his own dramatic purposes.

As a tragic play *Julius Caesar* follows the concept of tragedy that is largely Aristotelian. The play has feelings of pity and fear which according to Aristotle is one of the dominant features of a tragedy. *Julius Caesar* also arouses in the spectator feelings like hope, admiration, awe and wonder.

The plot of *Julius Caesar* begins with conspiracy against Caesar, followed by development of conspiracy. These are followed by Caesar's murder and the defeat of the conspirators. It informs us of the popular enthusiasm for Caesar as well as the hostile elements against him.

The play begins with Caesar returning to Rome where some of the people are jealous of his achievements because of which they turn against him. This ends in Caesar's murder, for which Brutus too, is responsible. Mark Antony, swears to revenge Caesar's death. He astutely guides the course of events and is later successful in his mission.

### 8.2.1 Conspiracy against Caesar

The plot of *Julius Caesar* begins with Caesar's triumphant entry into the city after defeating Pompey's sons. The common people of Rome celebrate Caesar's return to Rome. The two tribunes Flavius and Marullus who are people's representative in the senate, rebuke the citizens for their celebration of Caesar's recent victory. They criticize them, urging them to return to their work. They reproach the people for forgetting so soon their love for Pompey. At one time Pompey was regarded as a great statesman and a warrior in Rome but he had been defeated in a battle by Julius Caesar. The two tribunes send the humble artisans home whose only offence is that they have taken a holiday from their work so that they could witness Caesar's triumphant entry into the city of Rome. These tribunes are supposed to be protectors of the rights of the common people but actually prevent the populace from welcoming their popular hero. In the minds of the two tribunes, there is a strong feeling against Julius Caesar even though the common people are his great supporters.

The two tribunes are sympathetic towards the republicans who are criticizing Caesar and are also plotting his murder. The first seed of the subsequent tension has already been sown. They angrily ask the crowd:

*O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome,  
Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft  
Have you climb'd up to walls and battlements,  
To towers and windows, yea, to chimney tops,  
You infants in your arms, and there have sat  
The livelong day, with patient expectation,  
To greet Pompey pass the streets of Rome;*

(Act I sc i. 36-42)

They rebuke the citizens for being ungrateful and fickle - minded. In the past they had idolized Pompey and now they are acclaiming Julius Caesar's triumph and have declared the day to be a holiday. They further ask the mob:

*And do you now put on your best attire?  
And do you now call it a holiday?  
And do you now strew flowers in his way  
That comes in triumph over Pompey's blood?*

(Act I sc i. 47-51)

The final speech of Flavius in this scene indicates the widespread feeling that the people have forgotten about Julius Caesar's growing ambitions and that his wings need to be clipped:

*These growing feathers pluck'd from Caesar's wing,  
Will make him fly an ordinary pitch,  
Who else would soar above the view of men  
And keep us all in servile fearfulness.*

(Act I sc ii 72-75)

We can see in this Act that there is a conflict between the Tribunes, the supporters of Pompey and the artisans who have taken Caesar's victory against Pompey's sons as an excuse for a holiday. There is dualism in the first scene where we see that on the one hand Caesar is a popular man among the common people while on the other hand he has also roused jealousy among the tribunes. In the opening scene we see that the various people in Rome are beginning to turn against Caesar and conspire against him which develops further as the play moves on. This conspiracy leads to the subsequent war of Philippi between Caesar's enemies and his supporters.

The opening scene is significant in many ways. In this scene we come across certain people in Rome who are hostile to Caesar. We also note that Caesar is a popular man so far as the common people are concerned. In addition, this scene reveals the fickle-mindedness of the populace. First, they display a lot of enthusiasm over Caesar's victory and his triumphant return to Rome and then, after being rebuked by the tribunes, they disperse and quietly go home.

This scene suggests that the hostility represented by the two tribunes will soon develop into a strong antagonism against Caesar, with Casius as the chief instigator against him. The result of this can be a civil war between Caesar's enemies and his supporters. The opening scene of the play is dramatically very important in acquainting us with the circumstances relating to the political situation in Rome.

Although Caesar does not make a personal appearance in this scene, yet his greatness as a ruler and conqueror is clearly indicated. The scene is also important in revealing to us the character of the populace who cannot think for themselves and have no judgment of their own. Critic Dieter Mehl in his book *Shakespeare's Tragedies: An Introduction* says:

The first scene, contrasting the relaxed holiday mood of the opportunist plebeians with republican zeal and indignation of the Tribunes of the people, presents the demonstrative personality cult of Caesar side by side with the political fears and apprehensions it arouses, thus introducing the crucial phenomenon that Caesar's impact, throughout the play, is more powerful indeed more real, than his physical presence.

Caesar, his wife Calpurnia and Mark Antony make their first appearance in Act I sc ii.

The second scene of the first act indicates the opening of the movement of the action of the play where the sooth-sayer gives his prophecy. The festival of Lupercalia is held in honour of the legendary she-wolf who suckled Rome's founders when they were children. Two noblemen run a race through the city during the feast and they touch the woman they come across with a thong. It is believed that those barren women who are touched by the thong become fertile.

As the procession passes a soothsayer calls to Caesar to beware the Ides of March ( 15<sup>th</sup> March ) He warns Caesar to take necessary measures for his life's safety on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March because there is danger to his life on that day. Caesar ignores him calling him a dreamer.

The procession passes on, but Brutus and Cassius step aside and admit to each other that they are not willing to be present if a crown is offered to Caesar. Cassius is jealous of Caesar and also worried about the power Caesar is assuming for himself. He attempts to persuade Brutus to join him in the conspiracy against him. He invents many stories to prove Caesar's shortcomings. After learning about Brutus's attitude towards Caesar, Cassius reveals to him his own resentment at Caesar's growing appeal. He tactfully poisons the mind of the noble Brutus about the importance Caesar is assuming for himself. He compares Caesar with himself and Brutus and states that Caesar is no more extraordinary than themselves. Before Brutus leaves Cassius persuades him to join in the killing of Caesar. Brutus does not directly agree to participate in Cassius's plans but says that he would think over and give the matter a serious consideration.

When the festival of Lupercalia is over and the procession returns they detain Casca who reports to them that Antony had offered the crown to Caesar thrice and how Caesar had refused it. Later he forges letters and orders Cinna to throw them into the house of Brutus urging him to free Rome from Caesar's tyranny. At the end of the scene Cassius expresses in a soliloquy his satisfaction at the result achieved:

I will do so: till then, think of the world.  
Well Brutus thou art noble; yet I see  
Thy honourable mettle may wrought  
From that it is dispos'd: therefore 'tis meet  
That noble minds keep even with their likes;  
for who so firm that cannot be seduc'd?  
Caesar doth bear me hard; but he loves Brutus.  
If I were Brutus now, and he were Cassius,  
He should not humour me.

(Act I sc. iii, 304-312)

This is the first soliloquy of the play. The soliloquy was one of the dramatic devices of the Elizabethan theatre, in which the actor speaks his thoughts aloud, directly to the audience, alone on the stage, which the other characters are supposed to hear. A soliloquy would convey information about a character's motives and state of mind or provide a general comment on the progress of the action of the play. Cassius's soliloquy reveals him as a schemer and also initiates a dramatic movement in the play.

This section introduces us to most of the characters of the play. It reveals the characters of Caesar, Brutus, Antony, Cassius, Calpurnia, Portia, Cicero and Casca.

Particularly, Casca gives an account of the dreadful sights he has seen on the stormy night. This scene continues with great dramatic skill and portrays both the conspirators and the victim skilfully. The manner in which Cassius manipulates Brutus into a conspiracy shows Cassius' skill as schemer. Here, we also come across a supernatural incident as the soothsayer warns Caesar to beware of the Ides of March. It arouses our curiosity and makes us wonder about the warning.

### **8.2.2 Shaping of the Conspiracy and its Effect**

I talked about a conspiracy in the preceding discussion. It takes place between Act I scene iii and the end of the Act II. The scene opens with the raging of a fearful storm. Casca the terror-struck senator meets Cicero and acquaints him of the supernatural phenomena that has occurred. The earth seemed to shake with fear as if it had become unfirm. It seemed as if there were 'civil strife in heaven' and

fire seemed to drop from the skies, as if gods were expressing their anger by causing death and destruction all around:

A common slave, you know him well by sight,  
Like twenty torches join'd, and yet his hand,  
Not sensible of fire remain'd unscorch'd  
Besides (I ha' not since put up a sword)  
Against the capitol. I met a lion  
Who glar'd upon me, and went surely by.  
Without annoying me and there were drawn  
Upon a heap a hundred ghastly women,  
Transformed with their fear who swore they saw  
Men, all in fire, walk up and down the streets.

(Act I sc iii 15-25)

The supernatural occurrences witnessed by Casca also produce an atmosphere of horror in the play. In Shakespeare's plays storms have far reaching symbolic significance. These storms are brought into closest relation with character and action. The term used is pathetic fallacy which means the poetic belief that nature shows sympathy with humans by reflecting human passions. The use of pathetic fallacy tends to produce in us a sense of the supernatural. We are made to feel that there is some kind of force outside human affairs which anticipates and acts as a warning to the great disturbances in the lives of humans.

The Elizabethans thought of individual man, his society or 'the state' and of the natural world as intimately and indivisibly connected. It was also believed that disorder and violence in the world of nature predicts disorder in the society and individual. For the Elizabethans the king symbolized the state and therefore when the king was murdered the social order was violently disrupted. In Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* we have a similar storm. In this scene the conspiracy against Caesar makes further progress and the unnatural events in nature are a premonition of the unnatural events about to take place.

In the first act of the play, Casca meets Cassius who convinces him that the supernatural events are an indication of some great catastrophe which is about to overtake the people of Rome. Cassius calls the storm an expression of God's wrath over the state of affairs in Rome brought by the tyranny of Caesar. Cassius thus succeeds to enlist Casca into his conspiracy. Another conspirator Cinna, is sent by him to distribute forged letters in Brutus' house so that Brutus would think that the people of Rome want him to take action. Cassius knows that the best way to manipulate Brutus is to make him believe that he is acting in the interest of Rome. Cassius feels that including Brutus in their conspiracy would make it appear much more patriotic and noble. Cassius' act shows his ruthlessness; he is willing to deceive his close friend for his self-interest. Cassius is able to draw a few other members of the Senate —Metellus Cimber, Decius Brutus and Trebonius into the conspiracy.

In Act II Scene i we see the mental conflict in Brutus. Brutus is walking in the garden disturbed, reviewing his reasons for joining this conspiracy to murder Caesar. Brutus' secret thoughts are revealed in his soliloquy. According to Dieter Mehl in his book *Shakespeare's Tragedies: An Introduction*, 'The first part of the impressive scene (Act II scene i) can be seen as one long soliloquy, interrupted three times by Lucius' brief appearances. It is through this monologue that Brutus' central position as the real, tragic protagonist of the play is established.' In his soliloquy he says that he has no personal enmity against Caesar; instead, Caesar loves him and has great confidence in him. But the interest of the common people demands that

he should prevent Caesar from becoming all-powerful. He comes to the decision that Caesar should be assassinated so that the country is saved from tyranny. Commenting on the soliloquy Diuter Mehl has remarked that the soliloquy here is not used 'as a kind of solo performance of aria, a recital of emotions or an unfolding of intentions for the benefit of the audience, but tries to render a continuous process of reflection, uncontrolled associations and worrying uncertainty.'

As Brutus is visited by Cassius and his conspirators and together they come to a resolution to murder Caesar, Cassius' proposal of killing Antony along with Caesar is turned down by him (Brutus). This decision of Brutus will have far-reaching consequences afterwards. Not being sure if Caesar will come to the capitol where he is to be murdered, Cassius decides that they will all meet at Caesar's place. The scene enlightens us about the natures of Brutus and Cassius. Brutus is portrayed as a noble man and idealist, unfit for practical politics and intrigues, whereas Cassius is a shrewd and practical man of the world.

The domestic scene between Portia and Brutus shows their deep attachment to each other. Portia is worried at his recent behaviour. She makes a gash on her thigh to prove that she can bear the pain of knowing his secret and the cause of his worry. Brutus is deeply touched and promises to reveal all his secrets to her. Portia here reminds us that her troubled husband has been happy and contented until recently. This gives added pathos to the destructive course he seems to be taking. When the death of Portia takes place later in the play we realize the gravity of the destruction he is heading for. Portia proves to be Cato's daughter - Cato the elder had always been a symbol of Roman strength and courage.

In Act II scene ii we come across another domestic scene between Caesar and his wife Calpurnia.

Calpurnia prevents him from moving out of doors because of some dreadful sights of evil witnessed in a dream.

A lioness hath whelped in the streets,  
and groves have yawn'd and yielded up their dead;  
Fierce fiery warriors fight upon the clouds  
In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,  
Which drizzled blood upon the capitol;  
The noise of battle hurtled in the air,  
Horses did neigh, and dying men did groan,  
And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets.  
O Caesar, these things are beyond all use,  
And I do fear them.

(Act II sc. ii. 17-26)

These signs of ill omen again add to the horror in the play. The symbolic association of the storm with violence in the world of men is again presented here. The storm in Act I Scene iii and the storm which Calpurnia described in Act II scene ii are linked with each other. The storm scene deals with the supernatural. Both have a deep dramatic significance. Both are a prelude to the murder of Caesar and reflects some evil omen for Caesar and the people of Rome. It also signifies political unrest in Rome.

The storm in Act I scene iii highlights the psychological unrest in the hearts of the conspirators while the storm in act II scene ii depicts the death of Caesar and the resultant upheaval in Rome. In both the scenes Shakespeare makes strong and mysterious events happen keeping in mind the taste of the Elizabethan audience.

In her dream the senators stabbed Caesar three times and his statue was pouring out blood in which Romans bathed their hands. The priests also declare that the omens are unfavorable for Caesar. Caesar dismisses the omens but has to yield to his wife's request and sends word to the senate that he will not be present that day. Caesar is then artfully flattered by Decius who interprets Calpurnia's dream as a good sign for Caesar and not as a warning of calamity. He gives the news that the senate will confer on him the crown of Rome that day. Brutus and the other conspirators also come to escort him to the capitol and Caesar agrees to attend the meeting of the Senate.

This scene shows Caesar as an inconsistent and fickle -minded person. He is superstitious, ambitious, loves being flattered and is befooled easily. These negative qualities in him cost him his life. The last two scenes of act II form a kind of bridge between Caesar leaving his house and his arrival at the capitol. The characters that appear in these scenes - Artemidorus, Portia and soothsayer - are suspicious of the approaching crisis. Artemidorus, a teacher of the rhetoric is aware of the conspiracy against Caesar. He writes a note to warn Caesar that his life is in danger and intends to hand it over to Caesar. Artemidorus has a special function as spokesman of Caesar's supporters and their point of view. This scene creates a feeling of suspense and arouses our curiosity.

In the last scene of Act II Portia is depicted in an ironic contrast to her proven ability in act II scene i. She fails to show strength and courage any more as she has done when she had seen Brutus in distress in act II scene i. In act II scene iv she is agitated and full of anxiety on account of her husband. Thus, despite being Cato's daughter, a symbol of dignity and courage, she becomes frail and weak.

### **8.2.3 Caesar's Murder**

The third part of the action brings us to the climax of the play in Act III scene ii. This is an important scene in the play as Caesar's murder is shown here. While Caesar proceeds to the capitol with his followers he notices the soothsayer and remembers his warning. As soon as the procession enters the capitol building, the conspirators start acting according to the plan. Caesar is asked to withdraw the order of banishment against Publius Cimber. Caesar tells Metellus Cimber that the banishment of Publius cannot be repealed. Brutus comes forward and requests Caesar to free Publius from the punishment but Caesar again rejects his request. Caesar compares himself to the pole-star which remains fixed at one place and does not change positions like the other stars.

Caesar is haughty in his reply to the conspirators and speaks in an insulting manner. Casca then stabs Caesar followed by the other conspirators. The dying Caesar sees Brutus attack him and is overwhelmed with grief and disappointment saying: 'Et tu Brute? Then fall Caesar!' With the assassination of Caesar the soothsayer's prophecy proves to be true.

Chaos follows Caesar's assassination with people running in panic. Screams and noise fills the air. Brutus tries to calm down the crowd, comforting the elderly and the frightened senators. Antony reacts to the murder of Caesar in the following manner:

O mighty Caesar! Dost thou lie so low?  
Are all the conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,  
Shrunk to this little measure? Fare thee well.  
I know not, gentlemen, what you intend  
I do beseech ye, if you bear me hard,  
Now, whilst your purpled hands do reek and smoke,

Fulfil your pleasure. Live a thousand years,  
I shall not find myself so apt to die;  
No place will please me so, no mean of death.  
As here by Caesar, and by you cut off,  
The choice and master spirits of this age.

(Act III sc i. 147-163)

Antony's request of being allowed to speak at Caesar's funeral is also granted provided he tells the people that he speaks with the permission of the conspirators and that he would not say anything against them. Antony also agrees to allow Brutus to address the crowd before he does.

At the funeral of Caesar, Brutus makes a speech which mainly justifies the murder of Caesar. He explains to them that his love for Caesar was not less than any of the other friends of Caesar. But his love for Rome is greater than his love for Caesar.

Brutus's speech to the crowd is logical, calm and factual, but the crowd is not intelligent enough to understand his argument. The crowd cheers and supports him and the other conspirators not because they have understood what he has said but because Brutus for them is an honourable man

The crowd was making a loud noise and praising Brutus as he was leaving the platform for Antony to give his speech. The people of Rome appeal to each other to be silent and listen to Antony who says the following:

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 interred 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 answer'd 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 to sterner stuff:  
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,  
And Brutus is an honourable man.  
Your 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 speak what I do know.  
You all did love him once, not without cause;  
What cause withholds you then to mourn for him?  
O judgment, 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.

(Act III sc. ii. 75-109)

Antony does not make an argumentative speech; his is an appeal to the mob's emotions. He is aware that the Roman crowd is illiterate and has no thinking of its own; they cannot be moved by reason but by reference to emotions and passions. First he praises his conspirators calling them 'honorable men' repeatedly to create dramatic irony. He disproves the charge that Caesar was ambitious and that he refused the crown thrice at the festival of Lupercalia. He gains the sympathy of the crowd by showing the wounded body of Caesar and connecting the wounds with each conspirator. Antony's speech makes use of rhetorical and poetic devices. He speaks in verse and makes use of irony, flattery, sarcasm and pathos in his speech. His clear understanding of human-nature makes him successful in instigating the Roman crowd against the conspirators. It is actually Caesar's spirit asserting itself through Antony's speech that worked wonders. The action captured in this scene marks the beginning of the sliding down in the play. The critic David Daiches comments in his essay "Guilt and Innocence in Julius Caesar" on Antony's speech in *Shakespeare's Tragedies An Anthology of modern Criticism* edited by Laurence Lerner (see Further Reading)

Wherein lies Antony's success? Is it not in his ability to manipulate people, to act the puppeteer and utilize the worthy emotions of innocent people for his own purposes? Cassius does this in a very mild way with Brutus, but Antony is the great puppeteer of the play, and his famous ovation is the work of a supreme puppet master. He manipulates other people's innocence.

Granville Barker comments on Antony's funeral speech in *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (1947)(see Further Reading):

One may so analyze the speech throughout and find it a triumph of effective cleverness. The cheapening of the truth, the appeals to passion, the perfect carillon of flattery, cajolery, mockery, and pathos, swinging to a magnificent tune, all serve to make it a model of what popular oratory should be.

The success of Antony's speech arouses the crowd's passion and they go about the city burning and destroying whatever they can lay their hand upon. The mob is infuriated and show irrational behaviour. They kill Cinna the poet spite of his explanation that he is not Cinna the conspirator. The crowd is in such a state of anger that it loses all sense of distinguishing between right and wrong. Commenting on the scene Critic Deiter Mehl says:

The scene where the utterly harmless and innocent poet Cinna is butchered in the street by excited and totally irrational plebeians only because he happens to have the same name as one of the conspirators. Nothing illustrates better the threat of political chaos than his desperate and unsuccessful attempt to save his skin by explaining the mistake.

This scene provides shock as well as brings comic relief to the tragic incident.

## 8.2.4 Defeat of the Conspirators

Act IV scene i throws light on Antony's shrewdness who decides with other members of the triumvirate consisting of Octavius and Lepidus, to execute along with a large number of citizens, Lepidus' own brother and Antony's own nephew. In Antony's opinion Lepidus is a worthless fellow even as he carried out certain tasks for them. This reveals Antony to be an unprincipled person. In *Shakespeare's Tragedies: An Introduction*, Dieter Mehl comments on this scene saying 'On the enemy's side, the bartering about human lives and the open contempt of the triumvir Lepidus shown by his partners are a demonstration of a cynical attitude towards humane values that greatly diminishes our sympathy for the avengers.'

Act IV scene iii takes place during the civil war being fought between anti-Caesar and pro-Caesar forces. Antony, Octavius and Lepidus are the leaders of the imperialist cause while Brutus and Cassius represent the republican cause. Brutus and Cassius are commanders of the army of two different regions. A misunderstanding arises between Brutus and Cassius leading to a rift between the two. Brutus complains to Lucilius of the changed attitude of Cassius towards him saying:

Thou hast describ'd  
A hot friend cooling. Ever note, Lucilius,  
When love begins to sicken and decay  
It useth an enforced ceremony.  
There are no tricks in plain and simple faith;  
But hollow men, like horses hot at hand,  
Make gallant show and promise of their mettle;  
But when they should endure the bloody spur,  
They fall their crests, and like deceitful jades  
Sink in the trial.

(Act IV sc. iii 18-27)

The quarrel continues, with Cassius threatening Brutus and Brutus ridiculing Cassius. Unable to bear the insult, Cassius offers his dagger to Brutus to kill him saying he loves Brutus very much and cannot be insulted by Brutus any further. But they soon reconcile and shake hands while Cassius admits that grief and ill temper had upset him when Brutus spoke rudely to him. Brutus is touched and confesses that he too was in a bad mood.

The quarrel scene also has dramatic significance. It brings out the contrast between Brutus and Cassius. Brutus is portrayed as an idealist and a man of principles whereas Cassius is a realist and a man of practical sense. This scene helps in the development of the character of Cassius.

Hazlitt comments in the book *Julius Caesar* edited by E.C. Houghton illustrates this:

'The quarrel between Brutus and Cassius is managed in a masterly way. The dramatic fluctuation of passion, the calmness of Brutus, the heat of Cassius, are admirably described; and the exclamation of Cassius on hearing of the death of Portia, which he does not learn till after their reconciliation. How scaped I killing when I crost you so?' gives double force to all that has gone before.'

Another important incident in this scene is the appearance of Caesar's ghost to Brutus. Whether the ghost of Caesar really appeared to Brutus or whether it was simply the creation of Brutus's exhausted mind is unclear. In either case it contributes to the atmosphere of horror in the play and gives us a sense of impending disaster.

The ghost of Caesar has a deep dramatic significance. It symbolizes the power of dead Caesar. His return to Brutus is ironic. Brutus with the other conspirators assumed that after the death of Caesar they would be able to seize power easily but Caesar proves to be more powerful dead than alive.

In this section Brutus and Cassius arrive with their armies at Philippi where they exchange sarcastic and insulting remarks with their opponents Octavius and Antony. Cassius in anticipation of the defeat asks Brutus what he would do if defeated by the opponents. Brutus says he will not allow his enemies to take him as prisoner and was also against committing suicide. They bid farewell to each other knowing that their defeat is imminent.

The battle begins but Brutus shows no signs of eagerness to fight the opponents. Pindarus brings a wrong report that the enemies had taken Titanius as prisoner whereas he was surrounded by his own army in order to rejoice the victory over Octavius. Thinking that Titinius is dead, Cassius feels deeply disappointed and tells Pindarus:

Come now keep thine oath.  
Now be a freeman; and with this good sword,  
That ran through Caesar's bowels, search this bosom.  
Stand not to answer. Here take thou the hilt,  
And when my face is cover'd as 'tis now,  
Guide them the sword, (Pindarus stabs him)  
Caesar, thou art revenged,  
Even with the sword that kill'd thee.

(Act V. sc iii. 40-46)

On seeing the dead body of Cassius, Titanius is greatly grieved and kills himself. On seeing Cassius and Titanius dead, Brutus pays tribute to both saying:

O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet!  
Thy spirit walks abroad and turns our swords  
In our own proper entrails

(Act V. sc. iii. 94-96)

He further says:

Are yet two Romans living such as these?  
It is impossible that ever Rome  
Should breed thy fellow.

(Act V sc iii 99-101)

Brutus is deeply grieved by Cassius' death. With the death of Cassius and Titanius comes the downfall of the Republicans.

David Daiches in his essay 'Guilt and Innocence' in *Julius Caesar* included in Lawrence Lerner's *Shakespeare's Tragedie: An Anthology of Modern Criticism* says:

Nowhere is the Epicurean Cassius more like the Stoic Brutus than when he commits suicide because he is ashamed of having lived 'so long, to see my best friend Ta'en before my face.' And that suicide, rather than military defeat, seals the doom of the republican cause.

In the next scene in the battle led by Brutus and Cato, the latter is killed. Lucilius is taken prisoner after being defeated. He pretends to be Brutus but Antony recognizes him. He is treated with great respect by Antony and his men.

In the last scene the defeat of Brutus becomes certain. After he sees the ghost of Caesar the second time, he is sure of his approaching death. He persuades his friends Clitus, Volumnius, Dardanius and Strato to run him through with the sword. None of them agree to kill him. There is an alarm and all his friends flee to safer places except Strato. After Strato is persuaded by Brutus to kill him, he reluctantly runs the sword through him. Brutus dies while saying:

Farewell, good Strato —Caesar, now be still;  
I kill'd not thee with half so good a will.

(Act V. sc. v 49-50)

Octavius and Antony enter Brutus' tent to find his body. Antony pays a moving tribute to Brutus saying:

This was the noblest Roman of them all.  
All the conspirators save only he  
Did that they did in envy of great Caesar;  
He only, in general honest thought  
And common good to all, made one of them.

(Act V. sc. v 68-72)

The power of the dead Caesar is felt throughout the second half of the play. It asserts itself through the army led by Antony and Octavius. It is visible in the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius where it is present in the thoughts of these conspirators. The spirit of Caesar again dominates the minds of Cassius and Brutus when they decide to end their lives.

Cunningness and flattery in Antony come forth in the second half of the play. Brutus takes him at his face value. He realizes very late what he had meant while speaking to the mob. Antony's speech has dramatic irony.

Thus, we note that *Julius Caesar* on the whole has a straightforward and well-developed plot. The play has a compact structure with no digressions. The plot moves smoothly keeping the readers in suspense throughout the play. The exciting events and incidents hold the attention of the reader. The play includes a number of supernatural incidents creating horror in the play that adds interest to the play. The abundance of dramatic scenes greatly enhances the appeal of the play.

About the structure of *Julius Caesar*, Granville Barker further comments in the *Prefaces to Shakespeare*(1947): "The larger rhythm of *Julius Caesar* can be variously interpreted. The action moves by one impetus, in a barely checked crescendo, to the end of Act III. Caesar's murder is the theme; the mob provides a recurrent chorus of confusion, and ends as it has begun, this part of the story."

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### 8.3 STYLE

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Style refers to the way the writer uses his language in his work of literature. The choice of words also is an important component of style. We find a continuous process of change in style in Shakespeare's early, middle and later plays.

About the style of the play *Julius Caesar*, Bradley has commented in his book *Shakespearean Tragedy* as follows:

In *Julius Caesar* neither thought on the one side, nor expression on the other, seems to have any tendency to outrun or contend with its fellow. We receive an impression of easy mastery and complete harmony, but not so strong an impression of inner power bursting into outer life.

### **Shakespeare's use of diction**

Shakespeare uses rhetorical devices frequently in his play *Julius Caesar*. One of the figures of speech is onomatopoeia involving the use of words whose sound seems to resemble closely thus conveying the sense of the author. One such example is in Act I Sc.i:

'you blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!'

Here the repeated use of 's' emphasizes the harshness with which the tribune Marullus scolds the crowd.

Alliteration is another rhetorical device put into use by Shakespeare. Alliteration is the selection of words in which we come across repetition of initial consonants or same sound. A suitable example of alliteration is in Act II Scene ii in Calpurnia's speech:

And graves have yawn'd, and yielded up their dead.

The repetition of 'y' sound adds to the eeriness of the disturbed nature

The same is true of the lines:

Fierce Fiery warriors fought upon the clouds

In ranks and squadrons and right form of war.

The repetition of 'f' in the first line and 'r' in the second line reinforces the warlike situation in this scene.

Shakespeare's use of puns add humour to his play. Pun is a play on words having identical meanings or having similar sounds but a vast difference in meaning. This figure of speech is employed for humour.

Let's take the example of pun in Act I scene i where the second citizen answers Marullus' question:

A trade, Sir, that I hope I may use with a safe conscience;

Which is, indeed, sir, a mender of bad soles.

Here 'mender of soles' is meant by Marullus as 'mender of souls'. This makes him ask the second citizen his occupation once again. Here the confusion is brought out to create humour for the readers.

### **Shakespeare's use of Language**

While composing verses, Shakespeare does not follow the rules of grammar or syntax. To convey the exact thought was most important for him and he did not care much about rules of language. Flavius' says in Act I scene ii lines 63-64.

Go you down that way towards the Capitol

This way will I

In one of his other speeches in Act I scene ii line 70-71, we see:

I'll about and drive away the vulgar from the streets; so do you too, where you perceive them thick.

Here the phrases 'go you down' and 'so do you too' used by Shakespeare are not in time with standard usage.

Shakespeare uses words for expressions that he wants to convey to his audience. He uses words which best suit the action in the play. For example in Act IV scene iii Brutus says:

Remember March, the ides of March remember.  
Did not great Julius bleed for Justice' sake  
What villain touch'd his body that did stab,  
And not for justice? What, shall one of us,  
That struck the foremost man of all this world  
But for supporting robbers, shall we now  
Contaminate our fingers with base bribes,  
And sell the mighty space of our large honours  
For so much trash as may be grasped thus?  
I had rather be a dog, and bay the moon;  
Than such a Roman.

(Act iv sc iii. 18-28)

Shakespeare's use of metaphors is also remarkable.

Brutus's soliloquy in the orchard in Act II scene i brings out the best example of metaphor:

But 'tis a common proof,  
That loneliness is young ambition's ladder,  
Where to the climber-upward turns his face;  
But when he once attains the upmost round,  
He then unto the ladder turns his back,  
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees  
By which he did ascend.

(Act II sc i. 21-26)

Or in the sentences,  
Fashion it thus: that what he is, augmented,  
would run to these and these extremities;  
And therefore think him as a serpent's egg,  
Which, hatch'd, would, as his kind, grow mischievous,  
And kill him in the shell.

(Act II sc. i. 3-34)

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## 8.4 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit you were introduced to the structure and style of the play *Julius Caesar*. Here, these have been analyzed in detail to enable you to understand the play as a whole and to place it in a proper perspective.

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## 8.5 SUGGESTED READINGS

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Granville -- Barker, Harley. *Prefaces to Shakespeare*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947, II.

Lerner, Laurence. *Shakespeare's Tragedies: An Anthology of Modern Criticism*. England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971.

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## **8.6 EXERCISE**

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1. Who are Tribunes? What advice do the tribunes give to the craftsmen of Rome.
2. What were the unnatural events seen by Casca during the stormy night?
3. Critically comment on the speech made by Antony after the murder of Caesar.
4. Recapitulate the events that take place on the occasion of Caesar's Murder in *Julius Caesar*.