
UNIT 9 THEME AND CHARACTERIZATION

Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
 - 9.1 Theme of *Julius Caesar*
 - 9.2. Characterization
 - 9.2.1 Major Characters
 - 9.2.2 Minor Characters
 - 9.3 Let us Sum Up
 - 9.4 Exercise
 - 9.5 Suggested Readings
-

9.1 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are to comment on the theme of *Julius Caesar* and to understand the role and nature of different characters in the play.

By the end of this unit you should be able to have a clear view of these two aspects of *Julius Caesar*; namely theme and characterisation.

9.1 THEME OF JULIUS CAESAR

At the beginning of the play we find a sharp division between the Monarchists and the Republicans. Monarchists were the supporters of Caesar while the Republicans were those senators who opposed the monarchic principle. The reasons behind the conduct of Monarchists and Republicans centered around freedom, liberty as well as selfish motives.

The play *Julius Caesar* opens with the crowd of commoners celebrating in the streets of Rome the triumph of Caesar over Pompey's sons. We also witness the bitterness of the two Tribunes, the representatives of the people of the Senate. They are jealous of the popularity of Caesar and rebuke the crowd for supporting him.

The opening scene gives us some suggestion of the development of the main theme of the play which is the conflict between Caesarism and Republicanism. Romans had a tradition of a Republican government or a government by the people rather than monarchy. It is this tradition of Republicanism that the tribunes try to uphold against the ambitions of Caesar. We get a hint of the atmosphere of strife and disunity in Rome preparing us for the crisis later in the play. The hostile elements against Caesar presented in the first scene contain germs of the conspiracy against Caesar.

The theme of Caesarism versus Republicanism is seen in the Cassius- Brutus conspiracy. Cassius makes an attempt to bring Brutus, a trusted friend of Caesar, into the conspiracy to murder Caesar. Cassius himself has some traits of Republicanism and love of freedom in himself but it is more out of jealousy of the growing powers and popularity of Caesar that he hatches a plan to kill Caesar.

On learning Brutus's love of freedom, liberty, and Republicanism and his disapproval of Caesar's assumption of royal power, Cassius reveals to Brutus his own jealousy of Caesar and his contempt for Caesar's physical weaknesses. Cassius is able to win Brutus to his side wholly by reminding him of his ancestor's love of Republicanism.

The conflict between his republicanism and loyalty to Caesar puts Brutus in a dilemma who essentially values freedom and republicanism. In his soliloquies he betrays the suspicion that Caesar is becoming more powerful each day.

The severe storm, thunder and lightning with unnatural happenings taking place in Act I sc iii is interpreted by Casca and by Cassius as an expression of the wrath of gods against the tyranny of Caesar. This sign of ill - omen further strengthens the approval of Republicanism against Caesarism.

Before his assassination Caesar is handed over a letter by Artemidorus warning him against the conspirators, which he ignores saying haughtily 'what touches us ourselves shall be last served.'

This pride and arrogance of Caesar reaffirm his monarchic quality a symbol of Caesarism. With the victory of Republicanism, chaos and commotion follows in the form of noise and movement all over the stage. In other words the victory of Republicanism has brought chaos and war. It is only with the triumph of the monarchical principle that peace is established later. In his soliloquy after Caesar's death and the fall of Caesarism, Antony predicts the violence and strife that will destroy Rome.

In his funeral speech Brutus again reiterates his love for liberty, freedom and republicanism to justify why he murdered Caesar. He says that he murdered him not because his love for Caesar was less but because his love for the people of Rome was greater. In his view, Caesar was ambitious and tyrannized the common people.

In his speech Brutus defends republicanism while Antony attacks republicanism and shows his preference for a monarchical rule. Antony then regrets the fall of Caesarism with Caesar's death and the rise of republicanism in these lines:

Even at the base of Pompey's statue
(which all the while ran blood) great Caesar fell.
O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!
Then I, and you, and all of us fell down,
Whilst bloody treason flourish's over us.

(Act III sc. ii, 191-195)

The appearance of the ghost in the last part of the play works against the assumption of the conspirators that the death of Caesar would produce a free Rome. Ironically, Caesar proved to be more powerful after death. All see that Caesarism which the conspirators wanted to destroy is not destroyed but is still alive with Caesar's spirit and is all powerful. It is the spirit of Caesar or the power of Caesarism which dominates the minds of Cassius and Brutus towards the end of the play. Brutus is too hasty in Caesar's spirit again directed the belief of Cassius that his army had lost the battle, an error instigating him to end his life followed by Brutus. Republicanism dies with the death of the conspirators one by one. Both Cassius and Brutus die with Caesar's name on their lips. Brutus says finally:

O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet!
Thy spirit walks abroad and thus over swords
In our proper entrails.

9.2 CHARACTERIZATION

Shakespeare's characters have complexity as well as fullness. He makes use of his great artistic skills while creating his characters. His characters have variety and are strongly conceptualized.

Julius Caesar has numerous characters. Julius Caesar, Brutus, Cassius, Mark Antony and Octavius Cimber are the major characters. The minor characters include Portia, Calpurnia, Casca, Cicero, Decius Brutus, Lepidus, Lucilius, Messala, Titinius, Pindarus, Lucius, Ligarius, Cinna the Conspirator, Strato, Volumnius, Young Cato and Popilius Lena.

9.2.1 Major Characters

Julius Caesar

In the very opening scene Caesar is introduced to us as a great warrior who has just returned to Rome after defeating Pompey's sons. Caesar does not appear in the opening scene of the play but the manner in which the tribunes Marullus and Flavius discuss him reveals that he has great power in Rome. Brutus is all praise for him and refers to Caesar as 'the foremost man of all this world'. His deafness and affliction with epilepsy do not effect his glorious conduct. According to Dieter Mehl in his book *Shakespeare's Tragedies: An Introduction*

As the play proceeds Caesar still remains a figure seen from the distance rather than in close – up and we learn more about his impact on others than about the actual individual. Whenever he appears in person he seems more anxious to create an impression of superhuman stature and commanding presence than to allow us any revealing insight into his real thoughts and emotions.

On the few occasions that he appears on stage he is delineated as having other individual traits. Caesar makes only three brief appearances before he is murdered. Again Critic Dieter Mehl in his book *Shakespeare's Tragedies: An Introduction* says:

His (Caesar) real personality comes out much more impressively through Cassius' attempt to influence Brutus and Brutus' tragic dilemma, as well as Casca's satirical account of what happened off stage. The fact that he is deaf in one ear- a handicap added by Shakespeare- and troubled with the 'falling sickness' does not mean that the dramatist deliberately reduced his heroic structure , but rather underlines the extraordinary force of his presence which is not even impaired by these physical defects.

Kenneth Muir in *Shakespeare's Tragic Sequence* comments that for Caesar public interests came before his own interests. 'He reforms the crown offered to him by Antony so as to demonstrate that he did not wish to be a king; he postpones the reading of Artemidorus's warning because his personal interests are of less importance than those of the state; and as Brutus admits , he has never let passion usurp the place of reason.'

Caesar is superstitious. He asks Calpurnia to stand on the way so that when Antony is running his race he can touch her because the old people believed that if barren women are touched by a runner of the holy race, they can be set free of their barrenness. At other times he disregards superstition. He calls the soothsayer a dreamer.

Caesar's fearlessness comes to the fore when Calpurnia insists that she would not allow him to leave the house because of the dreadful dream she saw and the watchman too had seen some frightening sights. Talking of Caesar and Calpurnia, Mehl has remarked: 'Caesar's tone towards her is hardly different from his usual public manner, showing little personal concern or genuine affection' (*Shakespeare's Tragedies : An Introduction*) His relationship with his wife is presented without such personal ties that Brutus shares with his wife Portia of love, concern and intimacy. He shows heroic bravery towards danger but this impression about him does not last long.

Caesar is a good observer and has remarkable psychological insights. He asks Antony to keep a distance from Cassius. He says that Cassius is dangerous and is capable of bringing harm to the people. His judgment of Cassius comes out to be true.

Caesar's arrogance is revealed when he meets the soothsayer on his way to the Capitol. Caesar points out to him that it is the Ides of March and no harm has been done to him yet. Again when Artemidorus asks him to read his petition, Caesar haughtily replies that whatever affects him personally will receive his attention last.

Another incident of Caesar's boastfulness and his haughty behaviour is seen at the Capitol at the meeting of the senate. As planned by the conspirators Metellus Cimber goes to Caesar to appeal to him to withdraw the banishment against his brother Publius Cimber. Caesar refuses his request. To Cinna he says that he is like Mount Olympus which cannot be lifted by anybody.

Caesar's generosity impresses the readers as revealed by Antony in his funeral speech. According to Antony, Caesar had made a will. In it he had left all his walls and his gardens for the common people. He had also left seventy five silver coins for each Roman citizen.

Caesar liked being flattered and pleased with Decius' interpretation of Calpurnia's dream as a sign of good omen. Decius says that the dream signifies that the Romans will draw vitality and strength from Caesar and that Caesar would be regarded as one of the most powerful personalities.

What is largely revealed of Caesar's qualities emerges from the opinions formed mostly by other characters in the play. He is killed by the conspirators in the middle of the play but the spirit of Caesar or Caesarism survives till the end of the play. Caesar's character is such that it arouses admiration for him.

Brutus

When we are first introduced to Brutus in the play we come to know that he is not interested in witnessing the holy race, a part of celebrations of Lupercalia.

Brutus is a man of principles. That is the reason why Caesar fails to understand how this right-minded man can commit his conscience to murder.

Brutus is appointed the leader of the conspirators because in Cassius's opinion he is the most respectable and honourable man in Rome. Brutus is very clear that he would not approve of Caesar being crowned as the king of Rome.

He tells Cassius that he would not like that Caesar should be made king. And yet he loves Caesar.

Brutus's love of freedom and republicanism gets further expressed in his soliloquy where he is again in conflict regarding his affection for Caesar and his love for liberty.

Brutus lives in the world of ideals. The forged letters thrown into his house make him believe that the common people genuinely need his help. He is unable to understand the realities of life and ugly facts of human behaviour. The suffering of the people is reason enough to compel them to commit the murder. Brutus does not agree to the suggestion made by Cassius that they kill Mark Antony. He says that they are sacrificers but not butchers. Contrary to Cassius's suggestions he allows Antony to address the crowd. The only precaution he takes is to address the mob before Antony after which he leaves without foreseeing the harm that Antony could bring to the conspirators. Brutus shows himself to be an idealist once again in the quarrel scene with Antony. Cassius is one who does not allow the rift to widen by expressing his regret to Brutus.

Brutus's love for his wife Portia is well presented in the domestic scene. Dieter Mehl comments in addition that his dialogue with Portia on the departure of the conspirators suggests very strongly that Brutus himself is not really convinced of the worthiness and integrity of his purpose. His dilemma comes to the fore again when his servant Lucius' innocent sleep appears to him as the image of a mind untroubled by any conflict or worrying reflections.

Later Portia's death overwhelms him with grief. He seems to be stoic and remains calm when Portia dies. To his servant Lucius, he shows fatherly care. He grieves for Cassius when the latter dies and sheds tears for him and says he owes him more tears than those he was shedding now.

The conflict in his mind between love for Caesar and love for freedom makes Cassius take advantage of his wavering mind. Cassius flatters Brutus saying that many Romans of the noblest reputations discuss his personality. Brutus' weakness for flattery and his love of freedom and republicanism bring him to join the enterprise Cassius was planning.

Brutus was not an able politician. His funeral speech after Caesar's death was dry, appealing to reason but not to the emotion. His speech was more of a philosopher that was 'too reflective and bookish for the harsh world of political realities...' (Dieter Mehl, *Shakespeare's Tragedies An Introduction*) that could not be understood by the masses. '..... people have not understood his true political motives behind the assassination and are hardly able to follow a rational argument, but he is obviously unable to recognize the thoroughly unreliable nature of public opinion, and the play leaves us in no doubt that he commits a fatal error when he leaves Antony alone with his audience. The fact that Antony turns out to be a much more effective virtuoso in manipulating the masses - does show his (Brutus') limited political foresight.' (Dieter Mehl, *Shakespeare's Tragedies; An Introduction*).

Brutus follows a wrong strategy as the leader of the army. He does not follow Cassius's suggestion of waiting for the enemy to attack them at Sardis. Instead he commands his army to march to Philippi and attack the enemy first. This was a blunder in the military strategy in the final stages of the battle. He orders an attack upon the enemy earlier than needed, bringing confusion in Cassius' camp leading to Cassius committing suicide. Towards the end of the play Brutus contradicts his own statement given to Cassius. He had told Cassius that he would not commit suicide if defeated by the enemy but he does commit suicide in the end.

At Brutus's death Antony refers to Brutus as the noblest Roman of them all. He also mentions that Brutus was the only conspirator murdering Ceasar for a noble cause prompted by his love for the common people.

Brutus was truly a noble and honourable man. But at the same time we cannot get over the fact that he betrayed his best friend Caesar by joining in the conspiracy of murdering him.

Cassius

Cassius is a contrast to Brutus, in being motivated by self-interest and jealousy in plotting Caesar's murder. While Brutus is philosophical, idealistic, and impractical, Cassius is shrewd, opportunistic and practical. Cassius maneuvers the noble Brutus into joining the conspiracy against Caesar by working on his patriotism and republicanism. He is very keen to involve Brutus in the enterprise to give it a certain respectability.

It is Cassius who hatches a conspiracy against Caesar but his reasons are less patriotic and more personal. He is envious of the growing powers and popularity of Caesar. He is least bothered about the tyranny which can befall the people; but

to hide his true motive behind the conspiracy he lets Brutus know how much he worries for the future of the common people and Rome. Cassius tries to arouse Brutus's jealousy by saying that Brutus is in no way inferior to Caesar and that he has the right to be as ambitious as Caesar.

In Caesar's opinion Cassius is a dangerous and unpredictable man, a quality often seen in lean and hungry-looking men, he thinks and reads too much, is a great observer and looks through the deeds of men. He believes that such qualities make a man self-centered. Caesar rightly reads Cassius's character.

Cassius is successful in enlisting Casca into his conspiracy as well. He finds Casca terrified after all the fearful events he has witnessed which he believes as ill omens. Cassius links the storm with the anger of the gods over the disturbance and chaos in Rome.

Cassius is shrewd and practical while making decisions. He makes practical suggestions while planning the assassination of Caesar to which Brutus disagrees. Cassius makes a point that they should take an oath to murder Caesar. He wants Cicero to be approached to join the conspiracy and Antony to be murdered along with Caesar. His suggestions are logical and far-sighted. Had his suggestions been accepted there would not have been civil war in Rome. The conspirators would have easily taken over as the rulers of Rome.

Cassius presents himself as a better strategist and able military officer by suggesting to Brutus that they should stay at Sardis and wait for the enemy to attack them before they retaliate.

Cassius is extremely cunning and unscrupulous. He has very few commendable traits in his character. The demerits in his character over-rule the merits in him.

Mark Antony

The most striking quality of Mark Antony is his firm loyalty towards Caesar. We are introduced to Antony at the celebration of the Lupercalia where he participates in the race. He is asked by Caesar to touch the barren Calpurnia so that she would be free from the curse of barrenness. His respect and humility is depicted once again when he offers Caesar the crown three times. His loyalty towards Caesar is reflected in his funeral speech to the mob. Antony begins his speech with humility and reasonableness. He describes the conspirators as noble and honourable men repeatedly until its ironic use is understood by the crowd. The main objective of his speech is to make the crowd emotional and rouse their passion. Their comments during his pauses assure him that they are with him. In his speech Antony points out that Caesar was not at all ambitious and Brutus had wrong reasons for murdering Caesar. He shows them the blood-soaked cloak and points to the holes made by the daggers of the conspirators. Antony's use of irony, passion, flattery and craftiness in his speech incite the crowd to rebel against the conspirators.

In Brutus's opinion, Antony is a harmless man. He has liking for sports, theatre and music. Caesar's murder brings great shock to Antony and he flees his home. He is determined to avenge the murder of Caesar with craftiness. Antony comes to meet the conspirators and reveals his wish to establish friendly relations with all the conspirators. He shakes hands with them and at the same time apologizes to the dead Caesar for establishing amicable relations with his murderers. His shrewdness and vengeful intentions are not suspected by any of the conspirators.

As a member of the triumvirate, Antony is unscrupulous. The open contempt shown by Mark Antony for Lepidus, diminishes our sympathy for him and also demonstrates his 'cynical attitude towards humane values' (Dieter Mehl, *Shakespeare's Tragedies: An Introduction*). Antony pays a generous tribute to Brutus at his death saying "This was the noblest Roman of them all."

Octavius Caesar is Julius Caesar's nephew and inheritor of his property and power. He comes to Rome after Caesar's murder in response to the letters that Julius Caesar writes to him. On hearing about Octavius's presence in Rome, Antony feels it to be the right time for Octavius's arrival.

Octavius is made one of the members of the triumvirate to help the pro-Caesar elements. He allows Antony to take major decisions, interfering only when he thinks is necessary. Over Antony's decision of getting rid of Lepidus, Octavius gives him the freedom to deal with him the way he wants.

Octavius takes right decisions at war as a military officer. He has a good understanding of human nature. Octavius asserts himself showing a position of authority on certain situations. He orders Antony to lead the army from the left side while he would lead from the right side of the field. Octavius is a true soldier having a 'do or die' attitude. He does not believe in wasting time on trivial matters.

Octavius is sympathetic towards the people of Brutus's camp after his death. He decides to employ them in his service. He decides to give due respect to the body of Brutus and to perform the ceremonious burial with respect and honour. He gives the same kind of honour and respect to the body of Brutus that a soldier should get.

9.2.2 Minor Characters

Portia

In *Julius Caesar*, there are only two women characters Portia and Calpurnia. Portia appears in only two scenes in the play. We are introduced to a worried Portia concerned about her husband's strange and unnatural behaviour. She pleads with him to reveal the cause of his sadness. Reminding him of the marriage vows which united them and made her a part of him, she emphatically says that she is his wife having all the rights to share the joys and sorrows and not a hired mistress. Reminding Brutus of the wound he had once inflicted on her thigh to prove her powers of endurance, she said she could even keep her husband's secret. Later in the play Portia contradicts her own statement of her bravery by saying that she has an ordinary woman's strength. She worries about Brutus's well-being and sends Lucius to the capitol to observe the happenings in the Capitol.

The plan of the conspiracy revealed to Portia becomes the cause of her restlessness and weakens her mentally. Later we learn from Brutus's talk with Cassius that Portia swallowed burnt coals and committed suicide. Her worry about Brutus, his absence from Rome for a long duration and her fear of his defeat in the hands of the enemies leads her to take such a drastic step. She struggles with her strength and endurance but in the end fails. She is presented as a noble woman who loves her husband and is always worried about his safety.

Calpurnia

Calpurnia, the wife of Caesar, is first seen at the festival of Lupercalia with Caesar and his friends. She is an obedient wife who follows the instructions given by Caesar to stand in the path of Antony, one of the participants in the holy race, so that she gets rid of her barrenness.

Calpurnia is superstitious and nervous, she gets very disturbed by the unnatural events at night. She requests Caesar not to move out of the house. Calpurnia appeals to him asking him to tell the people that it was her fears that kept him inside the house and not his.

Deiter Mehl comments on Calpurnia by saying 'Calpurnia's apprehensions are more general and far less personal than Portia's, caused by external forebodings and

warnings rather than by own observation of her husband...’ Calpurnia shares a very formal kind of relation with her husband and their relationship lacks the love and affection that is visible in Brutus-Portia relationship .

Cicero

Cicero is one of the senators and a friend of Ceasar who enters the play in Act I sc. ii but does not have any major role to play. Cicero speaks in Act I sc. ii after Caesar is offered the crown thrice which he refuses. The crowd shouted and cheered. Disgusted at the crowd and irritated by Caesar’s behaviour Cicero said something in Greek which Casca failed to understand. Cicero very well understood Rome’s plight under Caesar’s ambition and dictatorship and must have said something cynical at the expense of Caesar.

Cicero is the first senator to whom Casca discloses the horrifying sights during the storm and the other strange and unnatural events that he saw in the evening. Cicero is respected by most people. Most of the conspirators want him to be included in the conspiracy but Brutus says that he is too independent-minded and would never follow the course of action initiated by others. We last hear about Cicero when he is killed by the orders of the triumvirate.

Casca

Casca is first introduced to us at the festival of Lupercalia when the race is about to begin. Casca seems to be one of the loyal servants of Caesar who orders the crowd to calm down so that the race began peacefully.

The overall imppression one gets of Casca is his scornful and cynical nature. Casca does not fail to mention Caesar’s weaknesses. Casca dislikes Caesar’s pomposity, he mentions how the women were praising Caesar but is quick to remark that even if Caesar had stabbed their mothers they would still praise him.

There is a contrast between his sarcastic account of the events of Lupercalia and his nervousness and superstitious temperament on seeing the horrors of the raging storm. Brutus calls him a dull-witted fellow. Casca’s nervousness and his superstitious temperament come to the fore when he sees the raging storm. The dreadful signs horrify him and he interprets the happenings as warnings from God to the people of Rome. Cassius manipulates Casca into the conspiracy by accusing Caesar of being a dictator and a tyrant who would treat the people as slaves. Cassius also speaks of his love of freedom and his hatred of slavery which arouses Casca’s patriotism for Rome.

Casca shows inconsistent behaviour. He agrees with Cassius when he wants to include Cicero in the conspiracy but a moment later he speaks against him saying that he is not the right kind of person to be taken into the conspiracy.

Decius Brutus

Decius Brutus makes his entry in the play Julius Caesar in Act II sc i. He is introduced by Cassius to Brutus as one of the conspirators. He pretends to be one of Caesar’s friends and a well-wisher while Caesar loves him. He is in the play for a very short while but his role in the play of manipulating Caesar to the senate is significant. He has pertinent questions to ask from Cassius such as: Who else would be killed apart from Caesar?

Decius Brutus is a great flatterer. He offers to bring Ceasar to the Senate house in case he decides not to come. He is very clever and knows Caesar’s weakness. He interprets Calpurnia’s dream so that it becomes favourable for the conspirator’s evil designs. He says that the dream does not prophesy ill- omen to Rome and to Caesar but Caesar’s good fortune and luck. He is cynical and reassures Caesar

into false confidence saying that if the latter did not go to the senate the crowd would disperse.

Decius is tactful in distracting Caesar from Artemidorus and drawing Caesar's attention to Trebonius's petition first even as Artemidorus pleads Caesar to read his note.

Decius is one of the conspirators who comes to plead to Caesar to cancel the banishment of Metellus Cimber's brother. He keeps instructing the conspirators about their turns to go to the public platform so that they can surround him to stab him. He is a dangerous conspirator and skilled at flattery.

Flavius and Marullus

Flavius and Marullus are the first two characters we are introduced in the play. They are sending jubilant craftsmen home who have taken a holiday and gathered in the streets of Rome to celebrate the victory of Caesar over Pompey's son. Flavius and Marullus rebuke the people for being ungrateful to Pompey who was acclaimed by them some time back. The tribunes remind the people of the love and respect they once had for Pompey.

The two tribunes are dramatically significant in the play because they introduce us to the political atmosphere existing in Rome.

Flavius and Marullus are the two tribunes who have been given legal powers to protect the rights of the common people. They are believers of republicanism. They have their sympathies with Pompey's sons. They envy Caesar's growing popularity among the people of Rome and are hostile to Caesar.

Lucilius

Lucilius is a loyal officer in the army of Brutus and Cassius. He is loyal to such an extent that he pretends to be Brutus in order to protect him from the danger of being killed.

Lucilius is ready to die for Brutus and offers the soldier some money to kill him. Antony discovers his trick of trying to put on a false identity of Brutus. He is so touched by his heroism that he decides to take Lucilius in his service.

Brutus considers Lucilius a trustworthy friend and confides in him about the behaviour of Cassius. Lucilius has the same kind of opinion of Cassius as Brutus had of him. Lucilius says that he had become indifferent lately and did not have the same warmth that he had earlier.

Titinius

Titinius is a friend of Brutus and Cassius. He is an officer under Cassius during the civil war mainly to give commands to his subordinate officers. Titinius is bold to point out that Brutus has committed a blunder by giving order to attack early. Titinius is obedient to the commands given by Cassius and rushes to see whether the soldiers present there were theirs or the enemies. Pindarus conveys to Cassius that Titinius has been surrounded by the enemy and taken prisoner. Cassius cannot bear the fact that his best friend Titinius is taken as prisoner while he is helpless. He orders Pindarus to kill him. Titinius regrets Cassius's death and describes it as the setting of the sun in Rome forever. He fears that danger would soon overtake their lives.

Pindarus

Pindarus is taken prisoner by Cassius in Parthia. Cassius had spared his life on the condition that Pindarus would obey any kind of order given by him. Brutus wants to demand an explanation from Pindarus once he comes face to face. Defending

Cassius, Pindarus says that Cassius is an honourable man with warm feelings for Brutus.

Pindarus misinterprets Titinius being taken prisoner by the enemy's troops when asked by Cassius to observe him from the top of the hill. Cassius is ashamed of himself and feels extremely guilty of being a coward and letting his best friend Titinius to be arrested while he is still alive.

Lucius

Lucius is an innocent, trustworthy and obedient servant of Brutus who plays and sings for Brutus. Brutus is also very affectionate towards him. Lucius is first introduced into the play when he is fast asleep in the garden. Lucius represents the peace of mind and tranquility that Brutus has lost. Lucius is the first one to see papers thrown at Brutus's house by Cinna urging him to join the plot to kill Caesar.

Brutus is dependent on Lucius for trivial things like lighting the candle, looking at the calendar or attending to the visitors at the gate. While dealing with Lucius, Brutus treats him gently and with humanity and says that he will not give him work beyond his capacity.

Portia also finds Lucius very trustworthy to run errands. She sends him to the senate-house to bring information about Brutus' well being and to observe Caesar's action.

The name Lucius is derived from the Latin word 'Lucere' meaning light. Lucius in the play represents light that Brutus needs, to understand the true motive of the conspirators.

Ligarius

Ligarius is a sick man having great regard and respect for Brutus. He is pleased about the enterprise in which Brutus is involved.

Ligarius is aware that flattery is the weakness of Brutus. He calls him a magician who has made a dead man alive. He has immense faith in Brutus. For him it is enough to know that Brutus is involved in a particular venture and Ligarius will follow him without any incentive.

Publius

Publius is a senator hardly visible in the play. We see him only twice in the play. The first time when he comes with Ligarius, Messala, Casca, Tribonius and Cinna to take Caesar to the Senate house. The next time we see him driving away Artemidorus from Caesar. After Caesar's murder he is in a state of shock.

The Roman Crowd

The Roman crowd has a significant role in the play. Romans are fickle-minded, inconsistent and irrational. In the opening scene of the play, the crowd is shown celebrating the victorious return of Caesar after defeating Pompey's sons. The two tribunes Flavius and Marullus have to remind them that they loved Pompey when he was alive. The crowd meekly obeys them and returns to their work with guilt.

The crowd is irrational and cannot think independently. During the funeral speech given by Brutus, which they cannot understand in the least, the mob still applauds for Brutus saying 'Let him be Caesar'. The funeral speech of Antony moves the mob exciting them against the injustice done to Caesar and they run for the blood of the conspirators calling them traitors and villains.

Being filled with fury the mob later tears Cinna the poet into pieces only because he had the same name as Cinna the conspirator. The cruelty and irrationality of the mob is brought out here.

We come to know something more from Casca about the Roman mob. The Roman mob was dirty and foul smelling and wet with perspiration. Casca was cautious not to open his mouth to laugh at the whole spectacle fearing the foul smell would enter his mouth. In Casca's opinion, Roman women in the crowd had no independent thinking and would have forgiven Caesar even if Caesar had stabbed their mothers. The Roman crowd is foolish and ignorant with no judgment of their own. They worship Caesar as a demi-God.

Cinna the Conspirator

Cinna is one of the main conspirators appearing in Act I Scene 3. Cassius considers him faithful and loyal. He recognizes him from far by the manner of his walking. He is among the first ones to be appraised about the enterprise of Cassius that was in his mind. Cinna is anxious about the strange sights seen at night by some conspirators. He is considered responsible by Cassius and is assigned important tasks. He is also asked to throw some paper at his window and another paper to be stuck to the statue of Brutus's ancestor with wax.

He is one of the conspirators to strike at Caesar and once Caesar falls to his death, he is the first one to shout excitedly 'Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead!' He is a strong Republican and his motive to join the conspiracy is to fight against tyranny. The mob hate Cinna for his anti-Caesar feelings and tear Cinna the poet into pieces despite his explanations that he only shared the name with Cinna the conspirator.

Strato

Strato is brought into the play only in Act V sc. iii. He is the loyal servant of Brutus whom Brutus trusts. Brutus calls him a man of good reputation with a touch of honour in what he says. Strato obeys his wishes to hold the sword while Brutus falls on it to die. Strato tells Messala that his master is free from captivity. He praises the brave Brutus and says that Brutus was never defeated by anybody except by himself. He is modest enough not to claim to have done the honour of killing Brutus. Messala is glad that Strato did the last service to his Lord Brutus and recommends Strato to be employed with Octavius.

Volumnius

Volumnius is one of the loyal officers of Brutus appearing in the play in Act v Sc. iii. Brutus shares information with Volimnius about the appearance of Caesar's ghosts on two occasions once at Sardis and the other in the plains of Philippi. He tells him that the time of his death has come and it would be a more dignified death to jump into his grave than to be pushed into it by his enemies. Volumnius is taken by Octavius into his service after Brutus' death in return for his loyalty to Brutus.

Young Cato

Young Cato appears in Act V sc. iv. He is the son of the brave Cato and brother of Portia. He fights valiantly against Caesar holding his head high. Lucilius later finds him in the battle-field dead. Lucilius expresses grief over his death.

Popilius Lena

Popilius Lena is a senator appearing in the play in Act III sc i just before Caesar's murder is going to take place. He creates more tension to the already nervous Cassius by wishing him success in their enterprise. Cassius fears that Popilius Lena had come to know about their plan. Popilius Lena's advancement towards Caesar further scares Brutus. Fearing that they would be stopped, Cassius wants to hurry things before they could be stopped. Cassius threatens to kill himself if their conspiracy was not successful. Brutus gives a sigh of relief when he notices Caesar without any change of expression in his face after Popilius Lena had spoken to him.

9.3 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed:

- The theme of the play *Julius Caesar*
- The major characters namely Julius Caesar, Brutus, Cassius, Mark Antony and Octavius Caesar
- Minor characters such as Portia, Calpurnia, Casca, Cicero, Decius Brutus, Lepidius, Lucilius, Messala, Titinius, Pindarus, Lucius, Ligarius, Cinna The Conspirator, Strato, Volumnius, Young Cato and Poplius Lena.

9.4 EXERCISE

1. Comment on the theme of *Julius Ceasar*?
2. Who are the major characters in *Julius Ceaser*? Comment briefly on each of them.
3. Comment on the function of minor characters like Casca, Portia and Calpurnia in *Julius Ceasar*?

9.5 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Houghton E.C. Ralph. *Julius Caesar*. Oxford University Press. London. 1967.
2. Muir, Kenneth. *Shakespeare's Tragic Sequence*. Liverpool University Press, Liverpool. 1979.
3. Barker. Graucille, Harley. Prefaces to Shakespeare.
4. Daiches, David, *Shakespeare: Julius Caesar*.