

Trial of Julius Caesar (An Alternate History)

Instructions

What if Julius Caesar had not been assassinated on the Ides of March 44 BCE? What if, instead, he had been arrested and put on trial for the destruction of the Roman Republic?

We will conduct a trial of Julius Caesar. The prosecution will attempt to prove that he is guilty of the destruction of the Roman Republic. The defense will try to prove that Caesar was actually Rome's savior, and should be considered a hero, not a traitor.

Characters (19 parts)

Witnesses for the prosecution

("He is GUILTY!" "He was a TRAITOR to Rome!")

Marcus Junius Brutus	Vercingetorix
Gaius Cassius Longinus	Cornelia Galbo
Marcus Tullius Cicero	Cleopatra

Attorneys for the prosecution

Attorney #1 will make the opening and closing statements.

Attorney #2 will ask questions to the witnesses for the prosecution.

Attorney #3 will ask questions to the witnesses for the defense.

Witnesses for the defense

("He is INNOCENT!" "He was the SAVIOR of Rome!")

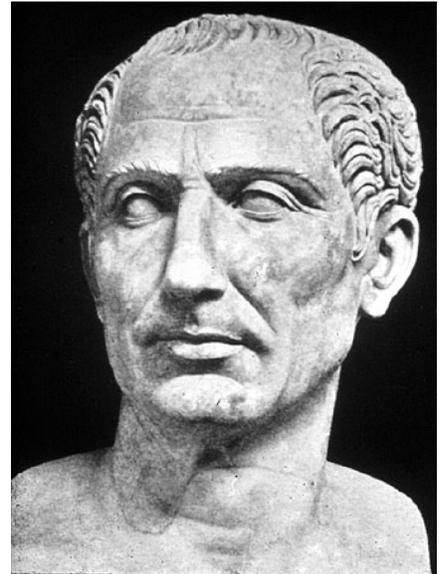
Claudia Sevilla	Sabinus Maximus
Marcus Trajanus	Mark Antony
Sextus Aurelius	Honorius Craxus
Octavian Caesar	

Attorneys for the defense

Attorney #1 will make the opening and closing statements.

Attorney #2 will ask questions to the witnesses for the defense.

Attorney #3 will ask questions to the witnesses for the prosecution.



Homework Assignment

Witnesses: Make note cards describing who you are in your own words. Add some personal information that is not in the packet to make your character more interesting, but it must be consistent with the information provided. Learn the information about your character well, so that you can answer questions from the lawyers with very little reference to your notes.

Attorney #1 for the prosecution and defense: Write an opening and closing statement explaining why Julius Caesar is **guilty** (prosecution) or **not guilty** (defense). Use the information in your notes and in this packet. Each statement should be 4-6 sentences long.

Attorney #2 for the prosecutions and defense: Write 3-5 questions for each of the witnesses for your own side. Your questions should help to bring out who they are and why they feel the way they do about Caesar.

Attorney #3 for the prosecution and defense: Write 3-5 questions for each of the witnesses for the other side. Your questions should try to discredit the testimony of each of these witnesses.

Witnesses for the Prosecution

The prosecution must prove that Julius Caesar was destroying the Republic. **(CAESAR WAS BAD!)**

Brutus

- You are a Roman patrician, descended from one of the founding families of Rome.
- You were once one of Julius Caesar's closest friends but turned against him when you realized that he was becoming too powerful and was destroying the Roman Republic:
 - You are angry that he ignored the Senate, and often issued his own laws, stating that they were "Senatorial Decrees" (laws made by the Senate).
 - You resent that he doubled the size of the Senate by including all of his friends and loyal allies. This way if anyone were to disagree with his policies they would be outvoted by all of his supporters in the Senate.
 - You are upset that he ignored the tradition of holding elections for government officials, such as consuls, simply appointing his friends and supporters to those positions.
 - You disapprove of the fact that he had the Senate (full of his supporters) vote to name him "Dictator for Life"—this was insane because a dictator has absolute imperium and the only limit on his power was always the shortness of his term (6 months or the length of the emergency).

Cassius

- You are a Roman patrician and a member of the Senate. You feared his ambition was to make himself a king.
- You feel that Julius Caesar had been behaving like a king, doing things no leader of the Roman Republic would ever do, such as:
 - Issuing coins with his own picture on them
 - Allowing his sculptures to be carved in the form of gods (for example, Jupiter with the features of Caesar.)
 - Wearing the laurel wreath and purple and gold toga and sitting in a golden chair at public functions
 - Requiring others (including Senators, like you) to stand in his presence, while he sat in his gold chair.
 - Giving the Senate no power or respect.
 - You fear that he would soon declare himself king and his half-Egyptian son Caesarion as his heir.

Cicero

- You are an expert on the Constitution of the Roman Republic. You are here to show how Caesar's actions violated the Constitution of the Roman Republic, such as:
 - Declaring himself "Dictator for Life." According to the Constitution a dictator is chosen by the consuls (not by himself) and only serves for 6 months or the length of the emergency—not for life!
 - Giving the Senate no power. He filled the Senate with his supporters, so whenever he wanted a law passed, he would just tell his supporters to issue a "Senatorial Decree."
 - Requiring the Senators to stand, while he sat before them, like a king addressing his subjects.
 - Julius Caesar was so popular with the common people that the Plebeian Council approved anything he suggested.

Vercingetorix (ver-sin-GHET-or-iks)

- You are a Gallic nobleman who led the Gauls against Julius Caesar. You hate him.
- You resisted him for five years before he finally defeated you and your people.
- In his conquest of Gaul, Caesar slaughtered thousands of innocent people if they resisted him, just so he could increase the size of the empire. When he conquered the city of Avaricum, his army slaughtered the entire population of 120,000.
- Then he began to send many of your people to Rome as slaves. Those who were not forced to become slaves were taxed to fill the treasury of Rome.
- In your final battle against Caesar, you defended the city of Alesia against a Roman siege. You sent for reinforcements from the other Gallic tribes, but Caesar built fortifications around his forces (like a doughnut around the city) to protect his soldiers, so your allies couldn't help you.
- When you finally surrendered, you turned yourself over to him in style. You rode your horse out of Alesia and around Caesar's camp before throwing your weapons and armor at Caesar's feet.
- Caesar sent you back to Rome, where you were kept in prison for five years, before you were paraded through Rome in chains in Caesar's triumph.

Cornelia Galbo

- You are a patrician, descended from one of the founding families of Rome, and your beloved husband fought for Pompey but was killed at the Battle of Pharsalus against Julius Caesar. You are now living with your father.
- Your entire family supported Pompey in the civil war, and while they did not lose their property or their lives when Caesar came to power, they lost all of their political power.
- Your brothers are Senators, but going to the Senate is a waste of their time, because Caesar has packed the Senate with his supporters, who always pass the laws he wants.
- You especially resent Cleopatra, who has been acting like a queen ever since she came to Rome. She arrived in the city with an outrageous procession of thousands of slaves, elephants, camels, dancers and Egyptian soldiers. She refused to adopt Roman customs, dressing like an Egyptian and showing off her foreign ways. You think she is power-hungry, and that she influences Caesar's decisions for the benefit of Egypt, not Rome.
- You think she is encouraging him to make himself king of Rome, or maybe even a god-king, like the pharaoh is in Egypt. Then her son would be heir to the Kingdom of Rome. You find the idea of Rome having a king as horrible, but to make it worse, the next king would be half-Egyptian.

Cleopatra

- You are what is called a "hostile witness." In other words, you love Caesar and don't want him convicted, but the prosecuting attorneys believe that your testimony will actually help their case against Caesar. They think that if you tell the truth about how you wanted Julius Caesar to become an absolute ruler of Rome (which you did), he will be convicted as a traitor to the Roman Republic.
- You married Caesar in an Egyptian ceremony, even though he had a wife at home in Rome. You bore him a son, named Caesarion.
- You feel that he made an important alliance between Egypt and Rome, which will provide Rome with a nearly unlimited supply of inexpensive grain from Egypt.
- You see no problem with Caesar becoming king of Rome. As far as you are concerned, the Republic was weak and useless. Only a god-king (like a pharaoh) can truly have the respect and awe of his people.
- In your opinion, if the people want Rome to be strong, it must be led by a powerful ruler, not a bunch of bickering Senators, who never get anything done except to make themselves richer.
- With you by his side, Caesar could build a great Roman-Egyptian Empire (which he has already begun to do), and your son Caesarion would be his heir.

Witnesses for the defense:

The defense must show that Julius Caesar was a great man, who restored peace after a century of civil war and violence. **(CAESAR WAS GOOD!)**

Claudia Sevilla

- You and your husband once were unemployed farmers living off of the free grain in Rome until Julius Caesar became “Dictator for Life.” Your families had owned land in your grandfathers’ lives, but after several years of bad harvests, they had gone into debt, and then they had been forced to sell their land to wealthy Senators. Before Julius Caesar, you had no money for rent, so your husband had to sell his votes in the Plebeian Council to get rent money. You had no land and no pride.
- Julius Caesar provided your family with land in Gaul, where you now have a small but prosperous farm. Now you have your own home and farm where you are raising your family. Now you take great pride in being a patriotic Roman citizen.
- Last year, you heard of a publican (tax collector) who was collecting more tax money than he was supposed to in your region, but when Julius Caesar found out, he had the man arrested, had forced him to return the money, and had him put in jail. The new publican is much more honest.

Marcus Trajanus

- You are a Spaniard, not a Roman.
- Ever since the end of the Second Punic War, when Spain was taken over by Rome, the Romans have treated you and your people as conquered subjects, until Julius Caesar came to power.
- Caesar did not have any prejudices against the native Spanish people. He allowed them to join the army and to hold important positions in the local government (governing cities and regions in Spain).
- Under Caesar, you served as the governor of a region in southern Spain, and then he asked you to join the Senate, where you were serving when you heard he was arrested.
- You think that Caesar believes in giving the conquered people political rights, which the Romans stopped doing after the Punic Wars. You think this will be good for Rome.

Sextus Aurelius

- You are a Roman plebeian, who owns a small shoemaking shop.
- You were glad when Caesar increased the size of the Senate, because a number of good, hard-working plebeians (some were friends of yours) got the opportunity to serve on the Senate (previously it was pretty much limited to only the wealthiest citizens).
- You are impressed with the amount of construction in Rome since Julius Caesar came to power, which is good because it provides the city with roads, temples, and bridges, and because it provides jobs for the unemployed people of Rome. The city is grander and more beautiful and people have work.
- You also like the new calendar. It was a little hard to get used to with the 365 days and the leap year every four years, but it is handy to have the seasons coming at the same time in the calendar every year.
- You also enjoyed the free gladiatorial games that Caesar provided.

Sabinus Maximus

- You are a quaestor (treasurer) of Rome.
- Ever since Gaius Gracchus started having the government sell cheap grain to the poor, the financial situation of the Roman government has gotten worse. After a while politicians were promising free grain in order to get elected. The government was bankrupt, which was forcing it to increase tribute demands on the conquered lands. Since the owners of the latifundia (huge estates) in Italy were growing cash crops instead of wheat, the government was forced to buy grain from far away lands such as Egypt and Asia Minor.
- Julius Caesar has made Rome financially strong again. By conquering Gaul, he provided a new source of tribute money. In Rome he revised the system of distributing the free grain so that it only went to the Romans who needed it the most. Soon the government was once again out of debt.

Mark Antony

- You are Caesar's best friend.
- You understand that he made himself "Dictator for Life" because Rome was in a state of emergency. Ever since Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, the city has been full of violence—both riots and civil wars. Under Marius and Sulla, thousands were killed for their political loyalties and in the civil wars.
- By making himself "Dictator for Life," Caesar was able to restore peace and order in Rome.
- By appointing officials, such as consuls, he ended the corruption and promises that politicians were making to get elected. He was able to appoint men who were well-qualified for the job and honest.
- Unlike Marius and Sulla, Caesar followed a policy of forgiveness toward his political opponents. He did not have anyone killed or confiscate anyone's property because of their political loyalties.

Honorius Craxus

- You are a legionary who fought in Caesar's legions in Gaul and then in the Battle of Pharsalus against Pompey.
- You believe he was the greatest military commander and leader in history.
- In Gaul you saw him conquer city after city using both diplomacy and brilliant military strategy.
- At the Battle of Pharsalus, he defeated Pompey's army, which was more than twice the size of Caesar's.
- You believed if Caesar were to continue as dictator, he could make Rome the strongest power in the known world. It could be rich because of tribute money and because Caesar would always make sure the treasurers in Rome would handle the money properly (and not waste or steal any). And Rome would increase in size because Caesar would lead more expeditions of conquest.
- You think that without Julius Caesar in charge, Romans would be in for more violence and civil war.

Octavian Caesar (You think he was good but not perfect. You are hoping to take his place as leader of Rome, but don't tell anyone this.)

- You are Julius Caesar's nephew, the son of his sister. Last year he adopted you as his son.
- You believe that Julius Caesar was a great leader, who took the title "Dictator for Life" to restore peace and order in Rome.
- You believe that Caesar had to seize control because the old Roman Republic was already dead, a result of corruption, greed, poor leadership, and civil war. All the senators cared about was getting richer, not about doing what was best for Rome, and all the military leaders cared about was using their armies to seize power. The old ways of the Republic led us to civil war, and only a strong leader could restore the glory and strength of Rome.
- You admit that Julius Caesar may have made some mistakes. You disagree with the way he treated the Senate, because by ignoring them he just made them all angry. You feel he should have treated them with more respect, giving the Senators some power, but not too much.