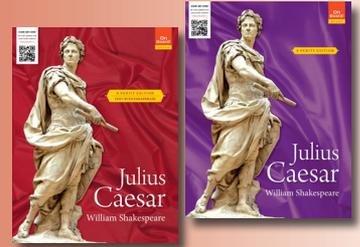


Julius Caesar

William Shakespeare



SAMPLE QUESTION PAPER 1 (For Class 9 – Act 1)

ANSWERS

Question 1

- (i) (d) He is a cobbler
- (ii) (c) They are celebrating Caesar's victory over Pompey
- (iii) (c) Lupercalia
- (iv) (b) Epilepsy
- (v) (a) A lion near the Capitol
- (vi) (b) Commit suicide

Question 2

- (i) Brutus' apprehension that Caesar would be crowned is proved to be well-founded when Casca describes what had happened after the Lupercalia games. Mark Antony had offered Caesar a symbolic crown – a bunch of leaves made into a coronet – after running the Lupercal course. Caesar had publicly refused the coronet thrice. However, Casca had observed that each time Caesar had refused it more gently than the last. Seeing how the commoners had cheered for him, Caesar had opened his doublet and offered the public his throat to cut, craftily indicating that he would rather die than accept the coronet. Casca also suggests that foul breath of the commoners triggered an epileptic episode in Caesar who collapsed, foaming at the mouth.
- (ii) In his private conversation with Brutus, Cassius claims that he was in a unique position to reflect Brutus' true image to him – that is, reveal Brutus' great qualities and discuss them. He asserts that he could be a mirror in which Brutus could see his hidden worthiness and merit. Cassius emphasises that Brutus had no reason to be suspicious of him since he was not a frivolous man who flattered people at will and let them down later, nor was he friendly with just about anybody. Cassius is able to appeal to Brutus and establish

his loyalty by reminding Brutus of his nobility, while slyly presenting himself as a dispassionate observer who had nothing to gain from their relationship.

- (iii) In his conversation with Brutus, Cassius claims to have rescued a physically feeble Caesar from drowning when the two of them had been swimming in the Tiber river on a particularly stormy day. He also recounts how Caesar had cried out like an average person when he was suffering from a fever, suggesting that Caesar's current image as an exceptional political leader was a carefully crafted façade. Caesar's epileptic episode after the Lupercalia race is also seen as an indicator of his human frailty.
- (iv) Caesar provides Antony with remarkably astute observations on Cassius. Cassius' 'lean and hungry look' is taken as an indicator of his inclination to think deeply and critically, which according to Caesar was a reason to deem him dangerous. Cassius' ability to analyse and observe, his vast knowledge, as well as his lack of interest in drama and music, are also considered threats. Caesar rightly claims that people like Cassius harbour jealousy towards those they consider superior, as evidenced by Cassius motivating others to join his conspiracy against Caesar. The manner in which Cassius manipulates Brutus and Casca, proves that Caesar assessed his character accurately.
- (v) Cassius initiates a personal conversation with Brutus by engaging him sentimentally, claiming that the latter had not been interacting with him the way he used to. Using that as an entry point into a confidential discussion, Cassius tests whether Brutus had similar apprehensions regarding Caesar. He uses Brutus' high regard for honour to induce him to discuss the state of Rome. Cassius introduces the idea that though Caesar was in no way superior to him, or Cassius, Caesar was towering over them like a mighty, but undeserving ruler.

He then gently suggests that honourable action had always been taken whenever Roman republicanism and freedom had been threatened in the past, but he does not directly state whether that action was necessary against Caesar. He simply reminds Brutus of his ancestor, Lucius Junius Brutus, had chased away the Roman king Tarquinius Superbus. Without revealing any clear line of action, Cassius is able to influence Brutus by appealing to the latter's inherent desire to safeguard the rights of Roman citizens, as well as his need to be seen as an honourable Roman. Cassius shrewdly does not instruct, demand, or coerce Brutus into joining the scheme: he simply lays the groundwork which would lead Brutus to the conclusion that only the assassination of Caesar, his beloved friend, would protect Rome from tyranny.

Question 3

- (i) On the night of the exceptional storm, Casca informs Cassius that he had seen a well-known slave hold up his left hand which seemed to burn as brightly as twenty torches combined. Despite the flames, the slave's hand seemed unburnt. Near the Capitol, Casca

had encountered an angry looking lion that turned away from Casca without hurting him. This behaviour seemed rather uncharacteristic to Casca. Casca had also come across a group of hundred women looking terrified since they had witnessed spectres walking down the streets. On the day before the stormy night, he had found an owl hooting in broad daylight in the marketplace. Frightened, he interprets these sights as indicators of civil war among the gods in heaven. Casca reads them as omens of dreadful times that were going to befall Rome.

- (ii) Cassius, unlike several others, appears unimpacted by the storm. He boastfully tells Casca that he had been walking about the streets of Rome with his garment open, exposing himself to the elements. He even claims to have walked in the path of the storm, inviting lightning to strike him. Cassius manipulates Casca's fears by reinterpreting what had seemed to him like an ominous civil war in heaven. Cassius claims that the storm was a cautionary sign from the heavens against the rise of tyranny in Rome. He informs Casca that he believed that honest men would be unafraid of the storm. This conversation about the storm and omens was Cassius' way of encouraging Casca to commit to his scheme and join the band of 'honest men' against the despotism of Caesar, without actually naming Caesar.
- (iii) Cassius threatens to commit suicide in his passionate and emotional conversation with Casca about Caesar's growing powers. He claims that as an act of courage, he would stab himself rather than submit to a tyrant. For him, stabbing himself would be like the act of a slave releasing himself from the chains of a master. Nothing, including stony towers, walls of brass, airless dungeons, and chains of iron, could trap the spirit of a man choosing to free himself by committing suicide. According to him, the awareness that he could end his own life gives Cassius the courage to face a potentially dreadful future. This rousing declaration further solidifies Casca's opinion of Cassius as a reliable leader whose daring politics could be followed.
- (iv) Casca believed that Brutus would be an important addition to the group of conspirators because he was widely perceived by the Romans as an honourable man. The actions that would appear unethical when committed by other people would seem virtuous and noble when carried out by Brutus. Casca compares Brutus' presence to alchemy – an ancient pseudoscience that believed that poorer metals could be transformed into precious metals like gold and silver. Brutus' transformative presence would make the assassination of Caesar seem like an honourable and just act.
- (v) Cassius was convinced that Caesar would become a tyrant because the Romans had become indifferent towards political responsibilities. The Roman senate's diminished powers in the face of Caesar's unchallenged rise would be dangerous and it would destroy the Roman republic. Had the people of Rome not been like frightened sheep, Caesar would not have become a vicious wolf. The timidity of Romans, comparable to deer, had

made Caesar powerful like a lion. Cassius even compares Caesar to a mighty fire which raged because the Romans had become like rubbish used to fan the flames.

The powerful rhetoric and potent metaphors used by Cassius attracts Casca to his scheme. Without even naming Caesar, Cassius had managed to induce Casca into sharing how he truly felt about Caesar. Cassius' decision to commit suicide rather than live under Caesar's tyranny inspires Casca to declare that he would do the same. Cassius also gives the impression that the two of them would not be alone in their effort. The possibility of Brutus joining the cause acts as a catalyst and Casca himself notes the impact it would have on how the conspirators would be perceived by the people.