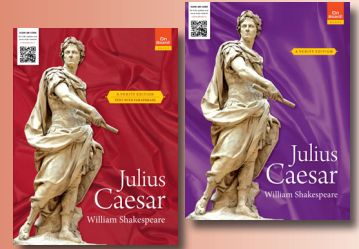


# Julius Caesar

William Shakespeare



## SAMPLE QUESTION PAPER 2 (For Class 9 – Act 2)

### ANSWERS

#### Question 1

- (i) (b) Cassius
- (ii) (c) They do not want to be recognised by others
- (iii) (a) The animal did not have a heart
- (iv) (c) Horses and a lioness
- (v) (b) Metellus Cimber had deep-seated resentment against Caesar who had banished his brother
- (vi) (b) Caesar had a weakness for flattery

#### Question 2

- (i) The lines given were spoken by Cassius. Cassius was addressing the conspirators – Decius Brutus, Brutus, Cinna, Cimber, Casca, Trebonius – who had gathered at Brutus' home.
- (ii) Cassius and the conspirators had gathered at Brutus' home the night before the ides of March, i.e. the day before Caesar was likely to be crowned at the Capitol. Cassius had successfully managed to assemble a group of people who were convinced that Caesar's coronation had to be stopped by any means necessary, even if it meant assassinating him. They needed Brutus to commit to the plan since his presence would make their gruesome act appear honourable to the public. They had gathered there to ensure Brutus' commitment to the plan and chart the future course of action.
- (iii) Cassius is certainly the shrewdest of the conspirators. Not only is he able to assemble a group of people with grudges against Caesar, in the lines given we see him considering the possible consequence of their plan. He sees Antony as one of the threats that exist, despite the fact that they have Brutus onboard to make the assassination look justifiable. His calculative nature and ruthlessness, combined with his eye for details and far-sightedness,

makes him powerful. Caesar had rightly described him as an intelligent man, jealous, and bitter man when he had advised Antony earlier in the play.

- (iv) Cassius insists upon the assassination of Antony alongside Caesar since he believed that Antony could be a threat to the conspirators. Antony was well loved by Caesar as well as the Roman public, and he was affectionate towards Caesar. Cassius was afraid that his allegiance to Caesar would inspire him to use his abilities and capacities to the detriment of the conspirators. Cassius' fears are justified since Antony does unite the public, as well as an army, against the schemers and killers.
- (v) Brutus was determined to brand the conspiracy an honourable attempt to rid Rome of oppression. Killing Antony would make their plan look 'too bloody' since with the elimination of Caesar, Antony would become redundant and powerless – like a body without a head. He believed that the most Antony might do is commit suicide while mourning Caesar's death. Brutus believed that their action should look like an act of sacrifice and not butchery, and therefore Antony should be spared. He did not want the conspirators to appear like murderers, but 'purgers', who were there to purify Rome.

### Question 3

- (i) Calpurnia refers to the unnatural events of the that night – lioness giving birth on the street, dead emerging from their graves, shower of blood upon the Capitol, etc – as evidence of a supernaturally-charged period. She believed that the unusual events of the night had a direct correlation with Caesar's security. She reminded Caesar that unnatural occurrences preceded the death of great men, and not beggars. Calpurnia even mentioned her nightmares, hoping to prevent Caesar from going ahead with his plans, and begged him on her knees. She asked him to stay at home citing her fears so that he would not appear weak to others.
- (ii) Caesar had heard Calpurnia cry out "Help, ho! They murder Caesar!" thrice in her dreams – words that complement the aspects of the nightmare she recollected to Caesar once she woke up. In her dream she had seen Caesar's statue bearing hundreds of wounds, and blood gushing out of each gash. Following that, she had dreamt of robust, avaricious men bathing their hands in Caesar's blood. Calpurnia interpreted her dream as an omen for what was to come if Caesar went to the Capitol. Here, we find Shakespeare using foreshadowing to show what was to come. Later, we find the conspirators doing exactly what Calpurnia had seen in her dream.
- (iii) Portia and Calpurnia were both married to headstrong men who had a firm footing in the Roman world. While Calpurnia tries to charm Caesar to do her bidding, we find Portia more accusatory towards Brutus' deliberate attempt to keep her in the dark. Both women derive and maintain strength from the relationships with the men in their lives – Portia through her husband, Brutus, and father, Cato, and Calpurnia through her husband,

Caesar. Calpurnia rightly identifies Caesar's weakness as overconfidence and a sense of infallibility, and Portia discovers Brutus' torment through her keen observations. Both the women actively seek the well-being of their husbands and one can even claim that had their requests not been turned down because of their gender, the course of the play might have been quite different. In these two characters we also find a reflection of societal and gender norms and expectations in Elizabethan England.

- (iv) Decius Brutus, true to his words about his ability to flatter Caesar into going to the Capitol, interprets Calpurnia's dream to do so. The statue of Caesar spouting blood from its gashes, as well as the men bathing their hands in the blood, is reinterpreted to appear as something positive. He claimed that the dream proved that Caesar's blood would have a regenerative influence on the people in Rome. The men bathing their hands in the blood was seen as symbolic of Caesar's power – such that people would hold his blood sacred and stain objects in it to be treasured as relics later. Apart from these flattering reinterpretations, Decius tempts Caesar with the possibility of being crowned that very day.
- (v) We learn of several aspects of Caesar's character in his conversation with Calpurnia. Firstly, we find that privately, Caesar was as superstitious as Calpurnia, which is why he had ordered a sacrifice to be made by his priests, and had been inclined to be influenced by Calpurnia's ominous dreams initially. His arrogance is seen when he discusses how threats do not have any impact on him. Caesar even believes in predestination, i.e., the events and occurrences that were set in one's destiny could not be avoided: this fatalism appears to be at odds with his faith in prophecies. We also find that he was a courageous man, prepared to face death and not fear it. As a husband, he was open to Calpurnia's opinions though it appears that he had been willing to make it seem that it was Calpurnia's fears, and not his own apprehensions, that had initially kept him from going to the Capitol.