

Name: _____

Date: _____

Julius Caesar

Rome was a huge and very rich empire after the second Punic War, but the Senate did a poor job of running the Roman republic. The Senate was designed to govern a city, not a growing empire. The senators often took bribes or were not careful about how they voted in the forum. Many Romans wanted a strong leader, and the ambitious Julius Caesar was an obvious choice.

Caesar sought the office of consul in 60BC. He had recently returned from Spain where he served a year as governor. The two consuls at the time were Crassus and Pompey. Rather than become involved in a struggle, Caesar convinced Crassus, Pompey, and the Roman Senate to name him a third consul. This partnership of three equal rulers later became known as the First Triumvirate.

When Caesar's year-long term as consul ended, the Senate appointed him to be governor of Gaul. Gaul was a territory northwest of the Italian peninsula. Caesar led an army that captured most of Western Europe. His successes on the battlefield made Caesar the most popular man in Rome.



In 49BC, the Senate ordered Caesar to return to Rome, but to leave his army behind. Caesar feared that his opponents would destroy him, so he ignored the order and marched his army back to Rome. Caesar's orders clearly told him not to bring his army across the Rubicon River. When Caesar reached the river, he

knew he faced an important decision. Caesar knew that if he obeyed the Senate and disbanded his army, his career would be over; but if he marched his troops across the river, the Senate would order Pompey and his army to retaliate. Today when people say they are "crossing the Rubicon," they refer to a very significant decision that cannot be undone.

Caesar's army seized control of Italy while Pompey and his army fled to Greece. Caesar hunted Pompey and defeated Pompey's army. Pompey then escaped to Egypt with Caesar in pursuit. When Caesar arrived in Egypt, the ten-year-old king of Egypt, Ptolemy XIII, presented Caesar with Pompey's decapitated head.

The Roman people admired Caesar as a war hero and a strong leader. In 46BC, they elected Caesar dictator of Rome. A dictator is a ruler with complete control. Caesar used his power to make many changes in Rome, often without approval from the Senate. Caesar instituted the Julian calendar of 365¼ days. Caesar's calendar is closely related to the calendar we use today. The month of July is named in honor of Caesar.

A year after his election as dictator, the Roman people elected Caesar "dictator for life." The Roman senators were outraged at Caesar's power and popularity. On March 15, 44BC, Caesar was met by a mob of sixty senators who stabbed the dictator to death.

Answer in complete sentences

*1. Describe an instance where you, or someone you know, has "crossed the Rubicon."

2. What is a dictator?

3. Why did the senators kill Julius Caesar?
