

# Julius Caesar

**Narrators 1-5**

**Samuel and Oxaviar**—soldiers

**Alexandra, Justin, and**

**Flaudine**—citizens

**Claudia and Jermene**—plebeians

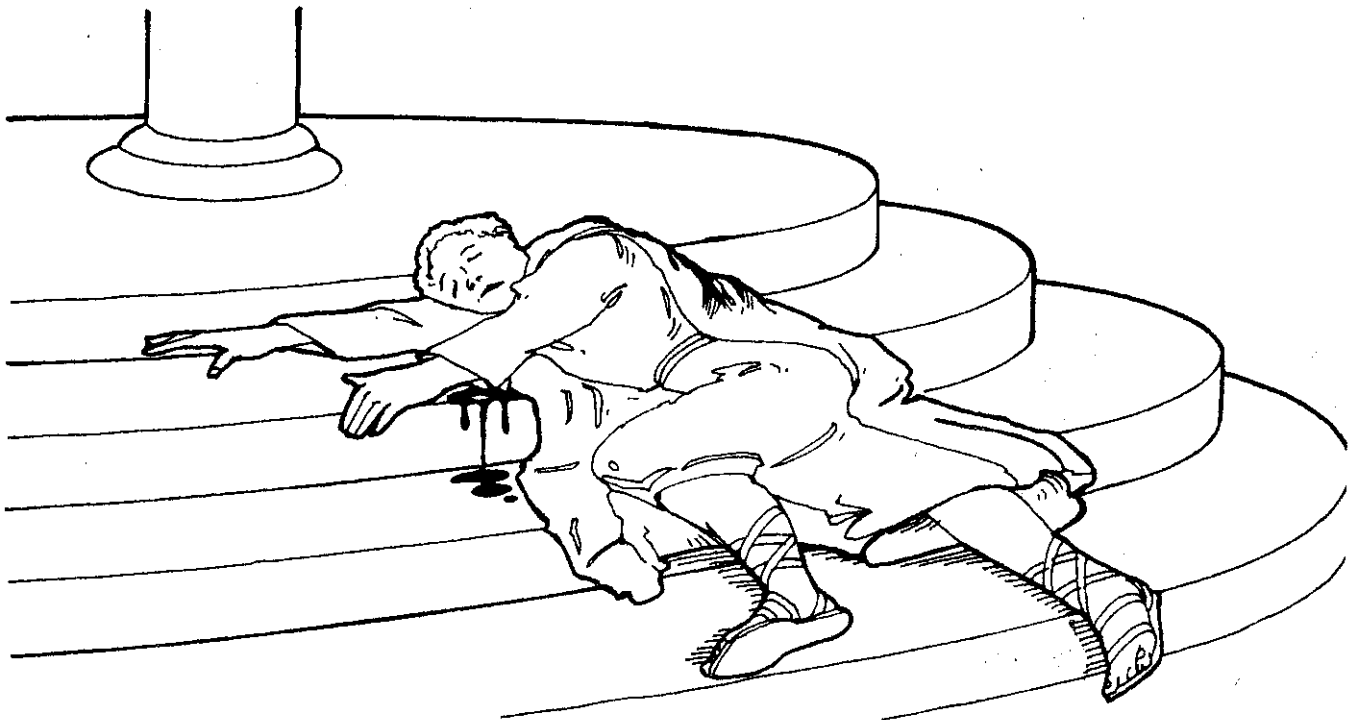
**Marthinian and Daledus**—senators

**Narrator 1:** From 509 B.C. to 50 B.C., Rome was a republic. Although no longer ruled by kings, it still was not very democratic. Most of the power was in the hands of the Senate, who were patrician men. For years the plebeians fought for more rights. Although they made some progress, power was never equally shared by the two classes.

**Narrator 2:** Around 50 B.C. a powerful Roman general named **Julius Caesar** took control of the Republic and declared himself **dictator**. He rendered the Senate helpless, and many believed his ambition would lead him to declare himself king of Rome and form a dynasty of rulers. In order to preserve the Roman Republic, a group of men assassinated Caesar. Join a group of Roman citizens on March 15, 44 B.C. in the Forum as they learn of Caesar's death and recount his incredible life.

**Justin:** Have you heard? Have you heard? Julius Caesar was just assassinated on the steps of the Senate! Caesar had been warned by his fortuneteller of danger, but he disregarded the warnings and dismissed his bodyguards. As he approached the Senate, a man pulled back his robe. This was the signal to attack. A horde of men with daggers lunged at him. Rumor has it he was stabbed more than 23 times.

**Alexandra:** How horrible to suffer such a death, but I can't say he didn't have it coming to him. Such a pity that a man with so fine an upbringing could let his ambition get the best of him. He was born into a fine patrician family. His wealth and education prepared him for the high positions the aristocracy fills in Roman society. By the time he was 20, he was serving in the army and anticipating moving into the higher ranks.



# Julius Caesar (cont.)

**Samuel:** And no better soldier could you find. Although he was very proud and vain, he was also a brave fighter and steady leader. One legend tells of how Caesar was captured by pirates while still a young soldier. They could tell he was from a high-class family so they demanded a ransom. Caesar laughed, saying they obviously did not know who they had, and he himself increased the ransom to an amount worthy of his status. Caesar sent one of his companions to raise the money while he stayed with the pirates. He told them that he would return someday to recover the money and punish their deed. The pirates thought this all a big joke and released him once the money arrived. To their dismay, Caesar did return with a fleet of ships and took revenge. Ah, yes, such a pity to have a man like that killed.

**Claudia:** I know you think he was a disgraceful ruler, Alexandra, yet I must agree with Samuel and mourn at his loss. Julius Caesar has done more to help us plebeians than any other Roman. Although he was rich, he was always fighting for the poor. After serving as a soldier, Caesar began his career in the government.



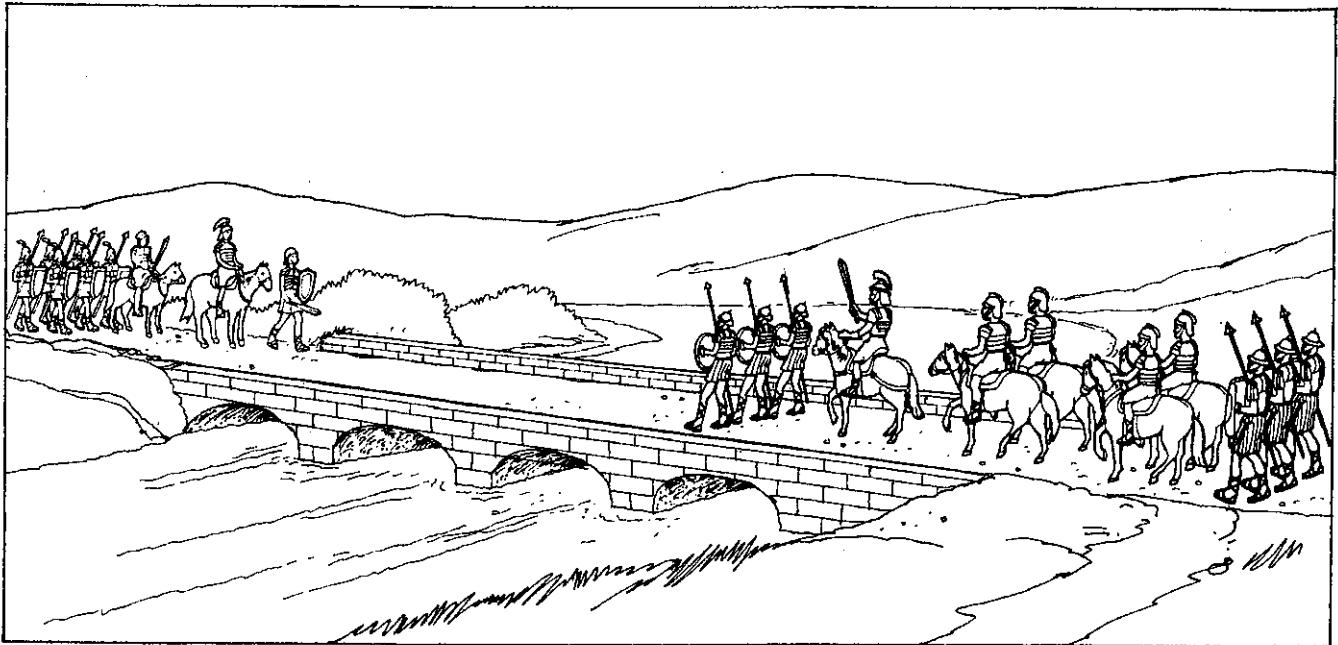
**Jermame:** I remember the time he threw a great party for 20,000 poor people. He gave away money, bread, and precious oil for lamps. I understand he was even more generous to his soldiers. It is said many were paid with rich farmland. During his rule he made many reforms, lowered taxes, gave jobs to veterans of war, and helped out those who owed money. He created many new jobs through his many building projects, which included canals, temples, and theaters. Some of the poorest in Rome were even allowed to discontinue paying rent at all. And if this were not enough, he then set about to prove himself worthy by returning to the military. As general, he led our army to many victories in Gaul and Britain, thereby regaining great wealth for himself and Rome.

**Oxaviar:** Yes, to many soldiers like myself Julius Caesar is practically a god. The Roman military is comprised of professional soldiers paid to fight. We are paid based on our victories and the spoils of battle. Although some might not like the way Caesar conducted himself in the government, there was no better military leader in Rome. I fought with him against the Germans hired by Gaul. Although we were greatly outnumbered, Caesar inspired us with words and led us by his own example. We felt we had superhuman powers. The Germans must have felt this, too, for they turned and ran! Caesar was quite a man and a powerful general. I would have fought for him anytime or anyplace. We soldiers pledge our alliance to our generals, not to Rome or the Republic.

# Julius Caesar (cont.)

**Marthinian:** And because of this, greedy and power-hungry generals have fought one another for power in the government. I know that most Romans like yourselves approved of Julius Caesar's conquests, but some of us were wary of his growing power and influence. Pompey, a rival general and once a friend of Caesar's, was the most distrusting. He convinced many of us Senators that Caesar was plotting against the government. The Senate declared Caesar a public enemy and ordered him to disband his army. Caesar attempted to compromise, but Pompey refused each compromise he offered. Things would have been different for Caesar and Rome had he chosen to follow our orders.

**Narrator 3:** It was in 49 B.C. that Julius Caesar made the most important decision of his life. While his army stood beside the **Rubicon River** bordering Italy, he pondered his choices. If he crossed into Italy with his men it would surely mean civil war, for he would be blatantly ignoring the Senate's orders. Furthermore, it was considered treason for a general to leave his own province and bring his army to Rome. However, if he stayed, he would be without an army, power, or hope. Allowing his ambition to guide his decision, Julius Caesar ordered his men to march across the bridge, thereby declaring war against the Roman Republic.



**Narrator 4:** Pompey and the Senate fought Caesar, and although they had the larger army, they were not as well organized. Pompey's army hadn't fought a major war for years and thus was unprepared for the hardened and loyal soldiers fighting for Caesar. The battles extended into Greece, at which time Pompey fled to Egypt, where he was eventually murdered. Julius Caesar declared himself leader of Rome, in control of the armies and the Senate.

**Daledus:** Yes, we could have avoided this ugly mess had Julius Caesar followed our orders back at the Rubicon. Once he came to Rome his ambition got the best of him, and he had to be stopped. Jermane, you think he cared about the common people, but he just bought your support by handing out bread and providing you with entertainment. The only thing Julius Caesar ever really cared about was power and control. Sure, we in the Senate voted to make him dictator. But what else could we do? His popularity among the citizens and military rendered us helpless to do otherwise. Once dictator, there was no end to his lust for power.

# Julius Caesar (cont.)

**Flaudine:** I heard that he treated the Senators as if they were common beggars. He thought himself so above others that he had a special chair made and layered with gold. He would sit on this “throne” while presiding over meetings. The other Senators also resented the fact that he refused to stand when speaking with them. We all saw the coins minted with his profile and that grand statue made from ivory that was paraded around the city. Dictators are usually voted in as a temporary measure. Caesar was not interested in losing his status, so I can’t help but think he was attempting to make himself a permanent ruler and possibly king.

**Marthinian:** He was gaining more and more land for Rome, but it was questionable who his alliance was really with. Once he conquered Egypt and became involved with **Queen Cleopatra**, he only grew more and more greedy for power. I’m sure she was a guiding force behind his ambition, hoping to gain power for herself as well. Many believed he intended to found a dynasty with himself the first king. Then he would get rid of the Senate and there would be no more voting by the people. I tell you, he had to be stopped.

**Justin:** Sorry to interrupt, my friends, but I have more details about the murder. Cassius and Brutus were involved in the assassination plot. Can you believe it? Brutus was one of Caesar’s best friends! Many believe he may even be Caesar’s natural son. So you can imagine Caesar’s shock when he saw Brutus approach with dagger raised. They say Caesar actually stopped resisting when he saw Brutus and sadly cried, “Et tu, Brute?” The Forum is buzzing with excitement. Mobs are forming to track down the assassins. Rome is divided and I fear the fate of our fair city.

**Narrator 5:** The assassination of Julius Caesar hurt the Republic further rather than saved it. Rome became divided, and a terrible power struggle followed. Caesar’s adopted son Octavian returned to Rome after hearing of his father’s murder. Octavian assumed partial control of the Roman Empire and later became its first emperor, thus putting an end to the Roman Republic.



# Vocabulary and Comprehension

Julius Caesar

dictator

Rubicon River

Queen Cleopatra

Use all or some of the following questions for whole-class discussion, small-group work, or individual assessment. Allow students to refer back to the story while working.

1. List the major events in Julius Caesar's life that helped make him dictator of Rome.
2. Why was the crossing of the Rubicon such a big decision for Caesar? Do you feel he made the right decision? Why or why not?
3. Why was Julius Caesar popular with the majority of plebeians and soldiers?
4. Why did the Senate dislike Caesar?
5. Why was Julius Caesar assassinated?
6. Did the assassination achieve its goal?
7. How might the history of Rome have been different had Julius Caesar followed the orders of the Senate and disbanded his army?