

Today, we will read and discuss a monologue written by William Shakespeare. Here is the background, copied from Wikipedia.

Gaius Julius Caesar (12 July 100 BC – 15 March 44 BC) was a Roman general and statesman. A member of the First Triumvirate, Caesar led the Roman armies in the Gallic Wars before defeating Pompey in a civil war and governing the Roman Republic as a dictator from 49 BC until his assassination in 44 BC. He played a critical role in the events that led to the demise of the Roman Republic and the rise of the Roman Empire.

In 60 BC, Caesar, Crassus and Pompey formed the First Triumvirate, a political alliance ... Caesar rose to become one of the most powerful politicians in the Roman Republic through a string of military victories in the Gallic Wars, completed by 51 BC, which greatly extended Roman territory.

Pompey realigned himself with the Senate after the death of Crassus in 53 BC. With the Gallic Wars concluded, the Senate ordered Caesar to step down from his military command and return to Rome. Caesar openly defied the Senate's authority by crossing the Rubicon and marching towards Rome at the head of an army. This began Caesar's civil war, which he won, leaving him in a position of near unchallenged power and influence.

After assuming control of government, Caesar began a program of social and governmental reforms. He gave citizenship to many residents of far regions of the Roman Republic. He initiated land reform and support for veterans. He centralized the bureaucracy of the Republic and was eventually proclaimed "dictator for life" (dictator perpetuo). His populist and authoritarian reforms angered the elites, who began to conspire against him. On the Ides of March (15 March), 44 BC, Caesar was assassinated by a group of rebellious senators led by Brutus and Cassius.

Marc Anthony's Eulogy of Julius Caesar

William Shakespeare
circa 1598 A.D.

1 Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones;
5 So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious:
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest—
10 For Brutus is an honourable man;
So are they all, all honourable men—
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
He was my friend, faithful and just to me:
But Brutus says he was ambitious;
15 And Brutus is an honourable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:
20 Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
25 Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And, sure, he is an honourable man.
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
But here I am to speak what I do know.
30 You all did love him once, not without cause:
What cause withholds you then, to mourn for him?
O judgment! thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason. Bear with me;
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
35 And I must pause till it come back to me.