

Questionable Heroes in
the Play Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar, a play written by the famous play-writer William Shakespeare, had many characters who could have been questioned in terms of their motives and will. Some may have had good intentions, but others were revealed to have other things in mind than the well-being of the Romans. The aim of this paper is to take a look at why the main people in this tragedy did what they did.

Julius Caesar, the center of the big ordeal, is the first logical person to take a look at. When he first arrives, he is hailed as a great man and offered the crown numerous times, refusing it each time. He is clearly the hero of the people for that time. The question of his heroism comes when his previous actions are looked upon. He has just returned from killing Pompey and Pompey's sons. He did this to gain complete control of Rome instead of sticking with the triumvirate that had currently ruled. He was ambitious, or so it was said, and he wanted only power. This alone shows that his motives were not as pure as was first thought.

The next person to be looked upon in Mark Antony, apparently Julius Caesar's right-hand man. He plays the part of the hero as he takes Caesar's side after death and rallies the people against the conspirators. As he speaks to Octavius, though, he shows that he is mainly after the power also in saying that the third person of their new triumvirate, Lepidus, is not a worthy adversary and is only good enough to carry messages. Antony goes on to say that they should have him (Lepidus) killed, along with all the other people they were making a list of. He was going to have them eliminated just because they might stand in their way to gaining complete power. He also ordered to have figured a way to cut some of the money out of the will to the people and keep it for himself. His intentions weren't so good after all.

Cassius, the apparent originator of the conspiracy in the first place, is at first hard to figure out if he would take action in good will or in greed for power. On one hand, he starts out by saying he doesn't want Caesar to have the power because it would turn out like the kings of past. He even convinces all of the other conspirators, including the noble Brutus, of this ominous threat. After a while, the audience is shown and led to believe his true drive. This drive turns out to be pure jealousy of Caesar's popularity and resulting power. He wanted it for himself.

Finally, the question of the noble Brutus is at hand. From the start, he is somewhat portrayed to be respectable in status and character. He said he feared Caesar accepting the crown he said, although he had not a notion of killing the man at the time. He was manipulated into doing it by Cassius and the two fake letters that Cassius sent to him in the name of the citizens of Rome. When he kills Julius Caesar by stabbing him even as he looked him in the eye he believes that he and the others are doing it only for the good of the country of Rome. Later it is shown that most of them were in it for the power, though. But the fact remains, Brutus had done it in good will and even said so as he explained his motives to the crowd of citizens. Finally, when it appears that all is lost in battle and he finds his partner Cassius dead, he also runs upon his sword. Over his dead body, even the evil Mark Antony declares him to be "the noblest Roman of them all".

Of all of the people involved in William Shakespeare's tragedy Julius Caesar, only one of them had good and pure intentions behind his actions. Brutus did what he did in the name of the Roman people, in fear that it might become another dictatorship like in the past with the kings. For this reason, Brutus is actually the only true tragic hero portrayed in this play.

