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# ACT 1

## PRE-GRAMMAR | Preparation

*Prepare the student for understanding the Central One Idea by drawing upon his or her prior knowledge or experience.*

1. Consider the saying “There is strength in numbers.” Groups can have strength, and that strength can often be a good thing. Think of a time in your own life or in history when “strength in numbers” worked for the good. Now consider the converse. Can you think of a historical example when “strength in numbers” has caused harm? How do groups succeed in their goals? Write your thoughts to all parts of this writing prompt in the space below or in your Literature Notebook. Conclude with a sentence that lists three or four characteristics of a good leader.

## GRAMMAR | Presentation

*The student is presented with and discovers essential facts, elements, and features of the play.*

### READING NOTES

1. **Flavius** – a Roman tribune
2. **Marullus** – a Roman tribune
3. **tribune** – a political office created during the reign of Coriolanus during the early republic; represents the plebeians and has power to veto any laws he dislikes
4. **Caesar** – Rome’s leader
5. **Casca** – a member of the conspiracy
6. **Calphurnia** – Caesar’s wife
7. **Antony** – loyal to Caesar; a triumvir after the death of Julius Caesar
8. **Cassius** – the leading conspirator

9. **Brutus** – Caesar’s good friend who joins the conspiracy
10. **Cicero** – a Roman senator
11. **soothsayer** – someone believed to have the divine gift of being able to see into the future
12. **sovereign** – one possessing supreme political power
13. **servile fearfulness** – fear of a suffering and humiliating enslavement
14. **pun**– a play on words deriving from the similarity of sounds between two words with different meanings<sup>1</sup>
15. **tone** – whatever leads us to infer the author’s attitude; implies the attitudes toward the subject and toward the audience in a literary work
16. **metaphor** – a direct, implicit comparison between two unlike things (does not use *like*, *as*, or *than*) (Example: *My daughter is an angel.*)
17. **simile** – the comparison of two unlike things with the use of *like*, *as*, or *than*; shows that something unknown can be understood because it is similar to something known (Example: *My daughter is as silly as a monkey.*)
18. **irony** – a discrepancy between what is said and what is actually intended
19. **dramatic irony** – a form of irony in which the audience knows more than a character(s)
20. **soliloquy** – a speech given by a character when he is alone on stage
21. **monologue** – a long speech by a character, esp. one that monopolizes a conversation
22. **allusion** – An implied or stated reference to something else – such as Greek or Roman mythology, the Bible, a historical event, work of art, or an epic poem. Knowledge of the reference imbues additional meaning to the work under consideration.

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[1] William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, *A Handbook to Literature*, Revised and Enlarged by C. Hugh Holman (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1960), 388.

## WORDS TO BE DEFINED

1. man of humble position
2. pointed tool used for making holes in leather
3. set foot; stepped
4. curved; hollow
5. facial expression; a person's face
6. thoughts
7. oppression; something that causes cruelty or takes away freedom
8. believe; consider
9. a small or lesser crown
10. strength of spirit or temperament
11. ominous; hinting of something sinister
12. unnatural, extraordinary, ominous

## WORDS TO BE DEFINED

### Definitions Bank

believe; consider	oppression;	small or lesser
curved; hollow	something that	crowns
facial expression; a person's face	causes cruelty or takes away freedom	strength of spirit or temperament
a man of humble position	pointed tool used for making holes in leather	thoughts
ominous; hinting of something sinister	set foot; stepped	unnatural, extraordinary, ominous

1. What trade, thou **knave**? Thou naughty **knave**, what trade? (1.1.14)
2. Truly, sir, all that I live by is with the **awl**. (1.1.22)
3. As proper men as ever **trod** upon neat's leather have gone upon my handiwork. (1.1.26)
4. To hear the replication of your sounds made in her **concave** shores (1.1.48)
5. I turn the trouble of my **countenance** merely upon myself (1.2.38)
6. Thoughts of great value, worthy **cogitations** (1.2.50)
7. And groaning underneath this age's **yoke** (1.2.61)
8. Brutus had rather be a villager than to **repute** himself a son of Rome (1.2.173)
9. 'twas not a crown ... 'twas one of these **coronets** (1.2.236)
10. Thy honourable **mettle** may be wrought from that it is dispos'd (1.2.308)
11. For I believe they are **portentous** things (1.3.31)
12. In personal action, yet **prodigious** grown (1.3.77)



*Read the Prologue and Act 1, marking the text in key places according to the method taught in "How to Mark a Book."*

As you read through Act 1, be sure to pause as often as necessary to read the helpful footnotes for difficult words and phrases. You may not need to read all of the footnotes because you will probably know some of the words already or have a sense of their meaning as you read. If you pause frequently in any section, it will be helpful to read the section again without pausing so that you get a proper sense of the rhythm and continuity of the language, as well as the gist of the complete speech or scene.

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

### Act 1, Scene 1

1. What are the professions of the onlookers questioned by the tribunes, and how do the two men explain their absence from work?
2. Why does Marullus think the crowd should feel terrible about Caesar's victory over Pompey?
3. a) Marullus and Flavius each give instructions to the gathered crowd. Using a quote from the text, tell what each tribune advises the people.  
b) What do Flavius and Marullus plan to do after dispersing the crowd?

### Act 1, Scene 2

4. Brutus and Cassius do not attend the races. Why not?
5. When Cassius tells Brutus he has been behaving strangely toward him lately, how does Brutus respond?
6. Cassius offers to be Brutus's mirror. What does Cassius "show" Brutus about himself?
7. Referring to scene 2, ll. 72-78, list four reasons Cassius says Brutus should trust him.
8. Cassius describes two occasions when he felt Caesar did not behave like someone who should become leader of the Roman Republic. Briefly describe the two occasions, including at least one quote in your answer.



## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

### Act 1, Scene 1

1. The onlookers are a carpenter and a cobbler. They have left work to view Caesar's triumph and celebrate his recent military victory (1.1.32).

2. The Romans used to love Pompey as they now profess to love Caesar. Marullus finds their loyalty capricious (1.1.38).
3. a) Marullus tells the people to go home and pray that the gods won't send a plague as a punishment for ingratitude toward Pompey. Flavius tells them to go to the Tiber River and cry until the banks overflow (1.1.54-56).  
b) Rome is decorated for the feast of Lupercal and the triumph for Caesar. The tribunes plan on dispersing the crowds and removing any decorations honoring Caesar (1.1.69-71).

### Act 1, Scene 2

4. Brutus says he is not interested in such matters. Cassius stays behind because he says Brutus has not been himself lately and has seemed less friendly toward him (1.2.28-36).
5. Brutus blames his distressed countenance on worries about which he should not speak, and he assures Cassius that he is one of his closest friends (1.2.39-47).
6. Cassius tells Brutus that many respected Romans have concerns about "this age's yoke" and see Brutus as someone with the ability to address Rome's current situation (1.2.55-62).
7. 1) I am not the butt of jokes or the laughingstock of the other patricians: the other patricians see me as respectable.  
2) I am not accustomed to bestowing my allegiance to any person that comes along wanting to be my ally: I am circumspect about my professional relationships.  
3) You know I am not a hypocrite, someone who acts like a loyal friend in the presence of someone and then speaks poorly of him after he leaves the room: I am loyal.  
4) I am honest with my friends.
8. Cassius recounts a time along the Tiber when Caesar challenged him to a swimming race but then needed Cassius to save him from drowning. The other occasion took place in Spain when Caesar was sick with a fever and cried, "Give me some drink, Titinius' as a sick girl" (1.2.127-128).

9. Cassius says fate is not responsible for every single event in a man's life; sometimes man has control over a situation. Being underlings to Caesar is an example of something Brutus and he do not have to accept.
10. Cassius would be a threat if Caesar had any fears, for Cassius is a man never at peace but always yearning for something else, something greater.
11. Flavius and Marullus were silenced for removing decorations celebrating Caesar. See also footnote 166 on p. 23 of the Ignatius Critical Edition.
12. Cassius says that if he were Brutus, he would not listen to himself. He comments that though Brutus is honorable and firmly wants to do that which is honorable, he senses Brutus wavering. Because of this, he will have fraudulent letters planted where they will be found by Brutus, letters imploring Brutus's help and that appear to be written by a variety of Roman citizens.
13. Casca says he has seen a lot of bad weather in his lifetime but none that rivals the current storm. He speculates that either the gods are engaging in their own civil war or they are upset with human behavior (1.3.3-13).
14. 1) A slave's hand burned like twenty torches but remained healthy.  
2) In the Capitol a lion stared at Casca but did him no harm.  
3) A hundred women riddled with fear told Casca they'd seen men on fire walking up and down the streets.  
4) An owl hooted at the marketplace in the middle of the day. (1.3.15-28)
15. Though Cicero agrees times are strange, he says human beings are apt to interpret the meaning of an event in ways that suit their particular viewpoint (1.3.33-34).
16. Like Casca, Cassius claims the fires, "gliding ghosts," and creatures behaving contrary to their natures are signs from the gods that something unnatural is taking place in Rome—specifically, one human has more power than should be bestowed upon one man. Cassius reassures Casca that honest men have no need to worry; in fact, he gave the gods opportunities to strike him down when he unbuttoned his shirt and bared his breast. Apparently, the gods are content with Cassius!
17. Cassius speaks of suicide as a way of liberating himself from a situation he perceives as tyrannical (1.3.89-100).
18. Some of the papers are to be put in Brutus's praetor chair, another by his window at his home, and yet another paper should be posted on the statue of Junius Brutus, a distant relative of Brutus who stabbed Tarquin Superbus and thus ended Rome's monarchy in 510 B.C. (1.3.142-146).
19. The people respect Brutus. If Brutus becomes a member of their group, the public's approval of one man will transfer into an acceptance of the group and their enterprise (1.3.157-160).

9. Reread scene 2, ll. 139-141. Paraphrase the idea Cassius presents to Brutus.
10. Caesar speaks to Antony about his concerns regarding Cassius. Summarize Caesar's concerns from scene 2, ll. 192-212.
11. What happened to Flavius and Marullus in scene 2, ll. 283-285?
12. Scene 2 ends with a short **soliloquy** by Cassius. In this soliloquy, what does Cassius say about himself in comparison to Brutus? What does he reveal he will do "this night"?

### Act 1, Scene 3

13. Act 1, scene 3 begins with an ominous **mood** created by the weather. What does Casca tell Cicero about the weather at the start of scene 3?
14. In addition to the vicious storm, Casca reports observing four unusual occurrences that he believes are **portentous**. List the four spectacles.
15. Unlike Casca, why doesn't Cicero believe the storms and unusual happenings are **portentous**?
16. In scene 3, ll. 43-78, how does Cassius view the weather and strange events?
17. How does Cassius respond when Casca tells him that the senators plan on making Caesar king?
18. Where is Cinna supposed to take the letters written by Cassius?
19. Explain why Casca thinks the group needs Brutus to join.

## LOGIC | Dialectic

The student reasons with the facts, elements, and features of the play; sorts, arranges, compares, and connects ideas – and begins to uncover and determine the Central One Idea. Discussion of the Socratic Questions may include note-taking in the Literature Notebook, or they may be answered in written form in the Literature Notebook.

### SOCRATIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

May be verbally discussed or answered in written form in your Literature Notebook.

1. Relying only on details from scene 1, in a paragraph explain the problems facing Rome at the start of the play.
2. Read 1.1.37-53, starting at “O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome ....”
  - a) Who says this?
  - b) To whom?
  - c) What is the occasion?
  - d) What is the significance?
3. Shakespeare enhances his **dialogue** with **puns** and their ensuing humor. In a sentence or two, explain the pun on soles in the cobbler’s dialogue in scene 1, line 13.
4. Cassius offers to be Brutus’s mirror in scene 2, lines 55-62. This is an example of what **figure of speech**? Why are Cassius’s words **ironic**?
5. Read 1.2.307-321, starting at “Well, Brutus, thou art noble; yet, I see ....”
  - a) Who says this?
  - b) To whom?
  - c) What is the significance?
6. Many of Shakespeare’s plays include a play within the play. Reconsider Casca’s explanation of events in the Capitol in scene 2, lines 234-274. Describe the drama Casca recounts and include what thematic idea this off-stage scene suggests.

### SOCRATIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Student paragraphs will vary, but they need to find their evidence in scene 1. The tribunes have already expressed disapproval of the masses’ capricious loyalties. Students should mention this and try to articulate why the public’s fleeting allegiances could harm the Republic. Students will likely also focus on Flavius’s extended metaphor in lines 69-76: Caesar has so much more power than any other man, it’s as if he is a god. His omnipotence leaves all other citizens in comparative “*servile fearfulness*.”

2.
  - a) Marullus
  - b) The crowds gathered to celebrate Caesar.
  - c) The celebration of Caesar’s victory over Pompey and his sons
  - d) The tribunes are upset by the Roman people’s change of heart. This will not be the last time the public has a change of heart.
3. The cobbler’s job is to fix the broken soles of shoes, but he uses the homonym of soles (souls) to joke about fixing the souls of men’s lives.
4. Cassius offering to be Brutus’s mirror is an example of metaphor. After the two men agree that the best way to “see” oneself is to listen to another man’s judgment, Cassius readily expounds upon his own character starting at 1.2.70, thereby arguing on behalf of his own trustworthiness.
5.
  - a) Cassius
  - b) The audience in a soliloquy
  - c) 1) a pun on *mettle* and *metal*;  
2) Cassius knows human nature. People must pick their company wisely because the individual, though convicted about what is good, will always be stronger in the company of people similarly principled. However, contrast Cassius’s observation with Caesar’s preferences for the men that surround him (1.2.192-194). Choosing to be around people with good character is not the same thing as choosing to be around people without the abilities or strength to ask critical questions.
6. Casca’s lines report Caesar acting before the crowd. Thrice Caesar rejects a pretend crown, and at one point he asks Casca to tear open his doublet (1.2.264) so Caesar could mime cutting his own throat for the sake of the people. With each passing moment, the masses grow in fervor and support of their new leader. Casca notes that Caesar could have killed their mothers and the crowd would have forgiven him. Readers learn secondhand how much emotional control Caesar has over his citizens, and Casca’s final comment suggests that the Romans may be too blinded by their emotions to think critically about their new leader.

7. a) Cassius  
 b) Fellow Romans  
 c) Romans may physically resemble their ancestors, but they do not act similarly or seem to have the same values. The current Romans behave like weaklings.  
 d) Casca has just told Cassius he will join the conspiracy and act out as far as is needed (1.3.118-120). Cassius wants to keep Casca emotionally stirred up and committed. The metaphorical yoke also comes with a historical allusion. In ancient times, “passing under the yoke” was an act of humiliation when defeated soldiers literally bowed under the yoke of the victorious as a way of acknowledging submission.
8. a) Cassius  
 b) Casca  
 c) 1) Cassius does not name the plan explicitly but uses a metaphor instead: the sky and its current appearance, which he describes as “*bloody, fiery, and most terrible.*”  
 2) The descriptors alone reveal Cassius’s understanding that his plans are morally questionable.
9. Answers will vary.

## RHETORICAL EXPRESSION

1. • **Scene 1:** Tribunes Flavius and Marullus attempt to admonish and control a crowd on a day when people should be at work.  
 • **Scene 2:** Cassius begins the process of winning the honorable Brutus over to his cause.  
 • **Scene 3:** The weather is perceived as divine evidence of the Roman Republic’s fragile state, while Cassius sends Cinna to plant letters appealing to Brutus’s aid. Cassius is certain Brutus will join his cause. Casca says the conspiracy needs Brutus to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the people.
2. Answers will vary.

7. Read 1.3.80-84, starting at “*Let it be who it is; for Romans now ....*”  
 a) Who says this?  
 b) About whom?  
 c) What is the meaning?  
 d) What is the significance?
8. Read 1.3.127-130, starting at “*There is no stir or walking in the streets ....*”  
 a) Who says this?  
 b) To whom?  
 c) What is the significance?
9. Consider what you know thus far regarding the characters of Caesar and Cassius – their apparent strengths, weaknesses, and their concerns about one other. Which man would you prefer for your country’s leader if they were the only two candidates from which to choose?

## RHETORIC | Expression

*The student reasons with the facts, elements, and features of the play; sorts, arranges, compares, and connects ideas – and begins to uncover and determine the Central One Idea. Discussion of the Socratic Questions may include note-taking in the Literature Notebook, or they may be answered in written form in the Literature Notebook.*

### RHETORICAL EXPRESSION

To be answered in your Literature Notebook in preparation for your essay.

1. In a sentence or two, summarize each scene in Act 1.
2. Write the Central One Idea of Act 1 in a precise, eloquent sentence.
3. List three or four points that support your determination of the Central One Idea.
4. Write a lead (1-2 sentences) that grabs the reader's attention – such as a *quote, question, startling fact or statistic, scenario, piece of dialogue, etc.*
5. Write an amplification/importance (1-2 sentences) that explains why your thesis is important in a larger or more universal sense.

◆ **Central Quote:** Choose a quote from anywhere in Act 1 that you think best embodies the Central One Idea. With good penmanship, write it in the Central Quote section at the beginning of Act 1.

❶ **Write the Central One Idea as expressed by the teacher.**

### ESSAY OPTION

Choose a topic below and respond with a 3-5 paragraph essay that includes an Introduction with a clear thesis; a Body with organized, logical, and specific support of the thesis; and a Conclusion that discusses the significance of the thesis.

The essay should feature appropriate tone, voice, and point of view; correct grammar, usage, and mechanics; a variety of sentence structures enhanced by subordination and parallelism; a balance of general and specific detail; and enhanced rhetorical effect through transition words, appropriate diction, strong verbs, descriptive adjectives, and other rhetorical devices.



3. 1) The tribunes express concern about Caesar's unnatural amount of power at the end of scene 1, and by the end of scene 2, Flavius and Marullus have disappeared. This disappearance symbolizes not just the lost voice of the citizenry, but suggests something about the manner in which any people can lose their voice—without recognition and thereby without protest, in the midst of fervent approval for a charismatic leader.  
2) Brutus, one of Caesar's closest friends, has concerns about Caesar's power.  
3) In this play, which focuses on the power and use of language, Caesar acts out a play (1.2.234) in which Antony pretends to crown him king. In this play without language and only mime, Caesar stirs the crowd into an emotional frenzy. Casca comments that the crowd would not have censored the leader had he killed their mothers.  
4) The unnatural events and weather described at the start of scene 2 indicate that Rome's situation is abnormal—yet another indicator of Caesar's unusual degree of power. The common people seem to revere him as more than a man, someone half-god. In their eyes, he can do no wrong, and so the people's love for Caesar is also unnatural.
  4. Answers will vary.
  5. Answers will vary.
- ◆ **Central Quote:** Answers will vary. Here is an example:  
*“These growing feathers pluck'd from Caesar's wing  
 Will make him fly an ordinary pitch,  
 Who else would soar above the view of men,  
 And keep us all in servile fearfulness.”*  
 – (5.1.45-49)
- ❶ Power should not be consolidated in an individual, even if that particular individual is considered virtuous. Untouchable power in one person threatens the security and well-being of a society.

1. Write a 3-5 paragraph essay in which you point out and explore the similarities between Caesar and Cassius.
2. Write a 3-5 paragraph essay discussing what you perceive to be Caesar's weaknesses, and how these weaknesses could affect his leadership and/or harm Rome.
3. Write a 3-5 paragraph essay exploring how appearances differ from reality in Act 1.
4. Central One Idea – Write about Caesar's power. Why is it wrong to have power concentrated in Caesar? What sort of problems are already sprouting up for the Republic as early as this first act? In your concluding paragraph, explain why your reader should prefer a balance of power over the leadership of one person – even if that leader is considered virtuous.