

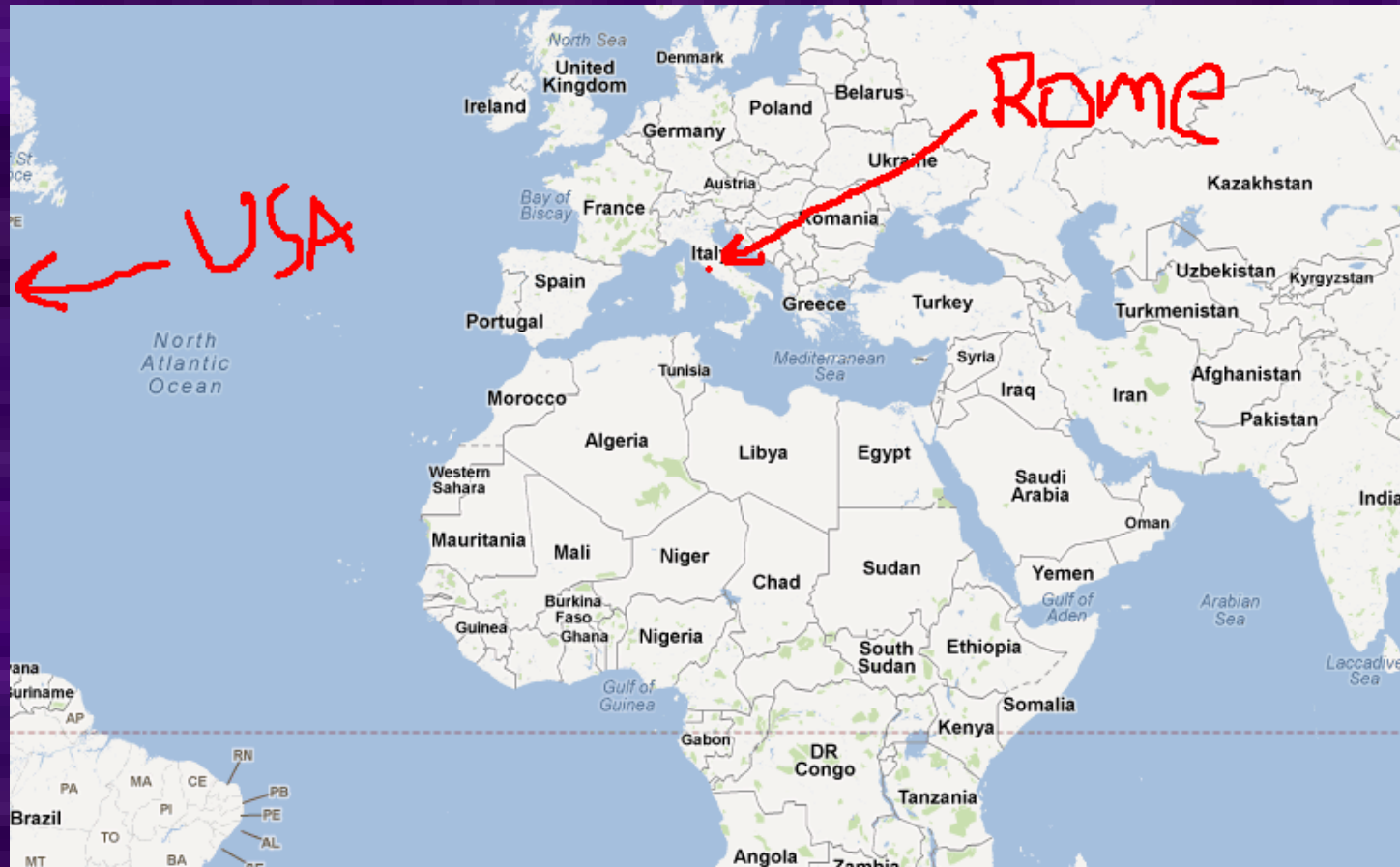
The Tragedy of Julius Caesar

William Shakespeare



Julius Caesar: Introduction

The setting of this play is ancient Rome.

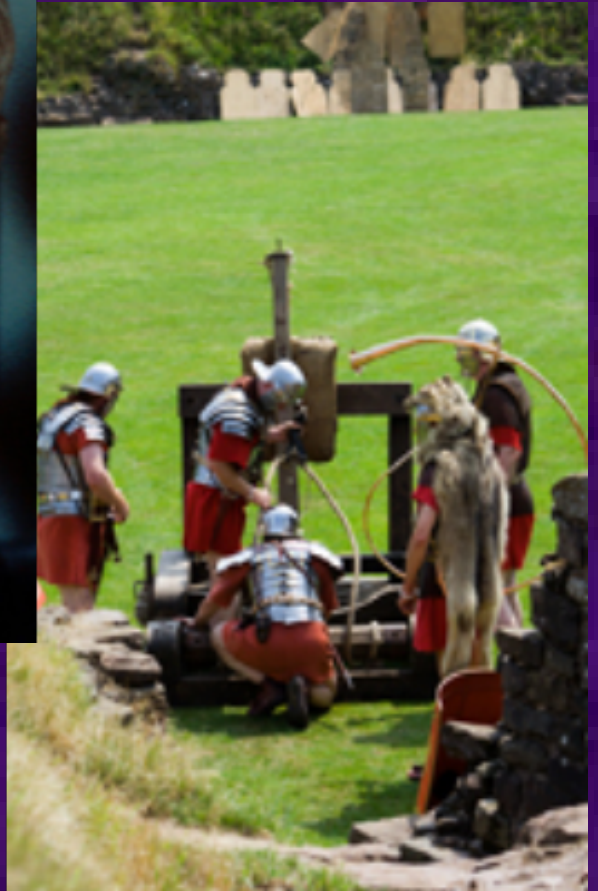
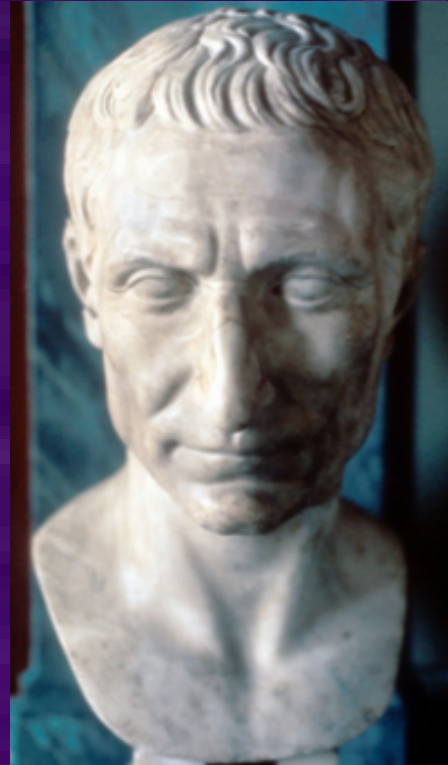


Shakespeare creates a world full of political intrigue, magical occurrences, and military conquest.

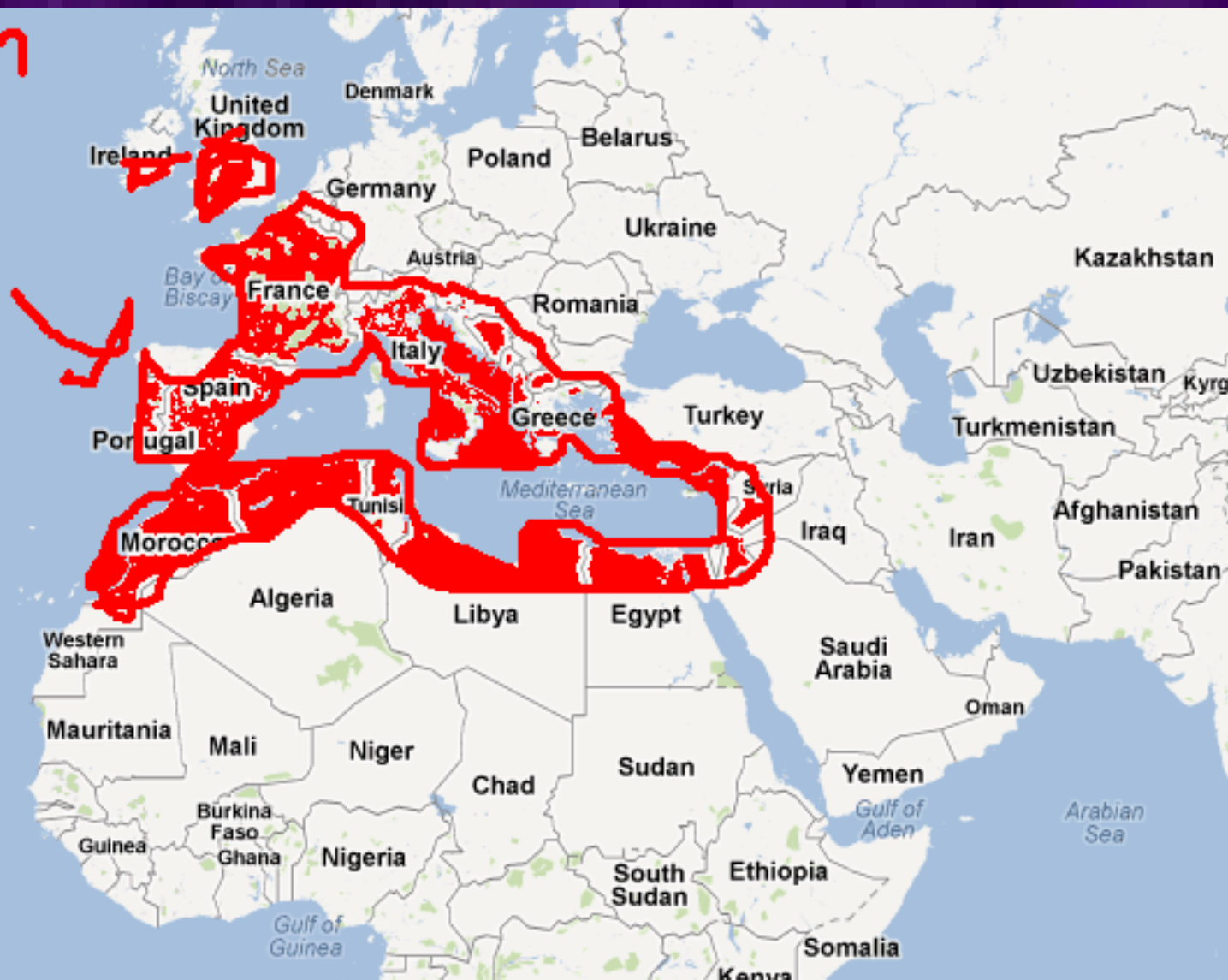
Julius Caesar: Introduction

Caesar, the most powerful General in Rome, has armies conquering here there and everywhere (Europe and Africa).

Rome is a republic and rule is shared by a Senate that uses a majority vote.



ROMAN
EMPIRE



Julius Caesar: Introduction

While Caesar was fighting, his daughter Julia marries Pompey.



Pompey, another powerful general, and a guy named Crassius were thinking about taking over Rome but teamed up with Caesar.

This was called the first Triumvirate (three lives)

Pompey, as well as others in the Roman senate, became disturbed by Caesar's growing ambition and power.

Caesar

- Caesar's daughter dies :(
- Caesar hears that Pompey wants to take Rome.
- Pompey asks Caesar to give up his army.
- Caesar makes a bee line for Rome and sieges.
- Pompey hides inside Rome before sneaking out at night with his kids.
- Caesar decides that he should be the Emperor, the one and true leader of the Roman Empire.

Caesar.

- After he is appointed Emperor, Caesar chases after Pompey.
- Kills him out near Egypt.
- Kills his Pompey's kids.
- Kills all loyal to Pompey.
- Chills out with Cleopatra
- "Veni, Vidi, Vici" (bragging about how easy it all was)

Julius Caesar: Introduction

Caesar refuses to enter Rome as an ordinary citizen after the war.

he marches his army on Rome and takes over the government.



Julius Caesar: Introduction

The people love Caesar!~

Caesar is made *dictator*, or ruler—a position that was sometimes been granted for a ten-year term—for the rest of his life.

He is usually known as an Emperor



Julius Caesar: Introduction

Many senators, however, resent Caesar's for having so much power.

They want a Republic back.

They want a government for the people, by the people.



Julius Caesar: Introduction

Some senators begin to conspire. . .

Casca, who hates the ordinary citizens of Rome yet is jealous of their love for Caesar

Cassius, a greedy and jealous man

Brutus, Caesar's friend who believes that he must act against Caesar for the good of Rome

to take drastic measures to keep Caesar from winning any more power-

and to take away all that he had!

Julius Caesar : Background



Shakespeare uses Roman customs and superstition to create spooky conditions to mirror the dangerous plot being planned.

This sometimes comes as foreshadowing.

A lot of this is Astrological.

Julius Caesar : Background

The Romans believed that omens could reveal the future.



These omens could take the form of unusual weather, flights of birds, or other natural phenomena.



Julius Caesar: Background

Animals were seen as indicators of the future. ▼

The Romans often sacrificed animals to the gods, and had their entrails examined by an official called a *haruspex*.

Any abnormalities or imperfections indicated the anger of a god or a particularly bad event about to happen.

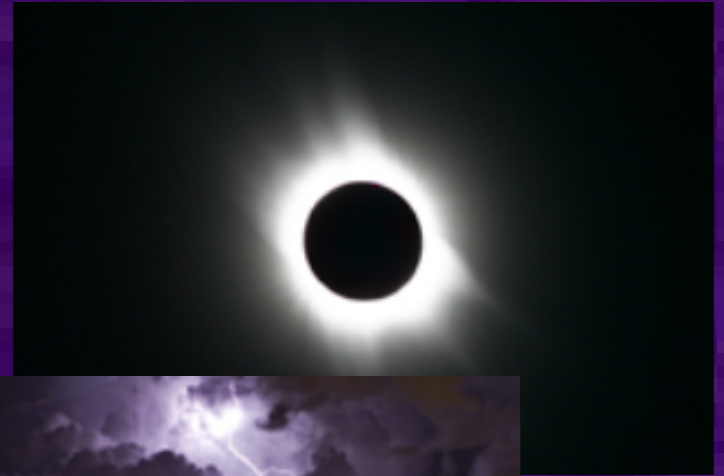


Julius Caesar: Background

Unusual astronomical and meteorological occurrences were also seen as indicators of future events.



Solar eclipses were believed to portend doom, as was lightning.



Julius Caesar: Background

One of the reasons the Senate was concerned by Caesar's accumulation of power was Rome's long history as a republic.



Julius Caesar : Background

Around 509 B.C., the Romans ended a monarchy by rebelling against the last king of Rome, Tarquinius.

That is about 500 years before Caesar's time.

Greece was a dominant empire at the time, as were the Egyptians.



Julius Caesar: Background



After this revolution, the Romans established their famous republic, in which all citizens were represented in the Senate.

They were very proud of their non-monarchical government, and were determined to preserve it—until the time of Caesar.

Dilemmas

- This play very much centers on the drama in deciding what the correct idea is.
 - Should a person make a decision on selfish interests? (YOLO)
 - Should a person make a decision while considering future generations?
 - Should a person sacrifice another for the benefit of all?
 - How should history be viewed by people of the future?

Influence of Plutarch

- *Julius Caesar* is a play based on historical events. Shakespeare wrote this play based on the accounts of writers and biographers who documented these events in history.
- One of Shakespeare's primary resources was Plutarch, who is the most famous biographer of the ancient world.

Influence of Plutarch

- Born in 46 A.D. in Greece, Plutarch was a writer and historian who wrote the famous collection of biographies now known as *Plutarch's Lives*.
- Plutarch's original title was *Parallel Lives of Famous Greeks and Romans*, and that describes his unique approach: the biographies were presented in pairs, the life of one Greek contrasted with that of a similar Roman.

Influence of Plutarch

- Plutarch's subjects were statesmen, generals and public figures including Alexander the Great, Solon, Pyrrhus, Julius Caesar, and Marc Antony, and together the biographies present a basic history of Greece and Rome up to Plutarch's life.
- Therefore, Plutarch has been a favorite of scholars and schoolteachers for centuries

So what?

- Plutarch sets in motion the idea that only the great men and women (mostly men) in history will be remembered.
- The “common” man will be forgotten.
- Think about the titles of his plays and the social positions of those characters.
- Think about the name of the guy who stacked the first stone of the coliseum.

Elizabethan England and JC

- During Queen Elizabeth's time, the money problems stopped.
- Culture progressed with the ideas of mainland Europe.
- The Renaissance was in full swing (sort of):
 - More open mindedness, educational reform, criticism of the class structure/aristocracy.

Elizabethan England and JC

- There were Catholic and Anglican Divisions (the same ones that chased the Puritans out of England).
- These were violent.
- Lots of back-stabbing and political plotting for selfish gain.
- Many questions about what was best for the country.
- This all shows up in Shakespeare's plays.

Elizabethan England and JC

- Democracy vs. Aristocracy.
- Devine right of Kings criticized.
- Parliament (like our congress) developed to improve the rights of the masses.
- These issues are discussed in JC.

Elizabethan England and JC

- The Arts flourish so long as rich people pay to see them.
- Elizabeth had a stable economy through ties to commerce in the new world.
 - She endorsed the use of pirates.
 - She endorsed the abuse of native populations.
 - This created a new awareness of classical/foreign culture.

Shakespeare's bio.

- • Wrote 37 plays between 1588 and 1613
 - – About 1.5 per year
 - Directed and starred in the plays
- Wrote 154 sonnets
- Modernized and unified the English Language (created “common” English through his popularity).

Shakespeare

- Used nouns as verbs (hunt)
- Published over 2000 new words
 - – *critical, aggravate, assassination*
 - – *monumental, castigate, countless*
 - – *Obscene, forefathers, frugal, hurry*
 - – *Majestic, homicide, summit, reliance*
- By comparison, the King James Bible uses only 7000 words. Shakespeare used 27000 words.
- Coined Phrases

How important is Loyalty?

- Loyalty to family?
 - Loyalty to country?
 - Loyalty to friends?
-
- Can loyalty be only be expressed in consistent actions?
 - Does promised loyalty count?
 - What can break loyalty?

How far should you go to defend your personal ideals?

- Is your conviction worth dying?
- Is your conviction worth killing someone?
- Is your conviction your own, or did you borrow it?

How do you determine what is the right thing to do, and the wrong thing to do?

Utilitarianism- greater good

Idealism- more self-centered and personal

Ethical ramifications for people, animals, earth, universe?