



# **Sixth Grade Social Studies**

The life of Julius Caesar is the story of a man overcoming obstacles over and over to become one of the most loved and powerful men in Rome. Warning: by the end of this article, one of the characters you read about will be dead... okay, so maybe more than one.

## Riches to Rags

Julius Caesar was born in 100 B.C.E. Both of his parents were **Patricians**, or members of Rome's highest social class. That didn't make Julius Caesar's life as easy as we may think: when he was only sixteen, his father died, and Julius Caesar became the head of his family. Julius tried to continue to gain political influence. He married a **Patrician** woman to cement (strengthen) his social status and gained even more power by becoming a high priest of **Jupiter** (the Roman equivalent of Zeus).

Okay, so life probably wasn't so hard at that exact moment. But things took a turn really quick! Someone named Sulla, who was Julius Caesar's political enemy, declared himself **dictator** in 82 B.C.E. (think: how old was Julius Caesar at this time?) A **dictator** is someone who has complete control of a government, even though they're only one person. Sulla had different values than Julius Caesar and his parents. Julius Caesar was a **Populare**, which means his major beliefs included a more democratic government and increasing the rights of **Plebeians**, or the lower social class. Sulla was an **Optimate**, which means he valued traditional Roman values and believed that **Patricians** knew what was better for Rome and that Roman society should give them even more power. In order to further his **Optimate** values, Sulla began to try to rid Rome of all of his **Populare** enemies.

At first, Julius Caesar fled (ran away from) Rome. His mother's family was able to keep him from being imprisoned or killed, but the government run by Sulla stripped Julius Caesar of his title of Priest and confiscated (took away) the money his **Patrician** wife brought into the marriage. Julius Caesar was broke, jobless, and on the wrong side of a very powerful guy who hated his guts. His father had been a very famous general, though, and Caesar decided his best chance was to join the military.

## Julius Caesar the Soldier

It turned out, Julius Caesar was a natural in the military! Even though he was just a soldier and not a powerful general (yet!), he made a name for himself by being very skilled and brave in battle (for example, he won a civic crown for saving someone else's life!) When Sulla died, Julius Caesar decided to

*There will be a short video lesson of a Knox County teacher to accompany this task available on the KCS YouTube Channel and KCS TV.*

go back to Rome.

## Julius Caesar's Greatest Hits

In Rome, Julius Caesar became an orator, which was basically an Ancient Roman lawyer. In this position, he further increased his social power to go with what he already gained as a soldier. He increased his power so much, he was elected to a powerful military position as part of the First **Triumvirate**. He even married that guy Sulla's **Optimate** granddaughter when his wife died!

Julius Caesar was one of Rome's greatest military leaders of all time. Even though he was in a position of great political power, He returned to the battlefield. But this time, he did it as the most powerful general. He conquered the region of modern-day Spain and Egypt for Rome (He's the one who made Cleopatra VII the Queen). He also made the first strides toward conquering Britain!

You know that conquering new lands meant Rome was getting a lot richer at this time. Julius Caesar used his political power to direct that wealth to changes called **The Roman Reforms** that benefitted **Plebeians**, including giving land to veterans, redistributing land for the poor, and increasing **Plebeian** rights. The reforms included creating the calendar that ours is based on (hello, JULI-us = July!), creating a police force, and getting rid of Rome's tax system. These were mostly **Populare** goals that his parents would have been proud of, and most of the Roman citizens loved him because Rome was having a really prosperous time.

## A New Enemy

The only problem was, to get all of this done, he called himself **Dictator for Life** and basically bossed the Roman senate around. **Plebeians** loved him. Other **Populares** loved him. The senate and **Optimates**? Not so much. The senate thought that Caesar was getting too powerful. They were about to do something drastic (crazy, dramatic, desperate). On March 15, 44 B.C.E. (this is called "the ides of March"), Julius Caesar was MURDERED! And you'll never guess who did it—the ENTIRE Roman senate! They all got together and took turns stabbing him! But here's the thing—even though they killed Julius Caesar's body, they couldn't kill his influence. That's why you're still reading about him in 2020 C.E.

The first thing you have to know about the man who ultimately came to power after Julius Caesar is that he is like Cardi B. Well, kind of. Her actual name is Belcalis Almanzar, but she probably knew that name wouldn't serve her very well when she wanted to be famous. Augustus Caesar, Julius Caesar's grand-nephew, was given the name Octavius when he was born. Some people refer to him as **Octavian** even now. I just want you to know that if you see the name Octavian, it's like seeing Cardi B's real name. It's talking about the same person, but it's not the name that person used publicly once they made it big. "Augustus" is a title of honor, and Augustus Caesar liked people to remember that he was related to Julius Caesar. Remember? Julius Caesar was a popular guy!

### **Like Uncle, Like Nephew**

Speaking of Julius Caesar, Augustus Caesar had some things in common with him. For one, they both used military strength to boost their political popularity. They also both ruled as part of **Triumvirates** before they had sole (exclusive, solitary) power over Rome. You remember that Julius Caesar ruled in the **First Triumvirate** before he became Dictator for Life. After his assassination, Augustus Caesar ruled Rome as part of the **Second Triumvirate** with Marc Antony (Julius Caesar's good friend) and another supporter of Julius Caesar's political ideas. The three of them ruled together, focusing on getting revenge for Julius Caesar's assassination from 38-36 B.C.E. In 36 B.C.E. one member of the Triumvirate turned on Augustus Caesar, and Augustus Caesar stripped him of his titles.

### **...And then there were Two**

Augustus Caesar officially ruled with Marc Antony for about 5 more years, but they had some pretty big problems. Augustus Caesar got really mad because even though Marc Antony was married to Augustus Caesar's sister, he started dating Cleopatra VII (remember, Egypt was part of Rome at the time). Marc Antony even divorced Augustus Caesar's sister so he could marry Cleopatra! So rude, right?

Naturally, Augustus Caesar had to go to war against them. He won at the Battle of Actium (a naval battle on the Ionian Sea). Marc Antony and Cleopatra both died soon afterward. Next, Augustus Caesar had Marc Antony's son and Cleopatra's son both put to death. He knew that

they would probably try to threaten his power later on, and he had just become the most powerful man in Rome.

### **Rome's First Emperor**

Augustus Caesar was Rome's first emperor. You've probably noticed that he wasn't the first person to be in charge of Rome by himself. The difference between his rule and Julius Caesar's is that Augustus Caesar's reign was given to him *by* Rome's senate! This is when they gave him the title Augustus. Augustus Caesar called himself **Princeps**, which means "first citizen." (Think: do you think Augustus Caesar's views were more Populare or Optimate?)

### **Peace Out**

Remember, an emperor is a political leader who holds many different lands under a single government. You'll remember from your study of Ancient Greece that problems can come with this—in fact, you know that fighting between Greek city-states contributed to the Persian conquer of Greece! The time of Augustus Caesar's rule is called the **Pax Romana**. In English, this means "The Peace of Rome" or "Roman Peace." During the **Pax Romana**, the many different groups inside Rome were united. Because Rome was not spending money or resources on fights with itself, it enjoyed a time of great economic growth.

Augustus Caesar promoted many building projects, including 82 new temples and the Roman baths. The arts were flourishing (thriving, doing really well), and it was during this time that Virgil wrote the Aeneid, a Roman Epic. He was so committed to the arts that he personally funded many Roman artists.

He also implemented social reforms, like his great-uncle Julius Caesar. His goals were to raise the birth rate in Rome (to increase the population) and to encourage and strengthen marriages. These reforms included a tax break for families who had more than three children, and higher taxes for couples who didn't have children.

### **R.I.P.**

Augustus Caesar died in 14 C.E. (Think: How many years after Julius Caesar's death?) His official last words were, "I found Rome a city of clay, but left her a city of marble." Whether or not he actually said that, it's interesting to think about what he might have meant.

## 6th Grade Social Studies: Tossed Caesar Activity

Directions: For each descriptor below, determine whether the person described is **Julius Caesar, Augustus Caesar (Octavian), Both, or Neither**. (Answer key: on the bottom of the next activity)

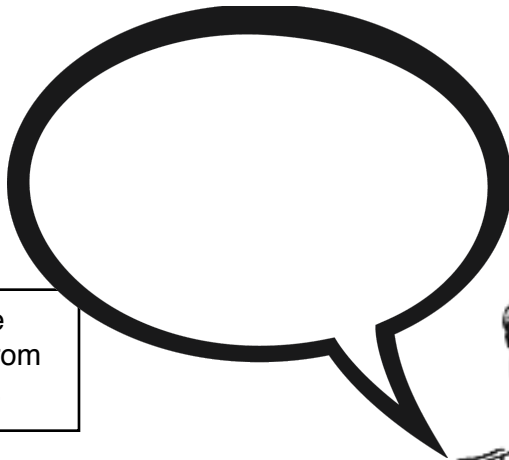
1. Murdered on March 15th: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Ruled earlier: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Ruled longer: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Conquered Egypt for Rome: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Is also called Octavian: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Ruled during a time called "The Peace of Rome" in English: \_\_\_\_\_
7. First gained power as a very popular military leader: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Made Cleopatra VII the Queen of Egypt: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Was the adopted son of the dictator Sulla: \_\_\_\_\_
10. Improved the Roman Empire during the Pax Romana: \_\_\_\_\_
11. Credited with creating a calendar very similar to the one we use today: \_\_\_\_\_
12. Ruled over Greece with great authority: \_\_\_\_\_
13. His rule marks the end of the Roman Republic and the start of the Roman Empire:  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. Was responsible for The Roman Reforms: \_\_\_\_\_
15. Delivered a famous speech after the murder of the Dictator for Life: \_\_\_\_\_
16. Was very popular with the lower class of Roman society for polices like debt-forgiveness:  
\_\_\_\_\_
17. Claimed the title "*Princeps*," which means "first citizen": \_\_\_\_\_
18. Used military strength to help him gain power: \_\_\_\_\_



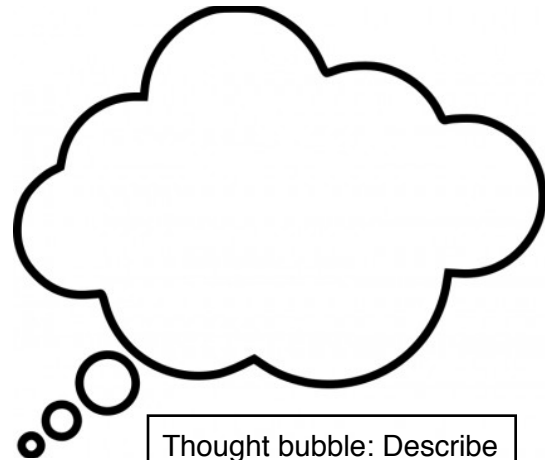
## 6th Grade Social Studies: Build-A-Caesar Activity

Directions: You will create a graphic representing either Julius or Augustus Caesar. Read and respond to each of the prompts below. Be ready to present your learning to a loved one when you are finished!

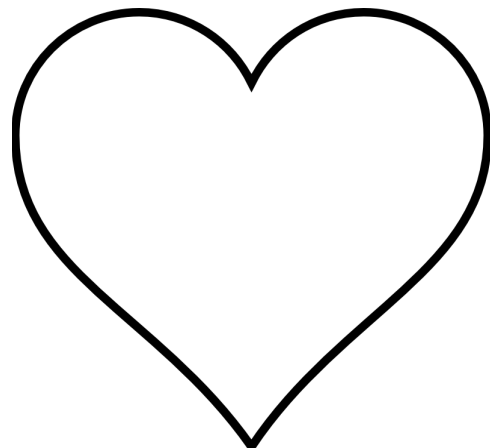
Speech bubble: Write or illustrate a quote from the article you chose.



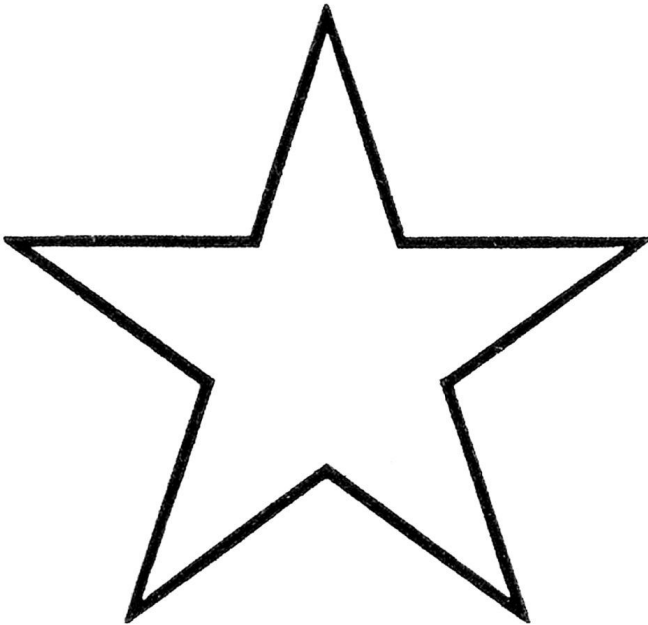
Thought bubble: Describe or illustrate something your Caesar believed in. How do you know?



Heart: Write or draw something you think your Caesar cared about the most. How do you know?



Star: Write or draw what you think your Caesar is best known for. Is it an achievement or a shortcoming?



I chose \_\_\_\_\_ (Julius or Augustus) Caesar

**Answer Key to "Tossed Caesar" activity:** 1. Julius Caesar 2. Julius Caesar 3. Augustus Caesar 4. Julius Caesar 5. Augustus Caesar 6. Augustus Caesar 7. Julius Caesar 8. Julius Caesar 9. Neither 10. Augustus Caesar 11. Julius Caesar 12. Neither 13. Augustus Caesar 14. Julius Caesar 15. Neither 16. Julius Caesar 17. Augustus Caesar 18. Both