

Name: _____
Date: _____

Julius Caesar

Rome was growing and quite wealthy after the second Punic War, but the republic faced serious problems.

Many Roman politicians took bribes and often encouraged violent mobs to help them rise to power. Soldiers returning home from years at war could not find work because rich landowners used slaves to do the work once done by poor Romans.

The republic also became embroiled in several civil wars. A civil war is a war within a nation. Many Romans wanted a strong leader, and the ambitious Julius Caesar was an obvious choice.

Gaius Julius Caesar was a patrician and popular general when he was first elected consul in 59BCE. Marcus Biblius was Caesar's co-consul, but Caesar paid no attention to the wishes of Biblius and the Senate.

Caesar ordered the redistribution of lands to the poor, a decision that made him very popular with the Roman people but angered many wealthy landowning senators. Biblius attempted to veto Caesar's act, but Caesar's mob attacked the co-consul. The terrified Biblius retired to his home and left Caesar in control of the Roman government.

The Senate tried to block Caesar's decisions, so he formed a partnership with his former enemies, Crassus and Pompey. Historians often refer to this alliance as the First Triumvirate. A triumvirate is a partnership of three equal rulers. Neither Crassus nor Pompey were consuls, but the three generals were so popular with the Roman people that they were able to ignore the wishes of the Senate.

Under Roman law, an official could not be arrested while he was in power. Knowing the Senate would have him jailed as soon as he left the consulship, Caesar arranged to be appointed governor of a Roman province in Gaul. Gaul was a territory northwest of the Italian peninsula.

Upon taking office in Gaul, Caesar used his personal fortune to raise a private army. For the next nine years Caesar led his troops across western Europe, killing or enslaving millions and conquering lands that added to the Roman Republic.

In 49BCE, the Senate ordered Caesar to disband his personal army and to return to Rome as a private citizen. Caesar once again feared arrest, so he ignored the order and marched his army back to Rome. Caesar's orders clearly told him not to bring his troops across the Rubicon River. When Caesar reached the

river, he knew he faced an important decision. Caesar knew that if he obeyed the Senate and disbanded his army, his career would be over; but if he marched his troops across the river, the Senate would order Pompey and his army to retaliate. Today when people say they are "crossing the Rubicon," they refer to a very significant decision that cannot be undone.

As Caesar's army approached Rome, many frightened senators fled the city. Pompey announced that "Rome cannot be defended," and retreated south with his army. The remaining senators named Caesar dictator. For the next several months, Caesar and his army pursued Pompey throughout the Mediterranean until Pompey led his army to Egypt.



When Caesar arrived in Egypt, he met Ptolemy XIII, the ten-year-old ruler of the ancient land. Hoping to gain favor with Rome, Ptolemy presented Caesar with Pompey's decapitated head. Caesar then met and fell in love with Cleopatra, the older sister of Ptolemy XIII. Caesar spent a year with Cleopatra, and then returned to Rome as a conquering hero.

The Senate elected, then re-elected Caesar consul, breaking the Roman tradition that a consul serve only one year. While in power, Caesar settled 80,000 of his soldiers in colonies, built buildings and monuments throughout the city, and reformed the calendar.

When Caesar came to power, the calendar was out of alignment with the seasons. Caesar instituted the Julian calendar of 365¼ days. Caesar added a month to the calendar and named it July for himself. Caesar's calendar is closely related to the calendar we use today.

In 44BCE, Caesar arranged to be named dictator for life. A dictator is a ruler with complete control. The Senate had appointed dictators in the past, but only in great emergencies and for a period of no more than six months.

Caesar ignored the Senate and ruled without their consent. Many Senators became enraged because Caesar broke with Roman tradition and behaved as if he were a king. On March 15, 44BCE, a mob of sixty senators stabbed the dictator to death in the Roman Forum. Ironically, Caesar fell to his death at the foot of a statue of Pompey, the general who Caesar defeated.

With Caesar dead, Rome fell into a period of civil wars that would lead to the end of the Roman Republic and the creation of the first Roman Emperor.

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Fill in the Blanks

Rome was growing world power after the P__n__c Wars, but the Romans needed a strong l__a__er. The S__n__a__e elected a popular g__n__r__l named G__i__s Julius C__e__ar to the *c__n__u__s__ip in ____BCE. Caesar formed the First T__i__m__i__a__e with P__m__ey and C__a__s__s, and the three *p__p__l__r generals i__n__r__d Caesar's co-c__n__ul and the Roman S__n__te. Caesar feared the S__n__t__rs would *a__r__st him at the end of his term, so he arranged to be appointed g__v__r__or of G__l. Gaul was a province n__r__h__e__t of the I__a__i__n peninsula. Caesar used his personal f__r__u__e to raise an a_____ in G_____. Caesar's army e__s__a__ed or k__l__ed million as they c__n__u__r__d lands that a__d__d to the growing Roman E__p__re.

In 49BCE, the S__n__te ordered Caesar to d__s__a__d his a_____ and return to Rome. Caesar i__n__r__d his orders and marched his army across the R__b__c__n River back to R_____. The Senate raised an army led by P__m__ey, but as Caesar's army a__p__o__c__ed Rome, Pompey announced that "Rome cannot be d__f__n__ed." Caesar and his army *c__a__ed Pompey across the M__d__t__r__a__e__n Sea until Pompey reached E__y__t. Caesar arrived shortly after to find that the ten-year-old king of Egypt d__c__p__t__t__d Pompey in order to curry favor with Caesar. Caesar returned to Rome to become d__c__a__or. His many r__f__r__s made Caesar popular with the people, but he continued to i__n__re the Roman Senate. On March 15, 44BCE, a m__b on angry S__n__t__rs killed Julius Caesar.

Answer in complete sentences

1. Why did many Roman people feel the need for a strong leader in 59BCE?

*2. Describe an instance where you or someone you know has "crossed the Rubicon."

2. What is a dictator?

4. Why did the senators kill Julius Caesar?

5. Was Julius Caesar a good or bad leader for Rome? Use at least two facts from the article to support your statement.

*This is a higher order learning question. You will earn credit for any reasonable answer.