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# Julius Caesar: The Power of Persuasion [10th grade]

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# UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN

## Unit Cover Page

Unit Title: Julius Caesar: The Power of Persuasion

Grade Level: 10

Subject/Topic Area(s): English/Shakespearean Drama

Designed By: Devon Erlich

Time Frame: 4 weeks

School District: Northside Independent School District

School: John Marshall High School

School Address and Phone: 8000 Lobo Lane, San Antonio, TX, 78240; (210) 397-7100

### **Brief Summary of Unit**

As we approach the Shakespearean tragedy, we are going to not only study the dramatic terms utilized, but also the ways in which characters are persuaded. The essential question, "What makes a person persuasive?" will lead us through the reading of *Julius Caesar* when looking at the actions of all of the characters. We will discuss their use of ethos, logos, and pathos to persuade others, and we will also look at each character's understanding of his audience. While we will study and practice persuasive techniques in advertising, writing, and speech, we will also focus on the audience's perception of the persuader through the question, "When should we follow the guidance of others and when should we follow our own conscience?" As young adults, it is important for students to consider the process of decision-making and the weight of decisions.

Hopefully, the students will come away from this unit with an appreciation for Shakespeare and an understanding of *Julius Caesar*. However, they should also be able to use the persuasive techniques used throughout the play in the classroom and in their own lives. Finally, as effective persuaders, the students should also be more conscious decision makers.

**Unit: Julius Caesar: The Power of Persuasion**

**Grade: 10**

**Stage 1: Desired Results**

**Established Goals (Standards)**

*TEKS: The student will be able to...*

*1B- distinguish between the denotative and connotative meanings of words*

*4- understand, make inferences, and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of drama and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to analyze how archetypes and motifs in drama affect the plot of plays.*

*5A- analyze isolated scenes and their contribution to the success of the plot as a whole*

*5B- analyze differences in the characters' moral dilemmas in works of fiction across different countries or cultures*

*13- use elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, etc.)*

*14- write to express their ideas and feelings about imagined people, events, and ideas*

*16- write persuasive texts to influence the attitudes or actions of a specific audience on specific issues*

*24- listen attentively and take notes; evaluate speech*

*26- work productively with others in teams*

**Understandings**

*Students will understand that...*

- *Effective persuasion utilizes ethos (credibility), logos (logic), and pathos(emotion)*
- *In order to influence a person or group, the speaker must understand his or her audience*
- *Decisions may be influenced by our own conscience or outside factors, but we are personally accountable for the decisions that make.*

**Essential Questions**

- *When should we follow the guidance of others and when should we follow our conscience?*
- *What makes a person persuasive?*

**Knowledge**

*Students will know...*

- *The three modes of persuasion*
- *The plot, setting, characters, and conflicts of Julius Caesar*
- *Drama terms (soliloquy, dramatic irony, aside, etc.)*

**Skills**

*Students will be able to...*

- *Create a thesis or standpoint on a topic*
- *Defend or challenge an idea using ethos, logos, and pathos*
- *Evaluate the success of an argument based on persuasive techniques*
- *Work collaboratively in groups*
- *Speak to an audience using effective verbal and nonverbal skills*
- *Create persuasive advertisements, speeches, and arguments*
- *Read and understand a Shakespearean drama*

**Stage 2: Assessment Evidence**

**Performance Task:**

***Choice A- The Great Debate***

In groups of four, two students will choose to debate one side of an argument while the other two will take the opposite viewpoint. They will choose to debate over one of the following topics below:

- One of the one of the last lines of the play claims that Brutus was the “noblest Roman of them all,” yet it is hard to ignore the fact that he murdered his friend. Do you believe that Brutus’ words and actions make him the most noble or not?
- Are women given a positive or negative portrayal? Some readers believe that the females in *Julius Caesar* are intelligent and strong while others see them as illogical and weak. How do you believe Shakespeare portrayed women based on this play?
- We will never know if Caesar would have been a successful, loved leader for Rome or if he would have been a hated tyrant. Given his words and actions from before the assassination (and those of others), would he have been good or bad for Rome?
- Cassius and Antony both prove to be master manipulators. Who do you believe shows better use of persuasion when trying to get what he wants?
- Many characters in this play believe that fate controls what happens to people, but others believe that they control their own destiny. Based on the events of this play, does Shakespeare show a world where man controls his own destiny or where fate controls all events?

Students will be grouped based on their topic interest. In pairs, they will create a thesis and an argument to support their belief. Their speech must use evidence from the play and fully explain how the evidence supports their thesis to convince the audience (the students) that their opinion is the best one. The class will rate the degree to which they were persuaded and will comment on each argument.

**\*\*Rubric for “The Great Debate” is attached at the end of this unit**

***Choice B- Create a Campaign***

You may work individually or with a partner. Choose one major character from the play: Caesar, Brutus, Cassius, or Antony. He is running for president of your class! It is your job to create an advertisement campaign that advocates for your candidate. In order to do this, you need to think about what traits make a strong leader and reasons why your candidate really embodies these specific traits. You may use powerpoint or photostory to create your visual. The following elements must be included (in any order and on any number of slides, as long as the title page is first):

- **Title page:** The name of you candidate, a slogan for them, and a picture
- At least two strengths of your candidate (and each strength must have concrete evidence from the play proving that the character possesses that strength)
- You must acknowledge your candidate’s weakness and explain why it would NOT be a concern. (For example, “Brutus may appear naïve and gullible, but really...”)
- Explain why at LEAST two of the other candidates would be poor choices for leader; text evidence must be included to support your claims.
- Your presentation must evoke feelings from the audience (patriotism, sympathy, fear, excitement, etc.) through either music or visuals.

As each person presents, the audience will be filling out an evaluation based on the speaker(s) use of ethos, logos, and pathos, and the degree to which they were persuaded.

**Besides presenting the powerpoint or photostory, each person or pair needs to turn in an analysis of their campaign. You need to explain how you used logos, logical facts and reasoning, to make your candidate appealing to the audience. You need to explain how you included ethos and made your candidate seem like a credible, reliable source (or maybe you had another credible character vouch for your candidate?). Finally, explain how you used music and/or visuals to evoke certain feelings from your audience (pathos). \*\*Rubric for “Create a Campaign” is attached at the end of this unit**

**Other evidence:**

*Exit tickets, Julius Caesar test, advertisement presentations, artistic interpretations, graphic organizers, journals*

**Stage 3: Learning Activities**

*(Steps taken to get students to answer Stage 1 questions and complete performance task)*

Day One: Anticipation guide/Four Corners. The students will answer opinion statements (that relate to the play) with strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. Examples of the statements are: “There is never, ever a good reason to betray a friend,” “Advice from family members is more valuable than advice from friends,” and “People are 100% responsible for their own fate.” They have to respond to each statement in writing and then defend their answers in groups when we do the “Four Corner” activity. I will explain to the students that these are issues that will come up in the play. I will then discuss a bit of Roman history and the history of Julius Caesar’s rise to power. The students will take notes from the overhead as I discuss the background information in their writer’s notebooks. Time permitting, we will look at the cast of *Julius Caesar* and make predictions about characters/events.

Day Two: Read Act I, Scene 1 (it’s very short). the students will fill out a chart in their writer’s notebook tracing the basic elements of the story:

Who is in this scene?	
What are they doing?	
Where does the scene take place?	
When does the scene take place (and why is it important)?	
Why are the people celebrating?	
How do Marullus and Flavius feel?	

Connect the story to the students by asking them about a time that they may have felt sad or angry when everyone around them was celebrating. Then, transition into a discussion of persuasion. I will explain that persuasion is an attempt to influence people’s opinions and behavior, and it will be important throughout the rest of the play. Distribute the ethos, logos, and pathos handout that explains characteristics of each. Flip through magazine advertisements with the students and find examples of each.

Day Three: In pairs, the students will create three advertisements for one product, but each ad must use a different rhetorical strategy. An example I would explain to the students would be about tires; if I was creating an ad for tires using logos, I would explain how Tire X lasts 40% longer than the leading brand, cost’s half the price, and has achieved excellent anti-hydroplaning ratings. For ethos, I would have a picture of racecar driver Jeff Gordon and he would be endorsing Tire X. For pathos, I would have a mother holding her child outside of a car wreck, and the caption would explain how the tires saved her life (we would discuss how this appealed to fear). I would then ask the students (in pairs) to develop their own trio of advertisements. As a modification for some of the weaker students, instead of creating their own advertisements, the students would need to find a magazine ad that represents each persuasive technique and explain how the ad utilizes the mode of persuasion.

Day Four: Present the advertisements to the class. As we begin reading Begin reading Act I, Scene 2, I will tell the students to look out for elements of persuasion that Cassius uses to manipulate Brutus.

Day Five: Hook: Watch the 30 second clip from *Mean Girls* where one of the characters reads her *Julius Caesar* essay in class about how “Brutus was just as smart as Caesar;” we will discuss how this clip was inspired by the part in the scene we are about to read. Finish reading Scene 2. Discuss Cassius’ soliloquy at the very end of scene two (define soliloquy) and do an “Open Mind” transparency with the students about Cassius’ plan. This is where there is an outline of the character’s head on the transparency and as a class, we list the thoughts that Cassius is thinking.

Day Six: As we read Act One, Scene Three, we will discuss the bad weather and omens in the play. We will discuss how Shakespeare uses these omens to foreshadow Caesar's death and build suspense. The students will watercolor the omens that are mentioned on a sheet of paper.

Day Seven: On a sheet of paper attached to the water coloring from the day before, students will have to describe how Cassius, Casca, and Cicero perceive the omens. They will have to use text evidence to support their reasoning. They will then answer the following question: Do you believe that people determine their own destiny or is there a larger entity (God, fate, luck, etc.) that determines someone's future? Or both? Share as a class.

Day Eight: Begin reading Act II, Scene 1. The students will have a graphic organizer. In the center circle, the question will be: "What factors are controlling Brutus' decision to kill Caesar?" Possible answers that will stem from that question are his fear of the unknown, Cassius' letters, his love for Rome, etc. Exit Ticket: Do you believe that Brutus has good reasons to murder Caesar, or would his actions be unjustifiable?

Day Nine: Read Act II, scenes 2, 3, and 4 (which are short). Distribute printed copies of the part in scene two where Calpurnia tries to convince Caesar to stay at home for his own safety while Decius tries to persuade him to go to the capitol. The students will pair up. With three different colored highlighters, they will highlight the parts of each speech (Calpurnia's and Decius') that include ethos, parts that utilize logos, and parts that rely on pathos. In the margins, they will explain WHY each part of the argument fits the mode of persuasion identified. Finally, they will write a response to the following short answer question: Both Calpurnia and Decius are very persuasive, but in the end, Caesar listens to Decius and chooses to walk to his death. How does Decius show that he understands Caesar's personality and motivation better than Calpurnia does?

Day 10: Caesar is assassinated today in Act III, Scene 1. Before reading the scene, we will watch it to follow Brutus' reaction to the entire murder. As we watch his face and actions, we will discuss how he feels. Then, we will read Act III, Scene 1 together and discuss character development and motivation as we read.

Day 11: Read Act III, scenes 2 and 3. As we read the famous funeral speeches together, we will discuss different elements of each: prose, poetry, rhetorical questions, sarcasm, and repetition. We will also discuss how Antony is a master manipulator and how he uses ethos, pathos, and logos to sway the audience. As an exit ticket the students will have to answer the following questions: Explain which persuasive tool (ethos, logos, or pathos) Antony uses the best and why. What does the final scene show us about the audience (the Roman public)?

Day 12: Start with a comprehension quiz to check for understanding over the plot, characters, and conflict of the first three acts of the play. Take this time to clarify any confusion that the students may be experiencing. We do not actually read the last two acts of the play but summarize the events based on the summary in the beginning of each scene.

Day 13-16: Assign the performance assessment, explain the rubrics, and clarify questions. Students can choose the one that interests them more. They will work on their project for four days before presenting.

Day 17-19: Presentations will begin. As students present their debates or their campaigns, the other students (the audience) will evaluate the speakers based on their degree of persuasiveness. Finally, all students will fill out a self evaluation based on their self perceived success and weaknesses of their final assessment.

Day 20: *Julius Caesar* test (which is designed as a sophomore level to evaluate student understanding of the play and dramatic terms).

\*Note: At my school, this unit is followed by a persuasive paper. The topic of the paper is unrelated to *Julius Caesar*, but the persuasive skills we study in this unit are incorporated into the assignment.

## Rubric for The Great Debate

Category	Fails to Meet Expectations 69 and below	Approaches Expectations 70-79	Meets Expectations 80-89	Exceeds Expectations 90-100
<p><b>Focus and Coherence:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do the speakers have a clear thesis?</li> <li>Do they stick to one side of the argument without wavering?</li> </ul>	It is unclear to the audience which side the speaker favors. The thesis is absent or difficult to understand.	The speakers seem to favor one side of the argument more than the other, but a precise thesis is unclear.	Throughout the presentation, the thesis becomes evident to the audience. The speakers never change sides.	From beginning to end, the thesis is extremely clear and is presented in a focused, organized way. They stick to their point wholeheartedly and never waiver.
<p><b>Presentation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do the speakers make eye contact? Speak loudly and clearly? Show inflection and enthusiasm? Use hand gestures? Engage their audience?</li> </ul>	The speakers do not attempt at all to look up from a page of notes, they are inaudible, and they make no attempt to engage the audience.	The speech is understandable, but the audience is not captivated due to a lack of presentation skills. There is an effort to speak loudly and make eye contact.	The speaker makes eye contact most of the time and occasionally uses hand gestures or inflection. The audience listens and understands the speech.	The speakers connect with the audience because they use eye contact, change their tone of voice, and use actions to support their words. The audience is captivated.
<p><b>Depth of Ideas/Evidence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do the speakers use clear evidence from the play to support their opinions?</li> <li>Do they explain the importance or effect of the evidence?</li> </ul>	Very little, if any, evidence from the play is used to support the argument.	The speakers attempt to use two pieces of evidence from the play to support their argument. The examples may or may not be explained well.	The speakers use three examples from the play to support their argument, but they do not explain the effect of their evidence well.	The speakers use three or more examples from the play to support their argument. The examples are used correctly, and the speakers elaborate and comment on the evidence.
<p><b>Preparation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do the speakers use notecards appropriately?</li> <li>Is the presentation organized? Do they stay within the time restraints?</li> </ul>	The speeches are way too short or way too long. The speakers appear unfamiliar with what are they saying and who is supposed to speak when.	Parts of the speech seem organized. The speakers may not have notecards or might read directly off of their notecards the entire time. They are close to the time restraints.	The speakers generally hold the interest of their audience. They speak clearly but may have occasional glitches. They appear organized and familiar with their speech and obey time restraints.	The speakers captivate their audience. They stay within the time restraint, transition seamlessly into different parts of the speech, and show clear evidence of rehearsal.

## Rubric for Create a Campaign

Category	To receive full credit in each category, a perfect example looks like this...	Score and comments
Introduction/title page (10 points)	Students have a beautifully designed and error-free introduction page with a creative slogan, the character's name, and an interesting visual	
Strengths of candidate (10 points)	The student(s) clearly understands the character's strengths and uses many examples from the play to prove why the candidate has certain strengths. They go beyond one or two obvious examples.	
Concession of weakness (10 points)	The students focus on the weakest point of their own candidate and support this claim with text evidence. Their concession must be persuasive and fully explain why a voter should not worry about this weakness.	
Analysis of other (weaker) candidates (10 points)	The student gives logical, accurate reasons to the audience about why voters should not elect other candidates. The concessions are supported by text evidence and really focus on the worst sides of each of the other characters.	
Appeal to pathos with music and/or visuals (10 points)	The students use creative, appropriate music and/or visuals to enhance the presentation. The music/visuals are not cliché but evoke a clear feeling associated with the presentation.	
Analysis of ethos, logos and pathos in the presentation (50 points)	Through analysis, the students show a clear understanding of ethos, logos, and pathos. The analysis is well written and error-free or close to it. They are able to explain how each mode of persuasion enhanced the overall effectiveness of their presentation.	