

Julius Caesar

Act 1

by William Shakespeare

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: construe, countenance, exalted, fawn, loath, mettle, portentous, prodigies, redress, servile

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Vocabulary Preview 2

Answer Key — Preview 3

Caution: share only if self-checking

OPTIONAL POST-READING QUIZ

Vocabulary in Context 4

Answer Key — In Context 5

Caution: do not share with students

About the Pre-Reading Activity (open-dictionary; ungraded or completion grade):

Students preview 10 words from the upcoming reading, each in a sentence that supports understanding. They choose the best meaning from 3 choices.

About the Optional Post-Reading Quiz (use after reading, or skip):

Same words, now in real excerpts from the text, with questions that build reading and analytical skills.

Vocabulary Sections for this Play:

Section 1 · Act 1 · Caesar's triumph in the streets of Rome

Section 2 · Act 2 · Brutus alone in his orchard at night

Section 3 · Act 3 · Caesar arrives at the Capitol

Section 4 · Act 4 · New rulers divide power in Rome

Section 5 · Act 5 · The armies meet on the plains of Philippi

Bold = this section. Other sections are available at verbalworkout.com.



verbalworkout.com
(all resources free)

Vocabulary Preview

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Read each prompt. Then choose the best meaning for the bold word.

1. Please don't **construe** my answer too quickly.
 - A. interpret or make sense of
 - B. dismiss or ignore
 - C. judge or criticize
2. A calm **countenance** hid her nervousness.
 - A. facial expression
 - B. tone of voice
 - C. way of standing
3. The champion was given an **exalted** seat above the crowd.
 - A. raised high in rank or honor
 - B. set far off to one side
 - C. richly decorated and ornate
4. The courtiers **fawn** constantly at court.
 - A. boast about wealth
 - B. flatter to win favor
 - C. quarrel over rank
5. She was **loath** to leave the warm fire.
 - A. fearful; nervous
 - B. unwilling; reluctant
 - C. ashamed; embarrassed
6. The long climb truly tested her **mettle**.
 - A. physical strength and stamina
 - B. patience and self-control
 - C. courage and inner spirit
7. A **portentous** silence fell before the storm.
 - A. long and unbroken
 - B. ominous; warning of trouble
 - C. strange and sudden
8. Frightening **prodigies** filled the night sky.
 - A. streaks of bright light
 - B. clouds of dark smoke
 - C. omens of coming events
9. The workers demanded **redress** for their unfair pay.
 - A. the correcting of a wrong
 - B. the praising of good work
 - C. the keeping of a promise
10. The new clerk had a **servile** manner toward every customer.
 - A. stiff and formal
 - B. anxious and hurried
 - C. slavishly obedient

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

ides — in the Roman calendar, the 15th of the month; here March 15, the day of Caesar's murder

lief — as gladly; as willingly (in the phrase 'as lief')

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary Preview

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#	KEY
1	A
2	A
3	A
4	B
5	B
6	C
7	B
8	C
9	A
10	C

Vocabulary in Context

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____ Score _____ / 10

Read each excerpt carefully. Then choose the best answer to each question.

1 "... Draw them to Tiber banks, and weep your tears
Into the channel, till the lowest stream
Do kiss the most exalted shores of all."

As it is used in the passage, the word 'exalted' most nearly suggests that the shores are...

- A. lifted high above the rest
- B. sacred to the gods
- C. ruined by the flood

2 "These growing feathers plucked 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."

The mention of 'servile fearfulness' at the end of the excerpt primarily functions to...

- A. name the bondage Flavius dreads
- B. praise the people's devotion
- C. describe Caesar's own fear

3 "... Nor construe any further my neglect
Than that poor Brutus, with himself at war,
Forgets the shows of love to other men."

It can reasonably be inferred that when Brutus tells Cassius not to 'construe' his neglect, he is asking him not to...

- A. repay it with coldness
- B. pardon it too quickly
- C. interpret it as a personal slight

4 "... That I do fawn on men and hug them hard
And after scandal them ..."

Which choice best describes Cassius's attitude toward men who 'fawn' on others?

- A. scornful of their flattery
- B. envious of their charm
- C. fond of their company

5 "Then he offered it to him again; then he put it by again; but to my thinking, he was very loath to lay his fingers off it."

The passage most strongly suggests that Caesar was 'loath to lay his fingers off' the crown because he...

- A. feared the crowd's anger
- B. was too weak to hold it
- C. secretly wanted to keep it

6 "Well, Brutus, thou art noble. Yet I see
Thy honorable mettle may be wrought
From that it is disposed."

As it is used in the passage, the word 'mettle' most nearly refers to Brutus's...

- A. rank among the nobles
- B. noble character and spirit
- C. skill with weapons

7 "... Even at noonday upon the marketplace,
Hooting and shrieking. When these prodigies
Do so conjointly meet ..."

According to the passage, Casca treats the 'prodigies' he describes as...

- A. ominous signs of things to come
- B. harmless tricks of the storm
- C. rare gifts of nature

8 "... For I believe they are portentous things
Unto the climate that they point upon."

The author most likely has Casca call the signs 'portentous' in order to...

- A. explain the change in weather
- B. calm Cicero's fears
- C. warn that disaster is coming

9 "Be factious for redress of all these griefs,
And I will set this foot of mine as far
As who goes farthest."

Which statement about Casca's pledge to 'be factious for redress' is best supported by the passage?

- A. He hopes to avoid a fight.
- B. He joins to right their wrongs.
- C. He wants only personal revenge.

10 "O, he sits high in all the people's hearts,
And that which would appear offense in us
His countenance, like richest alchemy,
Will change to virtue and to worthiness."

In the passage, Brutus's 'countenance' is characterized as something that...

- A. frightens the common people
- B. lends the cause an honest face
- C. hides his true ambition

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	A	
2	A	
3	C	
4	A	
5	C	Event comprehension.
6	B	The word 'mettle' puns on 'metal'; Cassius's 'wrought' continues the metalworking image.
7	A	The word 'prodigies' here means omens, not gifted children; the distractor 'rare gifts of nature' plays on that false friend.
8	C	
9	B	Event comprehension.
10	B	Character comprehension. Casca means Brutus's good name will make the conspiracy look virtuous.

Teacher Context: Act 1

Rome celebrates Caesar's return as tribunes try to break up the festivities and strip his images. At the feast of Lupercal, Caesar is offered the crown three times and refuses it, while Cassius works to turn Brutus against Caesar's rising power. A storm and strange omens close the act as the conspiracy takes shape.