

Analyzing Rhetoric & Language

RL. 4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including technical, connotative and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

Guiding Question: If you had one chance to speak about something that could make right what you saw as a terrible wrong, knowing that a false word could cost your life, what would you choose to say?

Conduct a Word Study on Marc Antony's famous speech. Use the following questions to guide your analysis.

- Why does he address his audience as "Friends, Romans, Countrymen" and in that order? What meaning does each word carry? What does the order of the words reveal about his objective in the speech and about his values as a character? Who does he claim as his audience?
- What does "honorable" mean? (Look up the denotative meaning). How many times is it used in the speech? Number each use. How does the connotative meaning of "honorable" change with each use?
- Rhetorical Approaches - Logos (logic), Ethos (ethics) & Pathos (emotion)
Which of these does Antony use in his speech? Identify which approaches he takes throughout the speech to turn his audience in his favor.

Excerpted from Act Three, Scene Two

ANTONY

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones;
So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
Hath told you Caesar was ambitious:
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest--

For Brutus is an honourable man;
So are they all, all honourable men--
Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
He was my friend, faithful and just to me:
But Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
He hath brought many captives home to Rome
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And, sure, he is an honourable man.
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
But here I am to speak what I do know.
You all did love him once, not without cause:
What cause withholds you then, to mourn for him?
O judgment! thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason. Bear with me;
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
And I must pause till it come back to me.

FIRST CITIZEN

Methinks there is much reason in his sayings.

SECOND CITIZEN

If thou consider rightly of the matter,
Caesar has had great wrong.

THIRD CITIZEN

Has he, masters?

I fear there will a worse come in his place.

FOURTH CITIZEN

Mark'd ye his words? He would not take the crown;
Therefore 'tis certain he was not ambitious.

FIRST CITIZEN

If it be found so, some will dear abide it.

SECOND CITIZEN

Poor soul! his eyes are red as fire with weeping.

THIRD CITIZEN

There's not a nobler man in Rome than Antony.

FOURTH CITIZEN

Now mark him, he begins again to speak.

ANTONY

But yesterday the word of Caesar might
Have stood against the world; now lies he there.

And none so poor to do him reverence.

O masters, if I were disposed to stir

Your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage,

I should do Brutus wrong, and Cassius wrong,

Who, you all know, are honourable men:

I will not do them wrong; I rather choose

To wrong the dead, to wrong myself and you,

Than I will wrong such honourable men.

But here's a parchment with the seal of Caesar;

I found it in his closet, 'tis his will:

Let but the commons hear this testament--

Which, pardon me, I do not mean to read--

And they would go and kiss dead Caesar's wounds

And dip their napkins in his sacred blood,

Yea, beg a hair of him for memory,

And, dying, mention it within their wills,

Bequeathing it as a rich legacy

Unto their issue.

FOURTH CITIZEN

We'll hear the will: read it, Mark Antony.

ALL

The will, the will! we will hear Caesar's will.

ANTONY

Have patience, gentle friends, I must not read it;

It is not meet you know how Caesar loved you.

You are not wood, you are not stones, but men;

And, being men, bearing the will of Caesar,

It will inflame you, it will make you mad:

'Tis good you know not that you are his heirs;

For, if you should, O, what would come of it!

Fourth Citizen

Read the will; we'll hear it, Antony;

You shall read us the will, Caesar's will.

ANTONY

Will you be patient? will you stay awhile?

I have o'ershot myself to tell you of it:

I fear I wrong the honourable men

Whose daggers have stabb'd Caesar; I do fear it.

FOURTH CITIZEN

They were traitors: honourable men!

Essay/Discussion Questions

English: RL. 4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including technical, connotative and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

- The Soothsayer attempts to warn Caesar, but is dismissed by the latter as a dreamer; what does this dismissal reveal about Caesar's character?
- When Caesar dismisses Calpurnia's dream, she tells him that "[His] wisdom is consumed in confidence." What does this mean for him as a leader?
- Many characters call others "ambitious" or "honorable," etc. What proofs do/can they make of these labels? Find the quotes and characteristics with which characters support their "interpretations" of another's character and, if different, those which support a character's true nature. (i.e. Brutus and Cassius call themselves honorable; are they truly so? How do they argue for their honor? How do they prove/disprove themselves to be so?)
- Connection to *The Hunger Games*: How does Marc Antony's situation and speech parallel Katniss Everdeen's situation on the Victory Tour in *Catching Fire*?

World History:H.1.2 Use Historical Comprehension to:

2. Differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations.
4. Analyze visual, literary and musical sources.

World History:H.1.3 Use Historical Analysis and Interpretation to:

1. Identify issues and problems in the past.
4. Evaluate competing historical narratives and debates among historians.
5. Evaluate the influence of the past on contemporary issues.

- How does the image of Caesar within the text compare with the historical figure? What traits does Shakespeare choose to emphasize in this leader?
- What would happen today if such a soothsayer warned a "Caesar" figure of an impending disaster? To what extent does or should the public hold leaders responsible for heeding or ignoring predictions of this nature?

- Consider the problems resulting from Caesar's violent overthrow; where else in the world are these effects visible?
- Reflect on the themes of honor, ambition, friendship and fate at work in the text. Choose one of these to explore in a written response. What does the text reveal about the Roman perspective on these issues? What kind of story do they tell?
- Extended research prompt: Discuss the historical accuracy of *Julius Caesar* using both Shakespeare's play and primary sources in a four to five page research paper. Consider the use of literature as a primary source and the texts from which we draw "history."

Comparing Visions

RL.9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Have a look at two notable performances of this speech and describe the actor's tone for each use of "honorable." How does the tone change from beginning to end? You may wish to chart it (similarly to a plot diagram). How does he move from calling Brutus and company "honorable men" in the beginning to calling them traitors by the end?

Marlon Brando: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7X9C55TkUP8>

Charlton Heston: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0bi1PvXCbr8>

Theo & Cockroach turn Marc Antony's speech into a rap during season four, episode five of *The Cosby Show*. While they alter the language a bit, they find the rhythm in the iambic pentameter, which may help students hear it better for themselves. (The episode also features several excerpts from *Julius Caesar* performed by Christopher Plummer, Roscoe Lee Brown & Earle Hyman, which make it very much worth watching.) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BM4S5Le1bM>

Characters

RL. 2 - Analyze how and why individuals, events and ideas develop and interact of the course of a text.

- For a detailed character diagram, visit the Folger Shakespeare Library [website](#).
- **Character Reflections:** Each of the four dominant speakers are characterized significantly by another character, often by one with whom they are at odds. Review the following excerpts from speeches to discover more about Caesar, Antony, Brutus

& Cassius. Consider how actors might draw insight from these descriptions as they make decisions about playing their characters and how Shakespeare uses characterization. For specific questions or question stems, draw inspiration from the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) question stems [here](#).

Selection 1 - I.ii

CASSIUS

I know that virtue to be in you, Brutus,
As well as I do know your outward favour.
Well, honour is the subject of my story.
I cannot tell what you and other men
Think of this life; but, for my single self,
I had as lief not be as live to be
In awe of such a thing as I myself.
I was born free as Caesar; so were you:
We both have fed as well, and we can both
Endure the winter's cold as well as he:
For once, upon a raw and gusty day,
The troubled Tiber chafing with her shores,
Caesar said to me 'Darest thou, Cassius, now
Leap in with me into this angry flood,
And swim to yonder point?' Upon the word,
Accoutred as I was, I plunged in
And bade him follow; so indeed he did.
The torrent roar'd, and we did buffet it
With lusty sinews, throwing it aside
And stemming it with hearts of controversy;
But ere we could arrive the point proposed,
Caesar cried 'Help me, Cassius, or I sink!'
I, as Aeneas, our great ancestor,
Did from the flames of Troy upon his shoulder
The old Anchises bear, so from the waves of Tiber
Did I the tired Caesar. And this man
Is now become a god, and Cassius is
A wretched creature and must bend his body,
If Caesar carelessly but nod on him.
He had a fever when he was in Spain,
And when the fit was on him, I did mark
How he did shake: 'tis true, this god did shake;
His coward lips did from their colour fly,

And that same eye whose bend doth awe the world
Did lose his lustre: I did hear him groan:
Ay, and that tongue of his that bade the Romans
Mark him and write his speeches in their books,
Alas, it cried 'Give me some drink, Titinius,'
As a sick girl. Ye gods, it doth amaze me
A man of such a feeble temper should
So get the start of the majestic world
And bear the palm alone.

Selection 2 - I.ii

CAESAR

Let me have men about me that are fat;
Sleek-headed men and such as sleep o' nights:
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;
He thinks too much: such men are dangerous.

ANTONY

Fear him not, Caesar; he's not dangerous;
He is a noble Roman and well given.

CAESAR

Would he were fatter! But I fear him not:
Yet if my name were liable to fear,
I do not know the man I should avoid
So soon as that spare Cassius. He reads much;
He is a great observer and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men: he loves no plays,
As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music;
Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort
As if he mock'd himself and scorn'd his spirit
That could be moved to smile at any thing.
Such men as he be never at heart's ease
Whiles they behold a greater than themselves,
And therefore are they very dangerous.
I rather tell thee what is to be fear'd
Than what I fear; for always I am Caesar.
Come on my right hand, for this ear is deaf,
And tell me truly what thou think'st of him.

Selection 3 - I.iii

CASSIUS

And why should Caesar be a tyrant then?
Poor man! I know he would not be a wolf,
But that he sees the Romans are but sheep:
He were no lion, were not Romans hinds.
Those that with haste will make a mighty fire
Begin it with weak straws: what trash is Rome,
What rubbish and what offal, when it serves
For the base matter to illuminate
So vile a thing as Caesar! But, O grief,
Where hast thou led me? I perhaps speak this
Before a willing bondman; then I know
My answer must be made. But I am arm'd,
And dangers are to me indifferent.

Selection 4 - II.i

BRUTUS

Our course will seem too bloody, Caius Cassius,
To cut the head off and then hack the limbs,
Like wrath in death and envy afterwards;
For Antony is but a limb of Caesar:
Let us be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius.
We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar;
And in the spirit of men there is no blood:
O, that we then could come by Caesar's spirit,
And not dismember Caesar! But, alas,
Caesar must bleed for it! And, gentle friends,
Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully;
Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods,
Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds:
And let our hearts, as subtle masters do,
Stir up their servants to an act of rage,
And after seem to chide 'em. This shall make
Our purpose necessary and not envious:
Which so appearing to the common eyes,
We shall be call'd purgers, not murderers.
And for Mark Antony, think not of him;
For he can do no more than Caesar's arm
When Caesar's head is off.

CASSIUS

Yet I fear him;
For in the ingrafted love he bears to Caesar—
BRUTUS

Alas, good Cassius, do not think of him:
If he love Caesar, all that he can do
Is to himself, take thought and die for Caesar:
And that were much he should; for he is given
To sports, to wildness and much company.

TREBONIUS

There is no fear in him; let him not die;
For he will live, and laugh at this hereafter.

Selection 5 - III.ii

BRUTUS

Be patient till the last.

Romans, countrymen, and lovers! hear me for my
cause, and be silent, that you may hear: believe me
for mine honour, and have respect to mine honour, that
you may believe: censure me in your wisdom, and
awake your senses, that you may the better judge.
If there be any in this assembly, any dear friend of
Caesar's, to him I say, that Brutus' love to Caesar
was no less than his. If then that friend demand
why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my answer:
—Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved
Rome more. Had you rather Caesar were living and
die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live
all free men? As Caesar loved me, I weep for him;
as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was
valiant, I honour him: but, as he was ambitious, I
slew him. There is tears for his love; joy for his
fortune; honour for his valour; and death for his
ambition. Who is here so base that would be a
bondman? If any, speak; for him have I offended.
Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? If
any, speak; for him have I offended. Who is here so
vile that will not love his country? If any, speak;
for him have I offended. I pause for a reply.