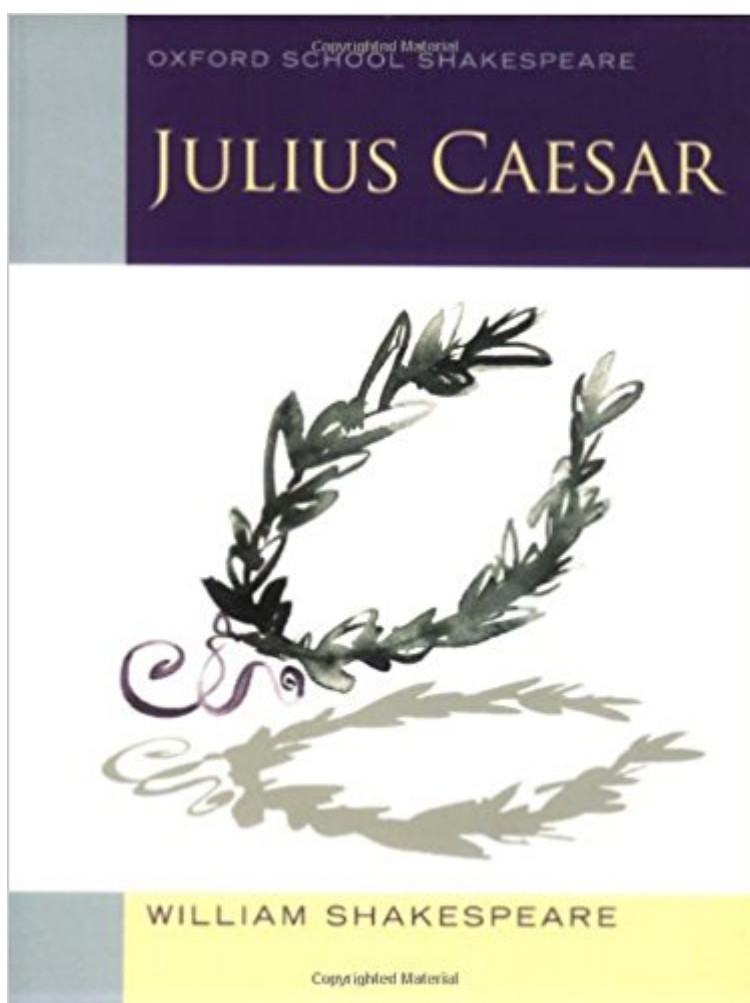


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Julius Caesar (2010 Edition): Oxford School Shakespeare (Oxford School Shakespeare Series)



Synopsis

This edition of Julius Caesar is especially designed for students, with accessible on-page notes and explanatory illustrations, clear background information, and rigorous but accessible scholarly credentials. This edition includes illustrations, preliminary notes, reading lists (including websites) and classroom notes, allowing students to master Shakespeare's work. About the Series: Newly redesigned and easier to read, each play in the Oxford School Shakespeare series includes the complete and unabridged text, detailed and clear explanations of difficult words and passages, a synopsis of the plot, summaries of individual scenes, and notes on the main characters. Also included is a wide range of questions and activities for work in class, together with the historical background to Shakespeare's England, a brief biography of Shakespeare, and a complete list of his plays.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I bought this book for my 15 year old son, for school. He particularly appreciates the notes which are on the side of the text, so there are easy to find and he doesn't lose his line. The presentation is very clear, and the information about the play, and Shakespeare, are very useful. * 5 star review *

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was an English poet and playwright widely regarded as the greatest writer of the English language, as well as one of the greatest in Western literature, and the world's pre-eminent dramatist.

I got this edition for my dd as part of Omnibus I homeschool curriculum. I almost did not get this because I have The Complete Works of Shakespeare in my library already. This book is much easier to read and the side notes explain the text well, so that my dd can understand it better.

These editions are my favorite ones to use with middle and high school students. They are slim; the page layout is attractive, with lots of white space and good illustrations; and the glossed words are well-chosen, the glosses well-done. In addition, the book provides useful background notes and act / scene summaries. In the past I have tried the following editions: Folger Library. Popular in schools, and easily the runner-up for an edition. My only objection is that the contemporary images (for instance, the title page of a 16th-century fencing manual) don't draw the readers into the text. Also, the textual apparatus is distracting; high school students don't need to know which old edition the editor has drawn on for a particular line. Cambridge School Shakespeare. A very good resource for a classroom teacher looking for activities that will draw the students into the text. However, sometimes the text gets lost in the activities. The book is also a bit heavy. You can get one copy for yourself and choose the activities / study questions to use. SparkNotes No Fear Shakespeare. I used this with a couple of private students when I was being overly-cautious about their ability to understand the bard. Since then, I've simply raised my expectations. Now, I require students to paraphrase as much of the play as possible; I find they can read the text with little difficulty by Act 5. (Also, I've realized that some plays are just too difficult. I love 1 Henry IV, but the bar scenes are too hard for average school-age readers.) Penguin Classics. Used these when TAing for a college course. They seemed good for high-achieving college kids. No pictures or teaching suggestions. Another excellent resource is Practical Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare, by Peter Reynolds. I got a lot of great feedback from students when using the exercises for Macbeth.

Dump your lame "side by side" versions and stick with what Shakespeare originally wrote. It's easier than one might think - copious notes, vocabulary explained, study questions, etc. The best option for required text in a high school English class.

Easy to deal with and makes sense of the characters.

Gift

I liked this play because I liked Brutus. He was an honorable, principled man. He believed he was acting in the best interests of Rome by helping to assassinate his friend, Julius Caesar. Even Mark Antony, at the end, praised Brutus for being the only conspirator who didn't act out of envy. Whether Brutus was justified or had legitimate cause, I couldn't tell from the play alone. It was clear that Brutus was torn in deciding to kill Caesar. What tipped the balance was Cassius, an Iago-like character who seemed envious of Caesar's power and glory. Curiously, even though Cassius was shrewd and made better decisions than Brutus, he let Brutus have his way. For example, he warned Brutus that they should have killed Mark Antony before he got a chance to turn the tables. He also warned that letting Antony speak at Caesar's funeral was a very bad idea. Finally, Cassius was the better general than Brutus and thought they should not attack Mark Antony and Octavius at Phillipi. Sure enough, Cassius proved right in all cases. Why, then, did Cassius let Brutus have his way? I believe Cassius was in love with Brutus. It became more apparent to me as the play went on. In the end, I wondered if Cassius' feelings for Brutus played a part in his motives to assassinate Caesar? Was he envious of Brutus and Julius Caesar's friendship? I'd like to have asked Brutus if he had any regrets about murdering Caesar? Did he learn that violence and bloodshed don't solve anything and often leads to more bloodshed? By the end, I didn't feel that his character experienced any growth or realization.

Although I have long lauded the Oxford School Shakespeare and have defended it as the best available introductory Shakespeare series in previous reviews, I regret to say that this Oxford School edition of Julius Caesar is a disappointment. Having read Julius Caesar numerous times, I never grow tired of the complexity of its characters or the richness of the play's detail. Unfortunately, the supplemental material in this edition -- the very thin section concerning the play's background, the section on Shakespeare's Plutarch, and even the suggested activities -- fail to make the play richer, which is what an effective edition should do. It seems to me Roma Gill phoned it in with this one. As for the play itself, it's a great play about politics and human character. On the one hand, we have Cassius, the selfish, manipulative conspirator who, after the assassination, shows himself to be an impulsive, loyal friend and an able politician. And on the other hand, we have Brutus, the conscientious intellectual and lover of the republic who becomes, under the weight of his guilt, an irritatingly scrupulous moralist and an inept general more concerned with reputation than success. And then of course there is Antony: brilliant, vicious, unscrupulous, and ultimately as unknowable as a tornado. Gripped readers will surely find themselves asking whom do they like more -- Cassius, or Brutus?

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