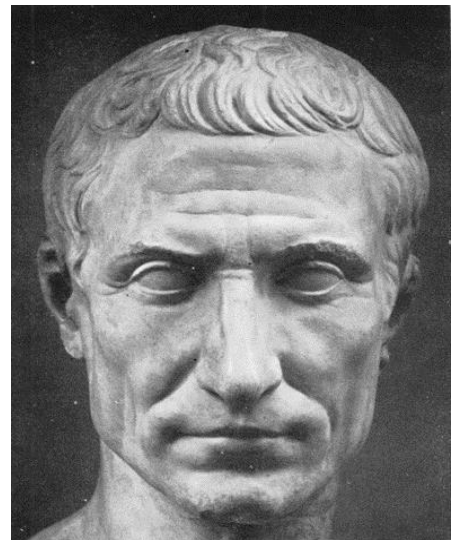


The Life and Times of Julius Caesar

Billboard –

Suppose there were billboards in ancient Rome. To show their support upon Caesar's return to Rome, a citizens' commission might decide to put up a billboard. What would it say? What images would the billboard show? Remember that it is funded by ordinary citizens and is intended to "advertise" their support for Caesar.

Julius Caesar was a great general and an important leader in ancient Rome. During his lifetime, he had held just about every important title in the Roman Republic including consul, tribune of the people, high commander of the army, and high priest. He suggested new laws, most of which were approved by the Senate. He reorganized the army. He improved the way the provinces were governed. The Romans even named a month after him, the month of July for Julius Caesar.



When Julius Caesar said he had something to say, the people flocked to the Forum to hear his ideas. His ideas had been good ones. The people trusted him. Julius Caesar told the people that he could solve Rome's problems. Certainly, the Republic had problems. Crime was everywhere. Taxes were outrageous. People were hungry. Many were out of work. It was easier to use slaves to do work than hire Roman people, but the dependency on slave labor was causing Rome unemployment problems. (The dependency on slave labor contributed to the fall of the Roman Republic, and in its turn, contributed to the fall of the Roman Empire for exactly the same reason – people were hungry and out of work)

The people were angry that their government had not been able to solve the many problems facing the Republic. Julius Caesar spoke publicly to the people about these problems, and promised to solve them if he could.

The people loved him. They wanted to see Julius Caesar in a strong position of power so that he could solve these problems. As Julius Caesar became more popular with the people, he became more powerful.

Leaders in the Senate began to worry. They were afraid that Julius Caesar wanted to take over the government and rule Rome as a king. The leaders of ancient Rome had vowed that the Roman people would never be ruled by a King again. They were right. Julius Caesar did want to take over the government.



One of the laws of the original Twelve Tables was that no general could enter the city with his army. Julius Caesar ignored this law. In 49 BCE, he entered Rome with the Roman Legion, and took over the government as a dictator. Although Caesar wanted to improve Roman society, some people resented the way he had gained power. They feared that Caesar was trying to make himself the king of Rome and they certainly did not want a king. The poor people of Rome, who made up the bulk of the population, were glad because he made reforms to help them acquire jobs. The people called him “father of the homeland”.

The Senate was furious because Caesar was not obeying the republic government and was becoming so popular with the people, giving him more and more power. On March 15 – a date the Romans called the Ides of March – in 44 BC, a group of senators attacked Caesar in the Senate house and stabbed him to death. Among the attackers was a young Senator named Brutus, who had been a friend and ally of Caesar’s. Rather than becoming heroes, Caesar’s murders were forced to flee for their lives. Rome was shocked by Caesar’s murder, and many people were furious about it. He had been loved by many common people and Rome was now in a state of chaos.