--- **LESSON PLAN** ---
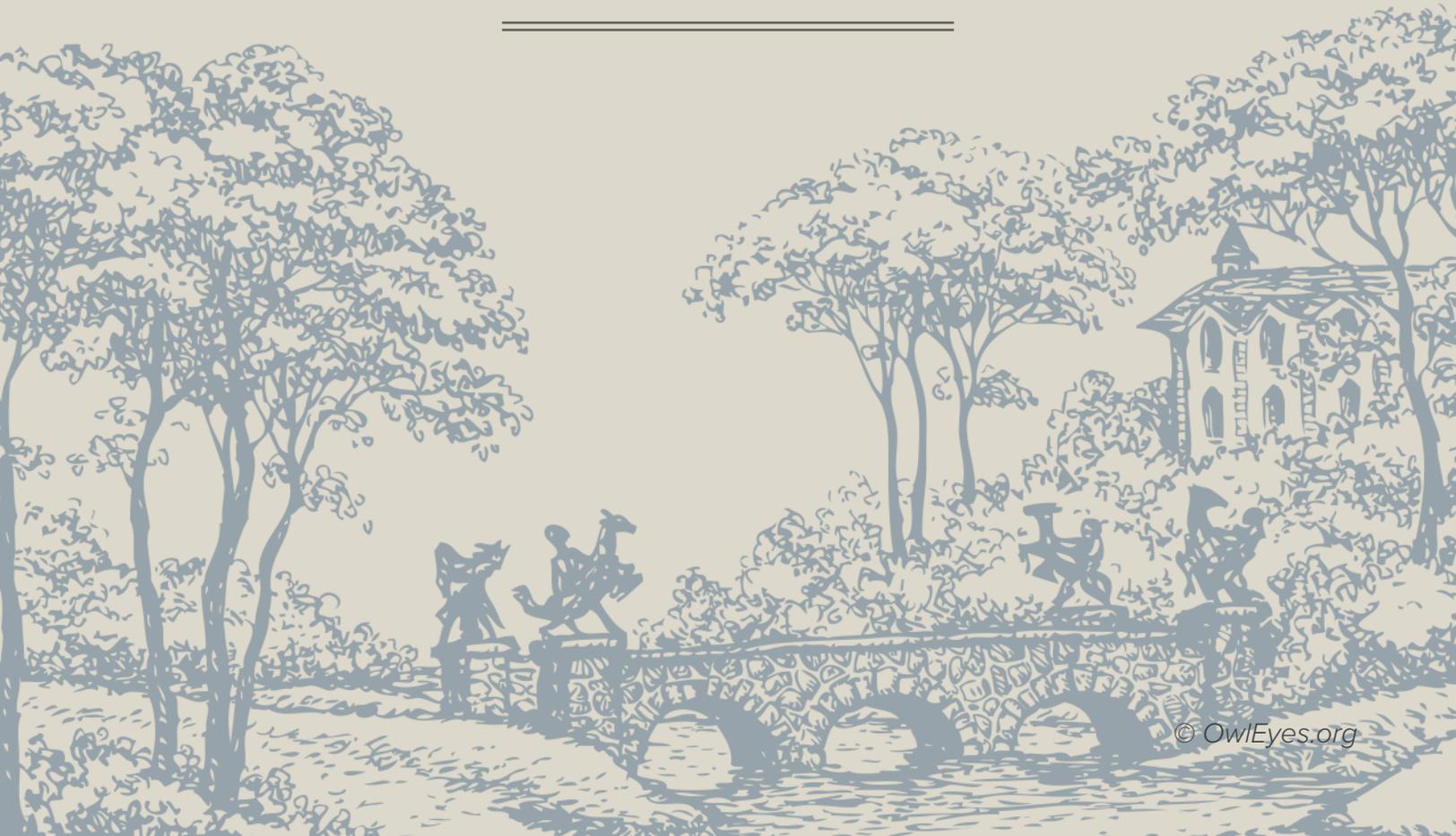
# Julius Caesar

## Portia and Calpurnia as Functional Characters

# Julius Caesar

*by* William Shakespeare

# Main Lesson

| Time / Interaction | Stage | Aims |
|---|---|---|
| **5 min.**<br><br>T-CL | **Introduction**<br><br>Have students log on to Owl Eyes at www.owleyes.org and navigate the site to open *Julius Caesar* and locate act II. Have them review the annotations they wrote for act II, scene I and act II, scene II in completing the homework assigned in the Previous Lesson.<br><br>• **Note:** When teachers create their own classrooms, they can have their students access assigned texts through a "classroom context." This means that the only annotations visible in a classroom context are the ones students and teachers make; they will not see any annotations from other users. This effectively creates a "blank slate" for each text. | *Primary Aim*<br><br>To give students access to the specific text used in the lesson<br><br>*Secondary Aims*<br><br>• To signal that class has now begun<br><br>• To focus students' attention on the work at hand<br><br>• To ensure that everyone has access to Owl Eyes and the Owl Eyes classroom |
| **5 min.**<br><br>T-CL<br>S-S<br><br>OCFB | **Warm Up**<br><br>Ask students to share their homework annotations with a partner. Have students then work with their partners to compare their annotations, list several ways the two scenes are similar, and then contribute their findings in a class discussion. In the discussion establish these points:<br><br>• Each scene takes place at someone's home (Brutus's or Caesar's) in the early morning hours of the day Caesar will be murdered.<br><br>• The atmosphere in both scenes is tense and foreboding.<br><br>• The atmosphere is created by Portia's and Calpurnia's fear and desperation. | *Primary Aim*<br><br>To direct students' attention to similarities between Portia's scene and Calpurnia's<br><br>*Secondary Aims*<br><br>• To draw students into the text<br><br>• To employ a pair/share strategy in instruction |
| **10 min.**<br><br>T-CL | **Pre-Main Event**<br><br>Have students continue working with their partners to consider these questions:<br><br>• Why would Shakespeare have created these two scenes and placed them back-to-back in the play?<br><br>• Why would he have chosen to set the scenes shortly before Caesar is assassinated? | *Primary Aim*<br><br>To establish the roles played by Portia and Calpurnia as functional characters in the drama<br><br>*Secondary Aims*<br><br>• To define suspense<br><br>• To introduce the Main Event |

T-CL / Teacher-Classroom • S-S / Pair Work • S-S-S / Group Work • OCFB / Open Class Feedback

# Main Lesson

| Time / Interaction | Stage | Aims |
|---|---|---|
| OCFB | Ask students to share their thoughts with the class. | *Primary Aim* |
| | In the discussion, establish that the scenes heighten the **suspense** as Caesar's murder becomes more imminent. | To establish the roles played by Portia and Calpurnia as functional characters in the drama |
| T-CL | Write "suspense" on the board, and define it for students: a feeling of excitement or anxiety while waiting for something to happen and while being uncertain what will take place. Point out that creating suspense in this play is a challenge since the audience knows from history that Caesar will be assassinated and Rome will be plunged into a civil war that defeats the conspirators. Explain that creating suspense in these circumstances is a matter of dramatizing *how* the events unfold by creating fictional scenes and conversations that lead up to them, scenes like Portia's and Calpurnia's in act II. | *Secondary Aims*<br>• To define suspense<br>• To introduce the Main Event |
| S-S | As the discussion continues, ask students to consider this question with their partners:<br>*Based on Portia's conversation with Brutus and Calpurnia's with Caesar, which man do you believe is a better husband?* | |
| OCFB<br><br>T-CL | Survey the class using a show of hands to determine how most students answer the question. (Students generally think that Brutus is a better husband.) At this point in the lesson, avoid discussing how students formulated their opinions; instead, point out that having an opinion regarding the question indicates that Brutus's and Caesar's characters are revealed in some way in their conversations with their wives. | |
| | Sum up the discussion by establishing Portia and Calpurnia's functions in the scenes:<br>• Through their conversations with Brutus and Caesar, they contribute to creating suspense as the plot unfolds.<br>• As they interact privately with their husbands, aspects of Brutus's and Caesar's characters are revealed in ways that otherwise would not be evident. | |
| | Tell students that you will now work together to analyze the two scenes and determine how suspense is created and how the characters of Brutus and Caesar are further developed through Portia and Calpurnia's inclusion as minor characters in the play. | |

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# Handout / Analyzing Portia's Role as a Functional Character

> Working as a group, discuss these questions about act II, scene I. Refer frequently to the text as you discuss them.
>
> When your group agrees on how the questions should be answered, record your answers on the handout.
>
> Choose one person in your group to highlight the title of the scene and write an annotation that sums up what your group has decided about Portia's role in it.
>
> Discuss the annotation as it is being written to make sure it accurately and thoroughly expresses your group's thinking.

1. Why is Portia worried about Brutus? What does she beg him to do?

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_____

2. At what point in the scene does Brutus agree to do it? Why do you think Shakespeare delays Brutus's agreeing to do what Portia wants him to do?

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3. How does Brutus feel about Portia? How does he treat her in this scene?

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4. What is revealed about Brutus's character by how he feels about Portia and how he treats her?

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**Sum it up:** How does Shakespeare create suspense and develop Brutus's character through Portia's appearing in the scene?

*Julius Caesar* / William Shakespeare