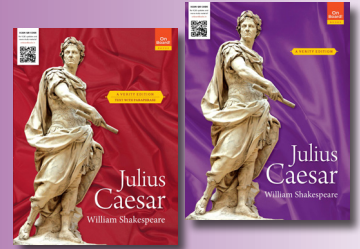


Julius Caesar

William Shakespeare



SAMPLE QUESTION PAPER 5 (For Class 10 – Act 5)

ANSWERS

Question 1

- (i) (d) Antony
- (ii) (a) “A peevish schoolboy”
- (iii) (c) Scavenger birds replacing the eagles on the battle ensign
- (iv) (a) Pindarus
- (v) (a) Pindarus
- (vi) (d) Sardis and Philippi

Question 2

- (i) The tension between Antony and Octavius that had been simmering earlier emerge clearly before the battle of Philippi. Antony had asked Octavius to move his contingent up a hill on the left of the battlefield. Octavius had pointedly refused to agree with him and stated that he would lead the right flank, leaving Antony with the left. When questioned by Antony, Octavius had curtly declared that he did not mean to upset him but Octavius would do what he saw fit, i.e., lead from the right.
- (ii) Cassius reveals to Messala that despite his life-long faith in Epicurean philosophy rationality and reason, he had developed new fears and apprehensions before the battle of Philippi. Unhappy that Brutus had convinced everyone to gamble their fortunes in a single battle, Cassius was fearful that they were heading towards failure and death. This had made him interpret the abandoning of the eagles and the presence of crows, ravens, and kites as an omen of their impending failure and demise at the hands of Octavius and Antony. This conversation is an admission of weakness and doubt in Cassius, a conspirator who had been always appeared to have faith in rational ideas.

- (iii) Brutus initially claimed that if the battle did not go in the favour of the conspirators, he would not dare think of committing suicide since that would be a vile and cowardly act, something he had condemned when others had done it. Brutus claimed he believed in the sacredness of life. When Cassius asked if he would rather be paraded as a vanquished enemy down the streets of Rome, Brutus rejected the possibility claiming that he had too much dignity to allow himself to be subjected to that kind of indignity. This shows that Brutus was quite uncertain of what he would do if the battle did not go in his favour.
- (iv) Before the battle of Philippi, we find that tensions between Antony and Octavius had escalated and they were at odds when it came to deciding who would lead which flank on the battlefield. We have them contesting for the upper hand to prove their superiority even before the battle. On the other hand, we find that Cassius had yielded to Brutus and decided to follow Brutus' decisions regarding their strategy. We do not find them bickering since they had resolved their differences earlier in the play. Despite their differences, Antony and Octavius maintain a united front when they confront Brutus and Cassius before the battle. Their respective causes and motivations keep both the opposing groups united, though Brutus and Cassius' friendship and deep respect for each other remains absent between Octavius and Antony.
- (v) Brutus begins the verbal confrontation by mocking Antony and Octavius for choosing to talk instead of fighting. When Octavius pointed out that conspirators as were interested in talking as them, Brutus countered him by commenting on his inexperience in battle and inability to use the sword well. Antony reminded them of the role they had played in Caesar's gruesome death and the flattering words the conspirators had used before Caesar was attacked. The conspirators' hypocrisy is criticised by Antony, whose words are compared to the buzzing of bees by Cassius. Octavius, incensed by the conversation, swore to avenge Caesar's wounds, or die at the hands of those who had killed Caesar. This confrontation is revelatory of the level of confidence both the parties harboured before the battle. Both Antony and Octavius appeared as committed to the task of avenging Julius Caesar, we find the conspirators, who had earlier run away from Rome, attempting to stand their ground and not give up without a fight. Interestingly enough, Brutus accuses Antony of being a traitor though he does not clearly indicate if Antony was being accused of betraying Rome, or Brutus. No final attempts are made by either party to resolve their differences without bloodshed which shows that the generals were more concerned about their pride, honour and motivations (even ambitions), than the lives of the Roman soldiers they were leading into battle.

Question 3

- (i) Once Brutus had realised that he had lost the battle of Philippi, Brutus, despite his earlier resolution against suicide, pivots towards ending his life instead of being taken captive. He first approached Clitus to assist his attempt to commit suicide, but Clitus refused stating

he would rather kill himself than do it. Brutus then took Dardanius aside and made the same request, only to be refused again. Brutus tried to explain his reasons to Volumnius hoping he would acquiesce, but he does not agree. Then, by hurrying these three men away to safety, Brutus took Strato aside, reminded him of his honour, and convinced him to help him commit suicide by holding Brutus' sword for him.

- (ii) It is important to note that while Brutus was critical of Cato for committing suicide, when he found himself surrounded by his enemies (Octavius and Antony), Brutus chose the same fate over disgrace. He was disheartened by the death of Cassius and other supporters, and felt gratitude that he had always been surrounded by people who were loyal to him. He appeared contented since he believed he was dying with his honour and dignity intact. We find Brutus reflecting upon Caesar, whose ghost had been haunting and tormenting him, till his very last breath – indicating that he truly believed in the nobility of the scheme to eliminate Caesar and rid Rome of oppression.
- (iii) Antony, who had once made the commoners of Rome question the honour of Brutus as well as the other conspirators, described him as the “noblest Roman of them all,” indicating that Brutus was more honourable than all the men who had schemed against Caesar. He characterised Brutus as a “gentle” person who was the only one committed to the betterment of Rome through Caesar's death, and not because he was jealous or covetous. Brutus is placed on a pedestal by Antony who was convinced that Brutus was an ideal man with commendable qualities. Octavius does not respond as elaborately but he too admits that Brutus exhibited virtue. In order to preserve Brutus' body from the elements and scavengers, Octavius asks his body to be placed in Octavius' tent – a sign of respect.
- (iv) Strato had followed Brutus' instructions and held a sword and looked away, while Brutus ran into it, thus committing suicide. Strato executed Brutus' desire to kill himself since he understood that Brutus wanted to retain his dignity. Strato believed that he had helped Brutus free himself from bondage, so that the conquerors could not do much apart from cremate Brutus' body. While convinced that no individual could take pride in having killed Brutus, Strato appeared proud in having helped Brutus “overcome himself” through his act of killing himself instead of surrendering.
- (v) Glory on the battlefield is often one of the primary desires of people participating in combat. It is associated with honour and nobility, as well as a sense of being victorious. However, when Brutus mentions “glory” in these lines, he does so in the face of a terrible loss on the battlefield and his imminent suicide. Brutus had fought on till the very end of the battle, even after he had lost Cassius. Brutus calls Octavius and Antony's victory “vile” because he still believed in the nobility of the act of killing Julius Caesar in an attempt to save Rome from tyranny. Brutus would have glory despite his loss since he felt he had done justice to his cause and convictions for the good of the general public in Rome.

In order to retain his honour and dignity, Brutus had chosen to die by his own sword rather than surrendering to Antony and Octavius Caesar. Brutus believed he had glory because he had lived by Roman ideals and code of honour, which made him better despite his loss to those he believed were inferior traitors. The loss on the battlefield did not effect the glory Brutus had achieved by remaining true to what he considered was his noble cause as an honourable Roman.