



Antony's oration

After Brutus's departure, Antony delivers his speech and manages to persuade the crowd that Brutus is guilty with a long, elaborate oration.

William Shakespeare
Julius Caesar
(1599)

Act III, Scene 2

ANTONY Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears¹.
 I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
 The evil that men do lives after them;
 The good is oft interrèd with their bones –
 5 So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
 Hath told you Caesar was ambitious.
 If it were so, it was a grievous fault²,
 And grievously hath Caesar answered it.
 Here, under leave³ of Brutus and the rest –
 10 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,
 15 And Brutus is an honourable man.
 He hath brought many captives home to Rome⁴,
 Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill⁵.
 Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
 When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept;
 20 Ambition should be made of sterner stuff⁶;
 Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,
 And Brutus is an honourable man.
 You all did see that on the Lupercal⁷
 I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
 25 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 disprove⁸ what Brutus spoke,
 But here I am to speak what I do know.
 30 You all did love him once, not without cause;
 What cause withholds⁹ you then to mourn for him¹⁰?
 O judgement, thou art fled¹¹ to brutish beasts,
 And men have lost their reason! Bear with me¹²;
 My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar¹³,
 35 And I must pause till it come back to me.

[...]

Good friends, sweet friends, let me not stir you up
 To such a sudden flood of mutiny¹⁴.
 They that have done this deed are honourable.
 What private griefs they have, alas, I know not,
 40 That made them do it. They are wise and honourable,
 And will no doubt with reasons answer you.
 I come not, friends, to steal away your hearts.
 I am no orator, as Brutus is,
 But, as you know me all, a plain blunt man¹⁵
 45 That love my friend, and that they know full well
 That gave me public leave to speak of him.
 For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth¹⁶,

- 1 lend ... ears. Ascoltatemi.
- 2 grievous fault. Grave colpa.
- 3 under leave. Con il permesso.
- 4 He ... Rome. Egli ha portato molti prigionieri a Roma.
- 5 Whose ... fill. I cui riscatti hanno riempito le casse dell'erario.
- 6 Ambition ... stuff. L'ambizione dovrebbe essere fatta di una stoffa più dura.
- 7 Lupercal. Festa dei Lupercali (feste per la purificazione che si svolgevano a Roma nel mese di febbraio).
- 8 I ... disprove. Non parlo per smentire.
- 9 withholds. Trattiene.
- 10 to mourn for him. Dal piangerlo.
- 11 art fled. Sei rifugiato.
- 12 Bear with me. Abbiate pazienza con me.
- 13 My ... Caesar. Il mio cuore è lì nella bara, con Cesare.
- 14 To ... mutiny. A una così improvvisa fiamana di rivolta.
- 15 a plain ... man. Un uomo semplice.
- 16 For ... worth. Poiché non ho né ingegno, né parole, né valore.



Action, nor utterance¹⁷, nor the power of speech
 To stir men's blood; I only speak right on.
 50 I tell you that which you yourselves do know,
 Show you sweet Caesar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths,
 And **bid** them speak for me. But were I Brutus,
 And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony
 Would ruffle up your spirits¹⁸, and put a tongue
 55 In every wound of Caesar that should move
 The stones of Rome to rise¹⁹ and mutiny.
ALL We'll mutiny!
1st PLEBEIAN We'll burn the house of Brutus!

17 **nor utterance.** Né espressione.

18 **Would ... spirits.** Scatenerebbe i vostri spiriti.

19 **put ... rise.** Ad ogni ferita di Cesare darebbe una lingua che muoverebbe le pietre di Roma all'insurrezione.

LITERARY COMPETENCE

> VOCABULARY

1 READ the text and match the highlighted words and phrases with their Italian translation.

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|------------------|
| 1 | offrite | 5 | gravemente |
| 2 | non lasciate che vi scateni | 6 | lodare |
| 3 | licenza, permesso | 7 | brutali |
| 4 | seppellire | 8 | ha pianto |

> COMPETENCE: READING AND UNDERSTANDING A TEXT

2 READ the text again and answer the following questions.

- Who are the characters involved in the passage?
- How does Antony start his speech?
- Does he openly condemn the conspirators' deed?
- Does what he says in lines 36-56 correspond to the truth?
- What do the plebeians do after listening to his speech?

> COMPETENCE: ANALYSING AND INTERPRETING A TEXT

3 READ Antony's speech carefully.

- State what effect is achieved by the opening words: 'Friends, Romans, countrymen'.
- List the points Antony makes in these lines and quote from the text.

4 FIND out the theme of Antony's speech and the thesis he wants to oppose.

5 POINT out what we learn about Antony from

- what he says about Caesar;
- what he states about Brutus;
- the way he speaks to the crowd.

6 COMPLETE the following sentence.

Antony appeals to the crowd's

- intelligence.
- emotions.
- common sense.



7 CONSIDER the attitude of the crowd. How do they react at the end of the oration?

8 CONCENTRATE on Antony's language.

- 1 Does he use prose or poetry?
- 2 How is his language? Tick as appropriate.
 - Appealing to feelings and emotions.
 - Ironical.
 - Offensive.
 - Rational.
- 3 When does it become satirical?

9 POINT out the repeated expressions and find the key words of Antony's oration.

10 RECOGNISE the two important syllogisms Antony uses in lines 10-27. Then complete the sentences and answer the question below.

- 1 Stated premiss: Brutus is an honourable man;
 Implied premiss: Honourable men tell the truth;
 Conclusion:
- 2 Stated premiss: Caesar was generous;
 Implied premiss: Ambitious men are not generous;
 Conclusion:

What is the aim of this rhetorical device?

11 FOCUS on lines 32-35, when Antony's speech becomes more personal and dramatic.

- 1 Find words belonging to the semantic areas of love and emotion.
- 2 Note the astute move when Antony decides to stop his speech. What is the true reason for doing this?

12 CONCENTRATE on lines 47-49, where the qualities that distinguish a good orator are listed.

- 1 These qualities are preceded by two different conjunctions. Which ones?
- 2 This repetition is introduced
 - A to give the impression of excess.
 - B to build up the emotional status of Antony.
 - C to underline the elements used to convince the crowd to mutiny.

➤ **COMPETENCE: FINDING AND UNDERSTANDING LINKS AND RELATIONSHIPS**

13 COMPLETE the table below.

	Brutus	Antony
Aim of the speech		
Form used		
Greeting and opening of speech		
Strategies used		
Development		
Focus		
Elements of personality emerging from the speech		

14 EXPLAIN why it is possible to consider *Julius Caesar* a historical tragedy.



> COMPETENCE: LINKING LITERATURE TO PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

15 ANSWER the following question and do the related writing activity.

Do you think the devices used by Antony are obsolete nowadays?

YES

NO

Write a short paragraph about this and find parallelisms between Antony's speech and a modern politician's.

Write a short paragraph about a present-day politician's speech you have listened to and underline the rhetorical devices he/she has used.