Rome – Julius Caesar

Caesar was a brilliant and controversial individual. The world in which he grew up was one of public violence, civil war, political factions, and fierce competitions for public office. Caesar, like all the Roman elite, had political ambitions and wished to enhance his dignitas. Like many others, he was prepared to bypass constitutional restrictions when his ambitions were constantly thwarted by his opponents, keen to keep all power within their own hands. Caesar’s genius raised him above his peers in understanding the political trends of the day, and he arrogantly made no attempt to hide his belief that Rome’s republican government was a ‘form without substance’ to which he, himself, had contributed. For his arrogance, he had to die, brutally cut down by those who failed to see what to him was so obvious.
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Focus: Students develop an understanding of Julius Caesar through a range of archaeological and written sources.

Key Issues:

The Historical Context.
Background and Rise to Prominence.
Key Features in the Development and Career of Caesar.
Evaluation.
The Value and Limitations of Plutarch’s *Life of Caesar* as a Source.

1) The Historical Context
1.1) Geography, Topography, and Resources of Rome and Provinces

RESOURCES

- By the time Caesar came to power, Rome controlled a vast area: from Spain to Asia.
- All of these provinces provided untold wealth and luxury for Rome, which was the centre of a vast trading network. These provinces also provided slaves and auxiliary troops for their legions.
- Resources including gold, silver, and marble came into Rome from Spain, Gaul, Macedonia, and Greece. Wool and linen came from Asia.
- The Apennines mountain range runs down the length of Italy. Land west of the mountain is well-watered and fertile.
- Main fertile areas: Gallia (in the north), Latium (in the centre), and Campania (in the south of Italy).
- Italy is favourable in climate and waterways.
- What the Romans ate was largely dependent on their wealth. Pork, seafood, game, and poultry were accessible to the wealthy. Vegetables were available and the poor mostly ate cereals; particularly millet.
- Markets supplied the essentials – pottery, carpets, fish, and wine.
- Slaves were an important commodity and were brought in from all over the empire.
- The state gave free handouts of grain to poor people. The cost of this policy grew enormously as the numbers on the corn dole increased. It had been an astute political strategy over the previous 3 centuries to keep the population well fed.
- From 58 to 46 BC corn was supplied free to citizens. The cost to the government was enormous but it was considered a necessary political move. When Julius Caesar became dictator in 47 BC over two thirds of the free population of Rome were receiving grain. Caesar reduced the number of recipients on the dole to 150 000 names – but he was the only one able to do this.

GEOGRAPHY

Geographic Advantages

- Rome lies in the centre of the Italian peninsula. The city was settled on both banks of the River Tiber in 753 BC.
- This centrality gave Rome trading and strategic advantages.
- Easy access to the sea available by river or land.
- Rome’s location was highly favourable for an aggressive, defensive, or commercial role in Italy.
Geographic Disadvantages

- Rome was too far from the sea to become a great commercial port.
- Rome had no natural resources.
- Rome’s climate was harsh: flooding, pestilence, and fever.
- Rome could not supply enough grain to feed its population. This resulted in a dependence on grain importation. Importation of grain from Sicily, Sardinia, and Africa made corn and wheat supply expensive and unreliable.

1.2) An Overview of Roman Political and Social Structures

POLITICAL STRUCTURES

- By Caesar’s time, the government comprised:
  - The Senate
  - The assemblies of the people
  - Magistrates of the Cursus Honorum
  - Tribunes of the Plebeians

- **The Senate**
  - Although originally intended as an advisory body of wealthy men who held a magistracy, it virtually ran the state from the 3rd century BC. It was the most influential governing body in Rome, whose members ruled through influence, tradition, wealth, patronage, and prestige.
  - The minimum position for membership was the quaestorship & membership was for life.
  - It originally had 300 members; was later increased to 600 under Sulla, and then to 900 under Caesar. Numbers increased to accommodate new wealthy families.

- **The People’s Assembly**
  - Law-making bodies. There were 4 groups:
    - Comitia centuriata (voted in military centuries)
    - Comitia curiata (voted in local areas)
    - Comitia tribune (voted in tribes)
    - Concilium plebis (restricted to plebeians only)
  - These assemblies voted for magistrates and made laws, but due to the practice of block voting, the senatorial aristocracy and their clients could always influence voting.

- **Magistrates of the Cursus Honorum**
  - **Consul**
    - Voted by the people in the Assembly of Centuries
    - There was 2. Minimum age was 42.
    - Had Imperium authority.
    - Supreme civil and military responsibilities. Presided over Senate meetings, carried out Senate decisions, carried out major elections, and command the army. There were assigned as pro-consul or governor of a province after their year in office.
  - **Praetor**
    - Voted by the people in the Assembly of Centuries.
    - There was 8. Minimum age was 40.
    - Had Imperium authority.
A city praetor was the supreme judge in civil cases; the foreign praetor looked after legal issues relating to foreigners. Could command an army, summon the Assembly of Centuries, introduce new laws, and head courts. Could also become governors after their term of office.

- **Aedile**
  - Voted by the people in the Assembly of Tribes.
  - There was 4. Minimum age was 38.
  - Had Potestas authority.
  - Responsible for maintenance of roads, traffic, public buildings, water supply, corn dole, and provided festivals and games.

- **Quaestor**
  - Voted by the people in the Assembly of Tribes.
  - There was 20. Minimum age was 30.
  - Had Potestas Authority.
  - Administrative and financial officers for Rome and their provinces. Looked after treasury, public records, accompanied army acting as paymaster and distributors of booty. They were automatically enrolled in the Senate after their term of office.

  - **Pro-magistrates**
    - As the empire grew, consuls and praetors could be given an extension of their imperium to lead armies or govern provinces.

  - **Dictatorship**
    - In times of military crisis, a dictator with imperium was appointed on a proposal of the senate to deal with the crisis. His power was originally limited to 6 months, then for as long as it took to restore the constitution.

**SOCIAL STRUCTURES**

- By the time of Caesar, there were three socio-political groups of significance of Rome:
  1. **The Senatorial Class**
     This included both wealthy patricians (those born of noble birth & could trace their ancestry back to the original clans of Rome) and wealthy plebeians (the rest of the Roman citizens). Within this elite group there was an even more elite sub-group known as nobiles. These were the families who could count among there members who had been elected as consuls. These families tended to dominate the consulship repeatedly and held great political power.
  2. **The Equestrian Class (Equites)**
     Originally, these were the men who could afford a horse in the army, but by the 1st century BC, they were Rome’s businessmen, bankers, and tax agents. They generated wealth but had little say in political decisions.
  3. **Plebeians (Plebs)**
     Were the non-aristocratic class (approx. 1/3): freed people, shopkeepers, the poor or unemployed. They were a fragmented group easily controlled by the authorities. They were not a unified revolutionary group. There are no accounts of their lives; Roman writers found them beneath contempt. Cicero referred to them as the scum of the earth.
1.3) An Overview of Significant Political and Military Developments

- During Rome’s wars of conquest in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC, the Senate became the dominant arm of the Roman government due to its experience, authority, and ability to calmly make decisions.
- However, the Senate had not been effectively working as the senatorial nobility had been governing Rome for its own benefit. They put their own interests ahead of the republic – focusing on increasing their estates, acquiring wealth, and maintaining a luxurious lifestyle.
- There were great contrasts in society and intolerable economic and social abuses. The wealthy class held most land in Italy; the poor suffered from unemployment and poor living conditions.
- In 133 – 121 BC, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus (Tribunes of the People) challenged the supremacy of the Senate in attempt to introduce social reform on behalf of the people.
- They took their bill directly to the assemblies without consulting the Senate; undermining the position of the nobiles. The nobiles responded to this attack on their authority with extreme violence – and thus, the first phase of the revolution began.
- Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus were murdered in the civil unrest that followed, but according to Cicero, they “…shattered the stability of the state.”
- After this period, the senatorial class was divided into optimates and populares.
- Optimates were a powerful, determined, and cohesive group who opposed anything that would affect their authority, prestige, and economic positions. They comprised most senators and nobiles.
- Populares also senators – some were genuine reformers, and some were only men of reform when it suited them (for their own political advancement).
- Following the death of the Gracchi, the optimates reasserted their control over the state and retained it until the emergence of Gaius Marius (Caesar’s uncle by marriage).
- He re-organised the army – he replaced loyalty to the state with loyalty to the general.
- The emergence of a series of ambitious and powerful generals backed by armies became a threat to the state.
- This reform probably did more than anything else to make possible the civil wars that threatened the very existence of the state.
- As the Senate lost control of the state, it was forced to make illegal appointments such as the successive consulship of Marius (he held 7).
- Marius (populares) and Sulla (optimates) were ruthless opponents and involved Rome in a civil war. Sulla’s victory over Marius resulted in the return of power to the Senate.
- Cornelius Sulla (138 – 78 BC) was a general and statesman. He was consul twice and revived the dictatorship (held it for 2 years) after it had fallen into disuse by the 3rd century BC.

The Roman Republic underwent crisis after crisis and following Sulla’s death, the Romans were confronted with new dangers and tensions. The causes of these were both external and internal.

- **External Causes**
  - A revolt in northern Italy in 78 BC (led by Lepidus) for radical land distribution.
  - This was followed by a war in the east (74 BC) when Mithridates, ruler of Pontus, raised his forces once more against Rome.
A slave revolt (73 – 71 BC) led by Spartacus (gladiator), saw more than 70,000 slaves from grain plantations in southern Italy join the uprising. The Roman army was ineffective for 2 years.

- The senatorial forces failed to put down these direct threats to Rome so Pompey (the populares' favourite general) was granted special commands to deal with the crises. This he achieved with almost casual ease.

  o **Internal Causes**
    - Corruption was evident in the courts – the equites (of the Senate) often failed to prosecute corrupt governors.
    - The continued fighting and disruption due to Sulla, Cinna, and Marius between 87 and 82 BC showed the ineptness and corruption of the Senate.
    - Pompey and Crassus (the two most successful generals of the time) joined in the consulship in 70 BC with the support of the populares; revoking the last of Sulla’s anti-populares legislation. Some political form of absolute rule (independent of populares or the Senate) was developing. The danger of a dictatorship, tyranny, or monarchy arising from a general with unrestricted power and popularity was obvious.

  o **Professional Client Armies**
    - Rome depended on its army for expansion and the security of the empire. The state could survive as long as the army supported it; that is, as long as the general remained loyal.
    - Generals who lost favour with their armies could not count on their loyalty. Generals who were popular with their armies could and did, march on Rome.

  o **The Army and the Republic**
    - The army was an instrument of terror and control which a general could exploit. During the age of Cicero, it was the generals who controlled the armies. Generals with an army behind them could make demands, threaten the state, and defy the constitution.

2) Background and Rise to Prominence

2.1) Family Background and Position

  o Caesar was born in 100 BC to the patrician Julian clan (Julii).
  o His family had noble, aristocratic, and patrician roots, although they were neither rich nor influential in this period.
  o “The Julii had declined and lost contact with the main centres of power, as they lacked the huge funds necessary for grand careers.” – M. Grant
  o Caesar’s mother was Aurelia Cotta (a member of one of the richest families in Rome), and his father was Gaius Julius Caesar.
  o Caesar’s father reached praetor in 92 BC.
  o Tacitus considered Aurelia Cotta an ideal Roman matron.
  o Plutarch described her as a strict and respectable woman.
  o Due to being patrician, Christian Meier states that therefore Caesar “…may well have imagined himself to be in some way special and exceptionally favoured.”
  o Meier states that the Julian family had “…long been in the second or third rank politically.”
The family position changed when Caesar’s father’s sister, Julia, married Marius in 111 BC. Marius, a ‘novus homo’ held the consulship 7 times and changed the direction of the republic with his military reforms.

As a supporter of Marius, Caesar was forced to flee Rome in 82 BC; threatened by Sulla. He served in Asia and Cilicia.

Caesar’s family benefitted from this Marius connection and became quite closely connected to him – a connection which had a great influence on Caesar’s youth and career.

2.2) Education, Early Life, and Ambitions

EDUCATION

Sources suggest that in his early childhood, Caesar’s mother Aurelia was a consistent influence on him. Caesar would have received the traditional education of an upper-class Roman boy; Latin, Greek, grammar, mathematics, and studying Homer and Virgil. He was educated in rhetoric by Marcus Gnipo.

His privileged education instilled a sense of pride over Rome’s past, and its conquests (during the two centuries before his birth) into north Africa, Spain, Greece, and southern Gaul. He also learnt how kings had been overthrown to become a ‘republic’.

Caesar received a “…rigorous intellectual education and trained his memory.” – Christian Meier.

Suetonius said, “He handled weapons with great skill, was an excellent rider, and had amazing endurance … he covered great distances with incredible speed.”

EARLY LIFE AND AMBITIONS

During the 1st century BC, Senators increasingly used the military to resolve political differences.

Caesar’s teenage years coincided with the bloody and ruthless collision in the careers of Marius and Sulla, which led to both men marching on Rome with their armies. In 87, while Sulla took up command in the east, Marius entered Rome and took revenge on all those who had offended him. In 86 BC he and Lucius Cornelius Cinna became Consuls (Marius for the seventh time). Marius died several months later; Cinna continued as leader of the populares.

At the age of 15 a boy would don the toga virillis (male toga) which symbolises the change in their life and how their life now holds responsibilities. There was a domestic celebration and then the father would take the boy to the forum in order to present him to the Roman Republic.

In 85, when Caesar was 15, his father died, and it was now important for him to begin building a network of supporters.

2.3) Paths to Power: Priesthoods, Marian Connections, Political Alliances, and Marriages

PRIESTHOOD

As a child, Caesar enrolled as the chief priest of Jupiter (Flamen Dialis). This was prestigious but would have limited his political endeavours. He was supposedly prevented from taking the position by Sulla.
Caesar published his speeches which enhanced his reputation. He obtained a seat on the College of Pontiffs (priests) in 73 BC.

“Do you know any man who, even if he has concentrated on the art of oratory to the exclusion of all else, can speak better than Caesar? Or anyone who makes so many witty remarks? Or whose vocabulary is so varied and yet so exact?” – Cicero.

The priests (pontifices) were all nobles, mostly men of considerable grandeur. “…since official acts had to be accompanied by religious observances, membership of the board was a political advantage.” – M. Grant.

MARIAN CONNECTIONS

Caesar gained support from the people as a result of his aunt Julia’s marriage to Marius. He would later marry Cornelia, the daughter of one of Marius’s supporters.

Through Marius’s connections, Julius Caesar became associated with the populares. Caesar was a lifelong military supporter. Sulla and Marius had taught Caesar the importance of military command in achieving political power.

Following Sulla’s victory Caesar’s connections to Marius made him a target for the new regime. He was “stripped…of priesthood, his wife’s dowry and his own inheritance” - Suetonius

He refused to divorce Cornelia and was forced to go into hiding, until his cousin Gaius Aurelius Cotta and the Vestal Virgins campaigned on his behalf and Sulla relented.

Sulla apparently made a prophetic statement: “Very well then, you win! Take him! But never forget that the man whom you want me to spare will one day prove the ruin of the party which you and I have so long defended. There are many Mariuses in this fellow Caesar.” – Suetonius.

POLITICAL ALLIANCES

Caesar went to the east; Asia and Cilicia. According to Plutarch, was captured by pirates who demanded a huge ransom for his release. Once released, he had them crucified.

He won the Corona Civica at the Battle of Mytilene.

He became friendly with Nicomedes, King of Bithynia. After returning to Rome briefly, he returned to the east to study rhetoric under Apollonius Molo.

Plutarch says “Caesar’s natural ability as a public speaker was of the highest order, and that he took the greatest pains to cultivate it…”

After Sulla’s death in 78 BC Caesar returned to Rome.

There, he prosecuted a number of people in the courts for maladministration – according to Plutarch he won a brilliant reputation for himself by his eloquence at these trials.

He lived in the suburb of Subura. He lacked the necessary wealth to advance his career, so entered a patron-client relationship with Marcus Licinius Crassus. Crassus had been estimated to have a fortune of $169.8 billion; according to economist Alex Santoso.

MARRIAGES

Caesar had been married to Cinna’s daughter in 84 BC. She died in 69 BC.

In 67 BC he married Pompeia, one of Sulla’s granddaughters. This ended in 61 BC due to her involvement in a scandal with Clodius.
In 59 BC he married Calpurnia, the daughter of Lucius Calpurnius Piso, who served as consul of 58 BC. They had no children.

2.4) Early political career to 60 BC

- In 69BC Caesar was eligible to stand for the quaestorship, and for the next ten years his career followed the standard pattern of the cursus honorum, but despite this the optimates were nervous about him because he refused to break with the tradition of Marius. According to Gelzer, he was, “… a born enemy of the optimates”.

**QUAESTOR**

- In 69BC, he was elected as quaestor to go to Further Spain. Before he left, he spoke at the funeral of his aunt Julia (widow of Marius) – he used the occasion to express his anti-conservative attitude. Shortly after, he spoke at the funeral of his young wife Cornelia and used it as an excuse to refer to her father Cinna and his association with Marius. Caesar gained support from the people for these actions.
- Plutarch records that while Caesar was in Spain, he saw a statue of Alexander the Great and became depressed, as he had already conquered the world at Caesar’s age. When he returned to Rome, he married Pompeia, the granddaughter of Sulla.
- According to Grant, “… although supporting Marian causes, Caesar still found it convenient to have a foot in both camps.”
- Before he was eligible for aedileship, Caesar supported two bills (lex Gabina 67BC, lex Manilia 66BC) proposed by the tribunes Gaius and Manilius to grant Pompey two extraordinary commands: a command against the pirates in the Mediterranean who were threatening Rome’s grain supply; and to deal with Mithridates in the east. Caesar spoke in favour of the bills despite the opposition from the optimates.

**AEDILE**

- In 65BC, Caesar was appointed as curule (patrician) aedile with the help of Crassus. Political advancement was an expensive business and Caesar “spent money recklessly” (Plutarch) on games, banquets and buildings, so much that, “… people thought that he was purchasing a moment’s brief fame at an enormous price” – Plutarch. He was left with an overwhelming debt to Crassus.

**PONTIFEX MAXIMUS**

- Caesar was elected chief priest in 63BC – a powerful position as well as sacred position that was linked to the religious powers of the early kings of Rome. “This priesthood was very much sought after…Caesar turned to the people and put himself forward as a rival candidate” – Plutarch. Catulus tried to bribe Caesar to step down, but he borrowed money from Crassus to fight the election and won by a narrow margin.
- Suetonius maintains that “he used the most flagrant bribery to secure it”.
- According to Plutarch, “this made the senate and the nobles afraid that he would go on to lead the people forward on a course of violent extremism”.

**PRAETOR**
In 62 BC, he was elected praetor and during his year of office he was faced with a scandal involving his wife, Pompeia having an affair with a degenerate aristocrat Clodius Pulcher. Caesar divorced Pompeia, but Clodius was acquitted.

At the same time, Rome was in turmoil over a conspiracy to overthrow the government led by Cataline, an unsuccessful candidate for consulship. As praetor, he supported the return of Pompey from the east to restore order, and also attacked the Senate leader Catullus (optimate) for corruption.

3) Key Features and Developments

3.1) Role in First Triumvirate

Caesar agreed to an alliance with two of Rome’s strongmen: Pompey and Crassus in 60 BC.

Knowing that the optimates were suspicious and openly hostile to them, these three men agreed to a political arrangement to work together.

“Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus now formed a triple pact, jointly swearing to oppose all legislation by which any of them might disapprove.” – Suetonius.

Caesar brought Pompey and Crassus together and “… used their united power for the strengthening of himself.” – Plutarch.

There were two aspects of this Trumvirate that made it different to that of other alliances before this: the combined power of the three men, and the support of the equites and the armed forces.

Almost from the beginning of the First Triumvirate, there were many people such as Cicero and Clodius who either wished to see its destruction, or to have a share in the political power.

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<th>Pompey’s Needs</th>
<th>Crassus’ Needs</th>
<th>Caesar’s Needs</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Land to settle his troops.</td>
<td>• A rebate for the equestrian tax, paid by farmers in province of Asia.</td>
<td>• The consulship for 59 BC.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• His arrangements for his provincial settlement in the east to be ratified ‘en bloc’.</td>
<td>• A place of pre-eminence.</td>
<td>• A province for 58 to give him scope for military glory and financial reimbursement.</td>
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<td>• Continued prestige.</td>
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All 3 Men Frustrated by the Optimates

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<td>Cato (optimates leader) rejected Pompey’s proposal to marry into his family. Blocked his attempts to get land for his veterans.</td>
<td>Cato and the optimates considered his request outrageous and refused to consider any concessions.</td>
<td>Optimates tried to force Caesar to abandon his consulship bid.</td>
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<td>When it looked like he’d win, they used briber to get their own, Bibulus, elected as well.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>When Caesar won consul, they limited his advancement by deciding his pro-consular province in 58 BC would be the administration of forests</td>
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Caesar indulged in illegal acts as consul by:
- Using Pompey’s veterans to force his bills through the assembly with the help of the tribune of Vatinus.
- Ignoring the veto of the tribunes and his fellow consul Bibulus.

These illegal actions meant that Caesar had to avoid returning to the status of private citizen as he could then be prosecuted.

The triumvirate was politically successful but animosity between Crassus and Pompey continued to develop. Caesar was usually able to intervene, and the partnership was reconfirmed in 65 BC and consolidated when Caesar’s daughter, Julia, married Pompey.

Before leaving for Gaul, Caesar removed two of his most outspoken opponents from Rome: Cicero was sent into exile and Cato given a governorship in Cyprus.

While Caesar was enhancing his reputation in Gaul between 58 BC and 56 BC, the Triumvirate was put under increasing pressure. In Caesar’s absence, the enmity between Crassus and Pompey was no longer held in check. However, despite the cracks appearing, the three men were not yet ready to end the triumvirate. In 56 BC, they met at Luca to renew their political arrangement.

Renewal of Triumvirate at Luca (56 BC)

Pompey and Crassus would stand for second joint consulship in 55 BC.

- They would work for their own pro-consular futures.
- Crassus was to dissociate himself from Clodius.
- They would gain an extension of Caesar’s command in Gaul.
- There was to be no discussion of Caesar’s land bill or his early recall.

Crassus given Syria. Pompey the two Spains with permission to stay near Rome.

Crassus leaves for his province and in 53 BC is killed at Carrhae.

Death of Julia: Caesar’s daughter and Pompey’s wife. Pompey rejects Caesar’s marriage offer (Octavia).

End of Triumvirate.

Anarchy in Rome between Clodius and Milo. Pompey moves towards the optimates and is appointed sole consul in 52 BC. Laws passed that undermine Caesar’s position.
3.2) Gallic Wars: Campaigns and Tactics, Siege of Alesia

CAMPAIGNS AND TACTICS

- The commands in Gaul gave Caesar what he wanted most: recognition of his abilities, the opportunity for military success, and the command of three legions.
- He spent 9 years in Gaul and documented his ventures in *The Gallic Wars*.
- What followed was a number of military conquests where he defeated the Helveti and drove the Germanic tribes across the Rhine. Along with his allies, the Gallic tribe of Aedui, Caesar also defeated the Belgae.
- Many advantages were presented to Caesar during his appointment to Gaul:
  1. Cisalpine Gaul
     - The area was a good recruiting ground for troops.
     - The province’s proximity to Rome would allow Caesar to maintain knowledge on the events in Rome.
  2. Narbonese Gaul
     - The province would give Caesar a chance to acquire wealth.
     - The rivalry of Gallic tribes outside the Roman province in Gallia Comata would give him opportunities to win military glory for himself and extend Rome’s influence.

During 58 - 56 BC

Caesar:

- repulsed an invasion from the Helveti (a Germanic tribe) who were migrating from across the Rhine from present-day Switzerland into France. 400,000 intended migrating westwards by passing through the northern corner of the Roman province. When Caesar prevented this, they entered at the Jura mountains; plundering the countryside of the Aedui and Sequani. The Aedui were allies of Rome (even though their territory was outside the Roman province). Caesar provoked a war, followed and defeated the Helveti at Bibracte, and forced them to return to their homeland.
- drove the German Suebi back beyond the Rhine.
- defeated the rebellious Veneti when they attacked the Roman barracks.
- defeated the Aquitani.

During 55 - 54 BC

Caesar:

- exterminated two German tribes who crossed the Rhine into Gaul.
- built a 230-metre bridge across the Rhine to demonstrate Roman strength, then destroyed it.
- carried out a reconnaissance of Britain in 55, followed by an invasion.
- Defeated king of the Britons, took the capital, received submission of the tribes, took hostages and return to Gaul.

During 55 - 51 BC
Caesar:

- suffered a setback when the Eburones attacked a Roman barrack at Aduatucass, annihilating 1.5 legions.
- faced the most serious revolt led by Vercingetorix, a young noble of the Arverni tribe.
- besieged Vercingetorix and his troops in the fortress on the plateau of Alesia. He eventually starved them into submission. Spent 51 – 50 BC subduing the remnants of the revolt.

**SIEGE OF ALESIA**

- The Gallic Wars culminated in the decisive Battle of Alesia in 52BC, in which Caesar’s victory became legendary. Roman victory resulted in the expansion of the Roman Republic over the whole of Gaul and a release from the restrictions imposed by the narrow lands of Italy. The wars paved the way for Caesar to become the sole ruler of the Roman republic.
- Alesia was a stronghold with high walls and “170 000 defenders” (Toni Hurley). Caesar besieged the city, constructing a ring of elaborate fortifications within sight of the enemy; a show of Roman discipline and training. Hurley claims they built “ditches to prevent cavalry attacks”.
- Vercingetorix attacked the Romans and Caesar responded with a second defensive ring, against the expected attack from the relief of the army. “… it’s purpose was to hold off attacks from outside…” – Caesar.
- Vercingetorix’s attacks failed – he surrendered and was held in captivity for six years before being displayed during Caesar’s triumph. He was then strangled.
- Hurley states “Caesar…imposed a moderate tribute and tribes were allowed to retain their own organisation” – demonstrating his ability for diplomacy, negotiation, political awareness and clemency.
- “In less than ten years in Gaul, Caesar successfully stormed over 800 cities, subdued 300 tribes and fought hand-to-hand battles against a total of three million warriors” – Plutarch. With these campaigns, Caesar had tripled the size of the Roman Empire. He now had a huge client base and a military reputation to rival Pompey. Furthermore, he now had a loyal army and had accumulated huge wealth.

Quick note on reliability:

- Sometimes Caesar held back certain information in his ‘books.’
- For example, Greek historian Cassius Dio states that Caesar accomplished nothing and retired rapidly out of fear of the Suebians, the exact opposite of what Caesar claimed.

The Significance of Caesar’s Gallic Campaigns:

- The Roman successes in Gaul were partly due to: the lack of unity, discipline and determination of the Gaul’s; the German cavalry employed by Caesar during the revolt led by Vercingetorix; Caesar’s military tactics and strategy, his swift action and leadership; and the leniency shown by Caesar in his organization of Gaul.
This conquest of Gaul was important for Caesar because he built up a great military reputation to equal that of Pompey and had the support of a devoted army; it provided him with the wealth he needed to buy political supporters in Rome; and this also meant that he had the support of Gaul during the civil war.

The conquest of Gaul also increased Rome’s strength by adding to it more land, greater population and offering vast resources.

Max Cary notes that “For Caesar his term of command in Gaul was the turning-point of his career. The war-booty which he appropriated not only sufficed to pay off his enormous private debts, but enabled him to buy political services in Rome on a scale comparable to that of Crassus. He held at his beck and call an invincible army that was ready to follow him anywhere. Above all, it was as proconsul of Gaul that he ‘found himself’ and brought into full play his latent powers as a soldier and administrator. From this point Caesar’s actions betoken a leader who is serenely conscious of his superior genius and regards himself as a Man of Destiny”

Caesar himself states that “I should have been condemned if I had not sought help from my army.”

3.3) Relationship with his Army

Caesar’s most valuable asset from his campaign in Gaul was the army that now followed him.

Caesar has a great relationship with his men. His fortune from his wars was “… open to all for the reward of valour…” – Caesar.

Caesar rewarded his men with large estates of confiscated lands and rich shares of the spoils of war.

"His ability to secure the affection of his men and to get the best out of them was remarkable. Soldiers who in other campaigns had not shown themselves to be any better than the average became irresistible and invincible and ready to confront any danger, once it was a question of fighting for Caesar’s honour and glory…” – Plutarch Life of Caesar (16).

He is ranked as one of history’s great soldiers and generals. After the victory in the Civil War, Caesar stated that without the loyalty of his army he would have been lost.

Suetonius wrote: “He always led his army more often on foot … treating them [his soldiers] with equal severity – and equal indulgence…”

He took an interest in all things military. He was skilled in logistics and he contributed an improvement to the design of the legionary’s chief weapon, the pilum.

He was, like most Roman generals, committed to the offensive strategy but was tactically very competent being able to change tactics during a battle to deal with contingencies as they rose. Manipulative

3.4) Relationship with the Senate

The senate feared Caesar.

The Senate had lots of ill-will towards Caesar, but no military muscle to back it up

The Assembly gave the generals extraordinary commands and enormous powers, but once they had conquered new territories, the Senate refused to ratify their acts, because its members could not allow one man to become too powerful.
The Senate constituted of a small group of Roman elites – mainly optimates. Caesar, who was devoted to the populares, sought to “…liberate and avenge the Roman people from the oppression of this minority faction” – Caesar. Caesar’s familial Marian connections strengthened his alignment with the “popular line” (Gelzer) – connections that immediately caused the senate to be suspicious of Caesar.

Throughout his career, the senate oscillated between supporting and opposing Caesar – they advanced his power by providing him with extraordinary commands and relenting to his demands:

- Plutarch states that the conference at Luca was attended by Rome’s “most illustrious”, including 200 senators; suggesting he had the senate’s support.

- After his victory in the civil war, the senate hailed Caesar as “father of the state” and he urged that the senators should “administer it (the Republic) with him” – (Caesar)

- By 49BC, Caesar gained a number of extraordinary powers and offices from the senate, which by then was only constituted of his supporters – his enemies had fled Rome. “An obsequious senate, deserted by Republicans…packed with many of Caesar’s creatures, not heaped additional honours upon him” (Cowell)

Yet, at other times they would clash:

- Early in his career, “Caesar caused so much concern among the optimates that the senate dismissed him for causing public disturbances. He was reinstated after popular demonstrations” – Toni Hurley

- “He was not welcome when he entered the senate in 66BC … he was accused of not showing proper respect” – Hurley

- In 60BC, when Caesar requested a triumph, the optimates offered him an ultimatum – a triumph, or consulship for 59BC. “They believed they could prevent Caesar’s possible election success by making his choose between the triumph and the consulship”- Hurley.

- Plutarch explains “the nobles were afraid he would go on to lead the people on a course of violent extremism”. He chose to stand for consul and initiated the first triumvirate in response to the senate’s dismissal of his triumph application. The formation of this alliance was “a fatal blow…against the optimates oligarchy” – Gelzer.

- During his consulship, the senate and their candidate Bibulus repeatedly attempted to block Caesar’s motions/Caesar passed a land bill which ‘effectively won him the sympathy of all classes except the Senate’ (Sabben Clare) who feared the popularity the bill brought Caesar and who wished to retain the lands for themselves. In an attempt to obstruct the ill “Bibulus proclaimed a scared period for all remaining days of the year, which made it legally impossible to convene an assembly. Caesar paid little attention” (Dio Cassius), threatening the senate with violence – the bill was passed.
- In 59BC, the senate voted Caesar the “woods and pastures” as his proconsular province, denying him command of an army – thus showing their fear. (Toni Hurley)

- Throughout his career, Caesar used the tribunate to pass legislation – a populare strategy that disregarded the senate and challenged Rome’s political framework. E.g. he used the tribune Clodius to exile Cicero and remove Cato – two optimates who vocally opposed him. E.g. he bribed the tribune Curio, offering to pay his debts; in return “Curio crossed over to the popular side and begun speaking up for Caesar” (Cicero). Using Curio avoided Caesar from being recalled from Gaul and avoided prosecution for illegal legislation he had previously passed.

- In the lead up to the civil war, in which Pompey acted as the senate’s champion, the senate pursued attempts to rid Caesar of his proconsular imperium so he could be tried as a private citizen for his previous unlawful actions.

- The senate played some role in the demise of the First Triumvirate, pulling apart Caesar’s preeminent alliance.

- Before the civil war “Caesar tried everything to keep the peace but no offer was acceptable” (Vellius). Caesar notes that he made “moderate demands” to achieve “some human sense of justice” with the senate. However, Cicero claims that his letters to the senate were “bitter and threatening”.

- Though many senators were un-eager for war, optimate enemies of Caesar like Cato and Lentulus and Scipio Mentellus, pushed the senate to pass the Emergence Degree – driving Caesar to cross the Rubicon.

- During the civil war, the optimates were defeated and Caesar filled the senate with his supporters. He now controlled the senate and “…was becoming dangerously powerful” – Scullard. He increased the number of senators to 900, admitting knights and foreigners; seemingly cheapening this once prestigious role.

- Optimate members of the senate who had been pardoned by Caesar could not tolerate this power. They “…were in duty bound to preserve the republic they had inherited from their forefathers … they wanted to thwart Caesar’s unscrupulous and destructive power.” (Meier).

- So “at least sixty Roman senators begun to plot his death” (Cowell). While Caesar had a steady relationship with many senators, the staunch optimates faction, who had opposed his every move, proved to be his final downfall.
3.5) Role in the Civil War

- In 49 BC Caesar crossed the Rubicon without standing down his legions; being directly responsible for civil war. Rome at this time was already turbulent.

- Caesar did this because he was not able to stand for consulship in absentia and he could not stand down his army for fear of prosecution for his crimes during his consulship of 59BC.

- Caesar himself wrote that he crossed the river to maintain his dignity rather than be prosecuted “Prestige had always been of prime importance to me, even outweighing life itself.”

- In January 49 BC, Caesar crossed the Rubicon into Italy. Unable to raise arms, the senate was helpless; Pompey and the consuls left Rome. Caesar drove Pompey the length of Italy, suffering only light losses himself. Pompey escaped by the sea and within two months Caesar was the master of Italy.

- In April, whilst Pompey and majority of the senators were in Greece, Caesar pardoned his enemies and called the senate to authorize his actions. He also proposed a law granting Roman citizenship to the inhabitants of Cisalpine, Gaul. Caesar then moved on to attack the senatorial forces in Spain, quickly defeating two of Pompey’s commanders. Caesar showed clemency in sparing the enemy commanders and disbanding the defeated legions. On his return to Italy, more of Pompey’s troops surrendered to his besiegement. In August, two of Caesar’s legions he had sent to Africa were destroyed, and Rome’s corn supply threatened. In December 49BC, Caesar was made dictator, which he relinquished after 11 days to become consul for the second time instead.

- Caesar and Pompey met in the Adriatic Sea, where Pompey’s 9 legions and 300 ships defeated Caesar. In March, Antony reinforced Caesar with extra legions. Despite this, he was defeated in July and so marched inwards to face Pompey in Greece. Caesar defeated Pompey at the battle of Pharsalus, killing 6000 of his soldiers and capturing 24000. In September, Pompey fled to Egypt where he was killed by Ptolemy XIII (who hoped to gain Caesar’s support in his war against Cleopatra VII by doing so).

- In 47 BC, Caesar was made dictator for one year, and chose to support Cleopatra against her brother, eventually defeating him. Consequentially, Cleopatra “…was the effective ruler…”- Toni Hurley. Caesar moved to Asia Minor where he defeated a challenge to Roman authority from Pharnaces and uttered the famous epigram “I came, I saw, I conquered”.

- In 46 BC Caesar was made consul for a third time and dictator for another ten years. In April Caesar defeated a large Pompeian army in North Africa. Cato, one of Caesar’s most prominent enemies, committed suicide after the defeat. By November Caesar headed to Spain to suppress a revolt led by the sons of Pompey. In 45 BCE Caesar was made consul again. In March Pompey’s sons were defeated at Munda. Caesar’s strategy and the skills and endurance of his soldiers had defeated the forces of Pompey in his soldiers had defeated the forces of Pompey in battles around the Mediterranean. Caesar was now undisputed master of the Roman Empire.

- In July Caesar was made dictator for life.
3.6) Political Supporters and Enemies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caesar’s Supporters</th>
<th>Mark Antony</th>
<th>Sallust</th>
<th>Clodius</th>
<th>Curio</th>
<th>Crassus</th>
<th>The Army</th>
<th>The Populous (people)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mark Antony’s mother was a Julian and so he was a relative, dear friend, trusted officer, and political supporter. Antony joined Caesar in Gaul in 54 BC, was elected quaestor through Caesar’s influence, and became one of his most rusted officers and devoted friends. As a tribune in 49 BC he vetoed the Senate’s attempt to deprive Caesar of his command then fled to Gaul. He commanded the left wing at Pharsalus and in 44 BC he was consul with Caesar. Antony tried to warn Caesar of the assassination attempt, but it was too late. He celebrated his funeral and read his will.</td>
<td>Sallust was a <em>populares</em> and disliked the old elite. He acted as a partisan for Caesar in the Senate. He supported Caesar in the Civil War and was given command of a legion. He wrote several works examining the Cataline Conspiracy and other aspects of Roman history – in which he depicted Caesar favourably.</td>
<td>Clodius became tribune in 58 BC and helped Caesar get rid of Cicero before he went to Gaul.</td>
<td>Curio, as a tribune for 50 BC, vetoed any discussion by the <em>optimates</em> of Caesar’s replacement in Gaul. During the Civil War, Caesar sent Curio as pro-praetor to Sicily where he drove Cato off the island and followed him to Africa. He was killed by King Juba in Numidia.</td>
<td>Crassus provided Caesar with financial support for his political advancement – <em>aedile, pontifex maximus</em>, and <em>pro-praetor</em> – and supported him in gaining the consulship and command as pro-consul to Gaul.</td>
<td>Caesar had not initially intended a career in the army but once there he showed his abilities. He earned the respect of his men and this stood him in good stead throughout the Civil War.</td>
<td>Caesar was the champion of the people. He had been popular in his early career with the extravagance of his games, but it was his actions as general and politician that earned him their respect. Much of his career was aimed at gaining their support and associating himself with the popular tradition of his uncle Marius. He was committed to the plight of the Roman people, addressing a significant number of their problems in his reforms.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Caesar’s Enemies</th>
<th>Cicero</th>
<th>Cato</th>
<th>Bibulus</th>
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<td>Throughout his political career Cicero was an opponent of Caesar and his policies. This was largely due to Cicero’s strong republican sentiment and his sympathies for Caesar’s main political rival, Pompey.</td>
<td>Cato the Younger, like Cicero, was a staunch republican and part of the senatorial faction that attempted to block Caesar’s legislation proposals in 59 BC. He wanted Caesar brought to trial for his illegal acts in 59 BC and attempted to replace him in Gaul. He considered himself the saviour of the state due to his uncovering of the Catiline conspiracy. He joined Pompey’s forces in the Civil War in 47 BC and committed suicide when he realised that the victory of Caesar signalled the death of the Republic.</td>
<td>Bibulus was Cato’s son-in-law and Caesar’s co-consul in 59 BC, fellow <em>aedile</em> in 65 BC, and fellow <em>praetor</em> in 62 BC. He attempted to use his power to block Caesar’s...</td>
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legislation and was threatened by Caesar’s supporters. He fought on Pompey’s side during the Civil War as his commander on the fleet in the Adriatic.

| Metellus Scipio | Metellus Scipio proposed in the Senate that Caesar should disband his army or be declared a public enemy. During the Civil War, he commanded the Pompeian centre at Pharsalus. He crossed to Africa, was defeated by Caesar at Thapsus, and like Cato, killed himself. |
| Brutus | Brutus was the son of Servilia (Caesar’s long-time mistress and half-sister to Cato). He was raised by Cato and joined the optimates on the outbreak of the Civil War. After Pharsalus, he was pardoned by Caesar and given many marks of favour, and yet he was one of the main conspirators in his assassination. |
| Cassius | Cassius was a leading general and at the outbreak of the Civil War joined the optimates. He accompanied Pompey to Greece. After Pharsalus, he was pardoned by Caesar who helped him gain praetorship, but Cassius harboured a secret hostility to Caesar and was the leading figure in his assassination. |

Supporters who became enemies

- Pompey was threatened by Caesar’s success in Gaul and his increasing popularity in Rome.
- Decimus served in the army under Caesar in the Gallic and Civil Wars but turned against him; historians are unsure as to why, but it could be due to Caesar denying him a triumph or his appointment of Octavian to be second-in-command in a new war against Parthia.
- It seems that Decimus felt slighted and became part of the conspiracy to assassinate Caesar.
- Gaius Trebonius was a military commander and politician and was made a legate by Caesar for his assistance to the triumvirate. He campaigned with Caesar in Gaul but was part of the assassination conspiracy as he felt Caesar was betraying the Roman people.

3.7) Personal Relationships: Julia, Cleopatra VII, Brutus, Mark Antony, Cicero

**Julia**

- Caesar married his first wife Cornelia in 84 BC. They had Julia in 76 BC. Julia was betrothed by her father to Pompey in 59 BC as a symbol of the political alliance between the two men and their families. “A tie of marriage was now cemented between Caesar and Pompey.” – Vellius.
- The marriage was “…an important element in the success of the amicitial.” – Hurley.
- However, Julia “…the one tie which bound together Pompey and Caesar in a coalition.” (Vellius) died in childbirth. This “…played an important part of the eventual breakdown of the triumvirate.” (Hurley).

**Cleopatra VII**

- Cleopatra was born in 69 BC and was the co-ruler of Egypt. She was a Ptolemaic descendant of the Macedonians who had conquered Egypt with Alexander.
- She wanted to prevent her kingdom from being made part of the Roman Empire.
The Romans had wanted to conquer Egypt for some time and were waiting for an excuse to intervene.

When Pompey was killed by her brother’s agents, Cleopatra saved Egypt and her own position by coming to an arrangement with Caesar. “Their relationship was obviously more than political.” – Hurley.

The ancient sources allude to Caesar being bewitched by Cleopatra’s charms and her managing to manipulate him into having her declared co-regent.

Caesar acknowledged her child Caesarion as his son.

Caesar left Romans in Egypt to support Cleopatra.

“As to the war in Egypt, some say it was at once dangerous and dishonourable … but occasioned only by his passion for Cleopatra.” – Plutarch.

Egypt’s future as a Roman possession was probably inevitable from this point onwards.

Brutus

He opposed the triumvirate and during the civil war, he fought against Caesar. However, after the war Caesar granted him clemency and he became praetor for 45 BC.

Caesar “not only forgave him freely but honored and esteemed him among his chiefest friends” (Plutarch).

Brutus went on to play an integral role in the plot to kill Caesar.

Seneca makes the judgment that “although in other respects Brutus was a great man, he was wrong to have killed Caesar”.

One of Caesars many notorious affairs, was supposedly with Servilia, Brutus’s mother.

Brutus believed Caesar’s dictatorship was akin to tyranny.

Mark Antony

A Julian military leader who joined Caesar in Gaul in 54BC and was then elected tribune under Caesar’s influence.

Antony often represented Caesar in Rome whilst he was on campaign. E.g. during the lead up to the civil war, Antony attempted to negotiate on Caesar’s behalf, “though the consuls did what they could to oppose it.” (Plutarch).

During the civil war, he fought on Caesar’s side, taking command of the left-wing forces.

When Caesar was dictator, Antony became his master of the horse and magister equitum (second in command.) In 44BC, during a festival, Antony publicly offered Caesar a diadem, which he refused – demonstrating that he did assume to become king.

Hurley reports that Caesar’s “assassins made sure they separated Antony from Caesar before they killed him in 44BC”.

Antony was overwhelmingly faithful and loyal to Caesar, and the two seem to have shared a close relationship, at least politically.

Cicero

Cicero’s career was marked by his desire to uphold the traditional republican system in Rome – which naturally brought him into conflict with Caesar’s popularist ambitions.

Despite their conflicting perspectives, Caesar urged Cicero to join the first triumvirate.

Cicero saw the benefits in this “close connection with Pompey and Caesar…win peace with regard to the common people”, however, he resisted, feeling it was against his senatorial persuasions.
By 58BC, Cicero was facing exile, under a bill against ‘anyone who had executed a Roman citizen without trial’ – designed to target Cicero over the Catiline’s. Taylor suggests that he was targeted to teach him “a lesson that his opposition would not be tolerated”. Once Pompey recalled him to Rome, he saw an opportunity to bring Pompey to the optimates; and so, attacked one of Caesar’s bills in an attempt to drive a wedge between the two. However, it did not have the desired effect.

Despite the fact that he supported Pompey in the civil war, Plutarch tells us that Cicero and Caesar greeted each other warmly when Caesar returned victorious to Rome. “From this time on, he always treated Cicero kindly and with respect”.

In a speech in 46BC, Cicero said that if rumors came true and Caesar was assassinated, there would be no chance for the republic. However, after the assassination, Cicero seemed supportive of the move. Hurley describes Cicero as having “a grudging respect for Caesar’s abilities but fearing his motives”. The pair were always going to be overwhelmingly set against one another; their perspectives too different.

“...” Cicero.

3.8) Impact of Personality on Career, the Significance of his Writings

Impact of Personality on Career

Caesar was intelligent, charismatic and skilled- a confident military leader, although fastidious and a womanizer.

Most significantly though, he was extremely ambitious and power-hungry.

“Caesar was increasingly driven to be the first man of Rome, unmatched by virtue of his deeds and victories.” – Meier.

Caesar as a General Leader

He led by example and proved himself courageous in the field, thus his army was “loyal to him because they trusted and respected him” – Kamm.

“He had the ability to secure and retain the affection of his men and get the best from them” – Bradley.

Tactical and strategic skill exemplified in his success in Gaul. Furthermore, he was highly logical, intelligent and innovative.

He is reported as being pragmatic and coolly thinking in battle.

Caesar and his enemies

He showed himself to be merciful towards political enemies; perhaps motivated by a humanitarian nature, however, many historians view this as an extension of his political cunning and tactical mind.

“The clemency that Caesar showed to his opponents should not be confused, for instance, with humanity or gentleness.” – it was in favor of pragmatic benefit (Kamm).

However, some view it as a weakness that Caesar was not harder on these enemies as they eventually proved his death.

Caesar as an Orator

“Do you know of any man who can speak better than Caesar” – Cicero.
o His excellence and success as an orator show he was charismatic, confident and persuasive.

Vain Caesar

o He is recorded as being obsessed with his appearance- suggesting he was organized and neat.
o He was known to have many intimate relationships with woman- suggesting he was confident and charming.

Significance of his Writings

o Caesar wrote two main works: on the Gallic War and the Civil War. Through this work, he kept Rome informed about his achievements. Both books provided his perspective and motives, with Hurley noting they can “be seen as personal propaganda, written to publicize and explain Caesar’s actions”.
o Cicero states that “Caesar wrote admirably, his memoirs are clearly, directly and gracefully composed”.
o Hurley supports this view, saying, “Caesar’s works were powerful, well-written narratives.” He showed himself to be politically minded, at times propagandist, and he demonstrated a breadth of knowledge, cunning and understanding within the political and social spheres.
o Caesar's Gallic Wars essays chronicle the history of his military engagements during the years 58-51 BC in Gaul, Germany, and Britain.
o Caesar detailed battles in lengthy propagandist commentaries. The Gallic Wars was written ‘on the march’ – this maintained public interest in his activities. Aulus Hirtius states he was a “superb stylist… truly skilled in explaining his stratagems”.
o For centuries, the Gallic War has been the first real Latin text, written by a real Roman, for children who were trying to master the ancient language.
o He provides expository information for those who are unfamiliar with the far-off lands and people encountered during his forays.
o *The Gallic Wars* kept Rome informed of his achievements
  o By a means by which Caesar ensured that his province would be seen in need of proconsular presence
  o Could possibly prolong his own governorship
o Books on the *Civil War* gave his perspective on events
  o Motives for invading Italy
  o Discussion of the legality of the senate’s actions and the issuing of the *Senatus Consultum Ultimum* to Pompey
  o Account differs to Cicero’s
3.9) Dictatorship: Policies and Reforms

- Caesar elected himself dictator on four different occasions:
  - 49BC, he held the post for 11 days
  - 48BC, he held it for one year
  - Mid 46BC, he assumed the title for 10 years, renewing it annually (possibly to limit the idea that he wished to become a monarch)
  - 45BC for life

- “Never before had Rome endured a dictator who set no limit to his dictatorship” – Cowell.
- Taylor states Caesar “showed himself to be a practical politician with an eye for social needs.”
- Gelzer states “Caesar had only one unshakeable principle - he would not let go of the power he had won.”

Powers as a dictator:

- All other offices and ranks were secondary to him, he was above the power of tribune veto and the imperium of all other magistrates.
- In 46BC he became praefactura morum, prefect of public morals, giving him the powers of a censor.
- In 44BC he was awarded Tribunician Sacrosanctity meaning that he could not be prosecuted.
- As pontifex maximus and as a priest to all the other colleges, he had a huge influence over the state religion.
- He could speak first in the senate, controlled the public funds, had command of an army and could chose all the magistrates.

Public Works

- Multiple building projects to glorify his memory - “Never before had a Roman citizen allowed himself to receive honours and marks of distinction normally reserved for gods” - Gelzer.
- The works provided employment. Through them, he promoted culture. Furthermore, he commissioned a new Forum, rebuilt the senate building, courts, speakers platform and assembly building. He also created a basilica, temples and state library.

Political Reforms

- He enabled people from outside Rome to become senators and raised the numbers from 600-900. Here, he diluted the power of the senate.
- He raised a number of magistrates, with praetors going from 6-16, aediles 4-6 and quaestors 20-40.
- He limited the terms of propraetor to one year, and proconsuls to two consecutive years. This prevented others from acquiring the powers he held in Gaul, as well as discouraging the provincial robbery of the past.
- Only equites and senators could serve as jurors
- Citizenship was granted doctors and teachers – even though most were Greek.
Economic Reforms

- Rome had been in debt since its inception. Caesar lowered the interest rates which had soared during wartime, increased liquidity, and removed a quarter of all debts.
- The first Roman coins were struck – minted in his image. These actions solved the immediate economic and social crisis and provided the economic framework for the economic boom during the time of Augustus.

Social Reforms

- Caesar re-organised the calendar. This stayed in effect until 1582 when it was slightly adjusted.

Clemency

- Caesar did not use proscriptions, appropriation of land, outlawing, or mass executions.
- The clemency he showed towards his enemies is viewed by some as a major error, as some of those he pardoned went on to become his assassins.
- However, his overall attitude pleased the population of Rome, making them less resentful to his immense power.
- Despite this Suetonius still warned “The Republic was nothing – a mere name without form or substance and that, now his own word was law, people ought to be more careful how they opposed him.”

Colonization

- Overpopulation caused unemployment. Thus, Caesar formed new colonies.
- New laws offered 80,000 poor Roman families a new life in the new colonies, among them Carthage and Corinth.
- Caesar cut the corn dole rate removing the incentive to stay in Rome. Within the colonies he allotted land to veterans.
- He put in place a ‘Romanization’ policy granting citizenship to a large number of people. Caesar forced landowners to use labourers who were freed men to reduce unemployment.

3.10) Assassination: Motives, Manner, and Impact of his Death

- The possibility of a permanent dictator ruling Rome could not be endured by many Romans.
- A group of 60 leading Romans formed a conspiracy to assassinate him of the 15 March 44 BC (The Ides of March).

Motives

- Caesar's dictatorship in 44BC “pushed the opposition into action” – Taylor. Rome was known for its “ancient hatred of monarchy” (J.B. Bury), thus “what made Caesar most openly and morally hated was his passion to be made king” (Plutarch).
- “The placing of a diadem on Caesar’s statue” was seen as “an outrage on democratic liberty” (Bury). Furthermore, Mark Antony’s offering of the kingship “by the peoples bidding” highlighted the potential danger Caesar posed to the Republican constitution. Also, as Pontifex Maximus, he was living in a royal residence and performing the religious duties of the Roman kings.
Caesar’s autocratic pursuit also increased the existing animosity between him and the senate. “Caesar’s intention to retain absolute authority antagonized everybody of any importance” (Cowell).

His clemency was also a catalyst for his assassination, as he had pardoned the chief conspirators M. Brutus and Cassius – this is viewed as a poor political decision by many.

Horace also suggests that another reason for Caesar’s assassination was due to “the rumour that Caesar would make Ilium or Alexandria his capital” due to his relationship with Cleopatra. The conspirators justified the assassination as an extinguishment of tyrannicide – “tyrannicide became a duty in the interests of the Republic.”

**Manner**

- Caesar was assassinated on 15th March 44BC. Cicero states the conspiracy was planned with the “courage of men but the understanding of boys”.
- The Curia was being rebuilt after a fire and the senators met at Pompey’s theatre where Caesar was to announce his plans to go on campaign to Parthia.
- Sixty leading Romans approached Caesar in the theatre, on the pretext of presenting him a petition. Tillius Cimber “caught his toga by the shoulder” (Suetonius). Plutarch describes “he was beset on every side by drawn daggers” receiving 23 stab wounds.
- Toni Hurley states, “One of the blows though to be fatal was delivered by Marcus Brutus.”
- David Taylor states “the assassins saw themselves as liberators” who “refused to see the Republic they loved destroyed by one man” though many of them had been shown clemency by Caesar.

**Impact of his Death**

- Public reaction was at first muted by the murderers’ defence: the rights of ‘tyrannicide’, the killing of tyrants.
- Caesar’s will named Octavian his grandnephew his heir; each Roman citizen was left 300 sesterces; and his gardens were to be made a public park.
- Antony unleashed a violent public reaction by delivering a eulogy over Caesar’s blood-stained body.
- Antony took control of the city. He restored order, arranged a compromise with the assassins and began to ratify Caesar’s legislation. He abolished the office of dictator, to the approval of the Senate and of Cicero, who said that the position had come to “usurp virtually monarchical powers”. – Plutarch.
- The Senate assigned Antony a proconsular province, however, the arrival of Octavian disturbed these arrangements. Octavian publicly challenged Antony for not avenging Caesar’s murder, and demanded his share of Caesar’s estate. Antony refused.
- The first major impact was “the return of civil war for nearly fifteen years” (Christian Meier).
- “Caesar’s death condemned Rome to another 13 years of bitter Civil War” (Plutarch). All the conflict between Octavian and Antony stems from Caesar’s death.
Caesar’s death is also the major catalyst for the inception of the Roman Empire under the despotic rule of Augustus Caesar. Augustus’s rule allowed Rome “an unprecedented time of peace” (David Taylor).

4) Evaluation

4.1) Impact and Influence on his Time

Impact and Influence

- “The career of Julius Caesar was the turning point for Rome” – Hennessey.
- Caesar was extremely successful and his career had an enormous impact on his time – he was awarded more honours than any previous Roman leader and was deified after dead.
- Hurley states, “He is often described as a genius”. He attained the highest office in the state, using both conventional and unconventional methods. He was an outstanding politician and advocate as well as a skilled orator and writer.
- Until his consulship in 59, Caesar's political career followed the cursus honorum. He was a committed popularis and did not veer from his position during his career. As a politician, he evaded the senate, passed reforms through the assembly and revealed weaknesses in the constitution.
- Caesar was unconventional and often acted illegally (using force and bribery) though his legislations were conservative and weren’t original.
- David Taylor states “He showed himself to be a practical politician with an eye for social needs”. The settlements, franchise, public works, calendar amendments he introduced benefited the people of Rome.
- Caesar’s legislation improved unemployment and provided for the poor, 80000 families moved to 20 new colonies reducing overcrowding. Pamela Bradley sees his colonisations (in Spain, Gaul and Africa) and extension of Roman citizenship to be his “most important initiative”.
- He led by example and proved himself courageous in the field: the soldiers “were loyal to him because they trusted and respected him” (Kamm), and “he had the ability to secure and retain the affection of his men and get the best from them” (Bradley). His tactical and strategic skill is exemplified in his extreme success in Gaul.
- Caesar’s military ability impacted his time by providing new lands and wealth as well as by plunging Rome into civil war for the sake of his person.

4.2) Assessment of his life and career

Assessment

- As a reformer
  - Legislations were sometimes conservative and weren’t original.
  - Settlements, franchise, public works, calendar amendments had all been tried before.
  - His laws were better put in place and were more effective than other but they were old ideas, however successful they may have been.
- As a Politician
- Short term laws: Public works only provide temporary employment.
- Settlements are only temporary solution unemployment and overcrowding still occurs.
- No way of enforcing the free men labour work law.
- None of his laws were long term or provided permanent solutions, if they were he had no measure put in place to check that they were being followed.
- He was unconstitutional; he offended many politicians and did as he pleased when he pleased.
- He used force and bribery to get what and where he wanted.

○ As a Statesman
- Caesar was most concerned with his own life rather than the whole of Rome.
- He showed disregard for Rome’s constitution.
- He destroyed political competition within Rome, this meant that there was nothing to achieve and people wouldn’t work as hard for him, or they would become jealous.
- The wars that gave Caesar the most glory were provoked by Caesar himself, they were not necessary.
- He was loved by the people but hated by the politicians, as can be seen by his death.
- Over 60 conspired to kill him but the whole state went into mourning after his death
- He used any means possible to pass laws, even if it was highly illegal.

○ As a General and Leader
- Napoleon and Hitler are said to have been jealous of Caesars outstanding military ability.
- He was swift, cunning and very obviously had a brilliant military mind. His attacks were well thought out.
- He led from the front line, encouraging his troops.
- His troops were loyal, he rewarded them well and treated them like friends.

4.3) Legacy
○ Caesar had been a brilliant orator.
○ Amazing military ability, speed and mind.
○ Provoked civil war, 13 years of civil war were to follow, Octavian was eventually successful against Brutus and Mark Antony.
○ The republic was never to return to the way it was and became an empire.
○ The people went into a period of mourning and the senate was afraid they would riot.
○ At Caesars funeral his blood stained toga was shown to the people and they became devastated.
○ His will surprised everyone as he named Octavian as his main heir.

4.4) Ancient and Modern Images and Interpretations of Julius Caesar

Ancient

Caesar:
○ Gallic Wars,
○ Civil Wars,
○ Positive in relation to himself,
○ “They would have it so”
○ “Prestige had always been of prime importance to me, even outweighing life itself.”
Plutarch: wrote a chapter on Caesar.
  o Life of Caesar: ‘But what made Caesar most openly and mortally hated was his passion to be made king.’
  o ‘This was Caesar’s last war. The triumph he held for it displeased the Romans more than anything else he had done’

Suetonius: writes the ‘gossip’ on Caesar.
  o ‘…not only did he accept excessive honours but took others which as a mere mortal he should have refused.’
  o ‘Caesar governed alone and did as he pleased.’

Cicero: Doesn’t like Caesar but praises his literary and oratory skills.
  o “[that the formation of the first triumvirate is] disgraceful and uniformly odious to all sorts and classes and ages of men…”

Modern

Grant: questions whether aiming for kingship.
  o Caesar: ‘… in all respects he is one of the most striking figures of the ancient world. He was an accomplished orator and a master of prose style’

Scullard: questions whether he understood and knew that his actions would bring about the end of the republic.
  o From Gracchi to Nero: ‘… [The assassins] regarded him as a tyrant and tyrannicide [assassination] became a duty in the interests of the republic…’

Gelzer: doesn’t like Caesar, sees him as a dictator (he lived under Hitler’s dictatorship).

Cary:
  o A History of Rome: ‘…while the unanimous verdict of antiquity proclaimed Caesar a great man, not a few saw in him a “great bad man” and regarded him mainly as a destroyer.’

  o (Muccini), Caesar: ‘Caesar to the people was now a god. Everywhere statues to him were erected. Temples were called after him. The name July still records his fame.’

  o (Cowell): ‘Caesars unconcealed intention to retain absolute authority antagonized everybody of any importance’

  o (March), A history of Rome: ‘To say that Caesar overthrew the Republic is a superficial view for the army had dominated Rome for many years before he came on the scene’
5) One Particular Source (Plutarch, *Life of Caesar*) for Julius Caesar

5.1) The Value and Limitations of the Source

- Plutarch lived roughly 100 years after Caesar’s death. He was a Greek biographer who wrote a series of parallel lives of famous Greeks and Romans and followed the usual ancient biographical format.
- He linked Caesar and Alexander the Great together, although the comparisons are somewhat contrived. He shows how Caesar’s career, like Alexander’s, “rendered him vulnerable to the temptations that beset the holders of supreme power.”
- He used a wide range of sources, although not all are equally reliable.
- Plutarch preferred to attribute Caesar’s various actions solely to his character, to focus on a particular quality (excessive ambition or passion for glory) and then to make moral judgements about him. This approach led him to misinterpret much about Caesar.
- Plutarch’s writings are helpful for details of Caesar’s personal life, and some aspects of his personality.
- However, information about Caesar’s place in terms of major political events of his day, is not reliably written in Plutarch’s work.

5.2) An Evaluation of the Source in the Context of Other Available Sources, Including Problems of Evidence

**Plutarch and Suetonius**

- Wrote in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD.
- Were major sources for the period but the picture they present of Caesar must be treated with caution.

**Plutarch**

- Plutarch accepted uncritically the Roman aristocratic tradition and neglected the changing power base of the 60s and 50s.
- Led to assume that Caesar believed he was born for monarchical rule and had believed from the very beginning to overthrow the republic and seize absolute power
- This is ‘the most insidious feature of the work’ and has been accepted by other writers at various times

**Suetonius**

- Suetonius reported everything like a series of anecdotes.
- Included material both for and against Caesar.
- Rarely made any personal judgement.
- His own opinions are rarely permitted to intrude.
- Makes little effort to make a decision about Caesar.

**The Middle Ages**

- Some writers in the Middle Ages used Caesar in their works.
- Example: Geoffrey of Monmouth in the 12th century wrote a legendary account of Caesar’s invasion of Britain in his *Histora Regum Britanniae*.
- Caesar also appears in Dante Alighieri’s *The Divine Comedy* in the section on Limbo.
In the 14th century work of Jacques de Longuyon, *Vouex Du Paom*, Caesar is included among those who in the Middle Ages were regarded as the nine ‘Worthies’. Also known as those who personified the ideas of chivalry.

Caesar’s civil war and assassination were recounted in Geoffrey Chaucer’s ‘Monk’s Tale’ in his *Canterbury Tales*.

**Shakespeare**

His play *Julius Caesar* was apparently written at a time when Elizabethan England was concerned over the succession. Their elderly queen had refused to name a successor and the people were anxious that civil war, like that in Rome, might break out in England.

Shakespeare was not writing history but a play about historical personages to entertain the public. More specifically about the assassination of Caesar and the dilemma of Brutus.

He depicts Caesar as popular with the common people, but aiming to become king; threatening to conspirators’ cherished Roman republic. Shakespeare failed to understand the sense of personal dignitas of Roman nobles. Tried to address the question of Caesar’s ambition in Mark Antony’s famous funeral speech, giving examples of Caesar’s qualities that did not indicate ambition.

**The 18th – 19th Centuries**

Around the same time that James Boswell, Scottish diarist and author, called Caesar the greatest man of any age, Handel produced his opera, *Giulio Cesare*.

Italian artist Vincenzo Camuccini painted his *Assassination of Caesar*.

One of the many paintings produced depicting his murder

**Modern scholarly views of Caesar**

Views of many 19th and 20th century scholars reflect their own political and social context.

**19th Century**

German historian Theodor Mommsen produced his famous *History of Rome* in three volumes in the mid-1850s.

He is believed to have compared what was happening in Rome at the time of Caesar with the situation in Germany when he was writing.

To him, the populares were a group rather like the German Progressive Party. The optimates resembled the Prussian Junkers.

Praised Caesar as the saviour of a decaying corrupt state.

Saw Caesar as a ‘heroic legislator’ who laid the foundations of an empire that served the needs of all, writing “We may well conclude that Caesar with his reforms came as near to the measure of what was possible as it was given to a statesman and a Roman to come.”

**20th Century**

During the first half of the 20th century, after enduring leaders such as Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini, the views of Caesar changed.
J.P.V.D. Balsdon, English ancient historian, in his work *Julius Caesar and Rome*, maintains that the leaders of the conspiracy against Caesar were idealists who resented the arrogance of Caesar and knew that while ever he was alive, his autocracy would take a more stifling grip on Rome.

1968 German scholar, Mathias Gelzer, published *Caesar: Politician and Statesman.*
- “His demonic genius raised him in every respect above all his contemporaries – through his spiritual and physical vigour, through the faster tempo of his life, through his free-ranging gaze which, unfettered by traditional concepts, everywhere discovered new possibilities, and through the masterful way in which he overcame difficulties and realised the most daring plans…”

In 1970s Michael Grant presented a more balanced evaluation of Caesar in his work *Julius Caesar.*
- “He was an astute politician, a masterly propagandist and showman, a clever and effective administrator, an exceptionally gifted writer, a man of great and wide learning and taste, and a military genius who moved with terrifying speed and exercised a magnetic authority over his troops.”

1990s another German historian, Christian Meir, published a biography of Caesar in which – unlike many previous scholars – he attempted to show him within the context of the late Roman republic, the limitations imposed on him and the social and political forces that shaped him.
- Believes that Caesar’s unique drive, self-confidence and detachment were bound to bring him into conflict with established institutions

**Popular Culture**

- Caesar has been depicted in modern pop culture in theatre, film, documentaries and TV mini-series to comics and video games.
- The range of actors who have played Caesar on film from 1911 to 2005 is extensive and each interpretation is different.
- In 2006, a book by Professor Maria Wyke was published titled *Julius Caesar in Western Culture*.
  - Explores the significance of Caesar to different periods, societies and people.
  - Ranges over the fields of religious, military and political history, archaeology, architecture and urban planning, the visual arts and literary, film, theatre and cultural studies.