Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare
~ Questions on the Play and Essay Topics ~
Complete your answers neatly on a separate sheet of paper. Explain fully your responses to each.

Act 1 Scene 1
1. Describe the setting of the play. Setting is background, time, place, circumstances & scenery.
2. What might Flavius be referring to when he asks, “…the sign of your profession?” (Lines 4 & 5)
3. Explain the puns “cobbler, soles, mend, and awl” as they are used in the scene. A pun is a play on words with similar pronunciations but different meanings.
4. How does this breaking-up-the-party mood in Scene One foreshadow the feelings of the people towards Caesar?
5. What does this scene reveal about loyalties among Roman citizens towards their leaders?

Act 1 Scene 2
1. Throughout the scene, Caesar speaks several times. Look over his lines carefully and tell what is revealed about Caesar’s attitudes and beliefs through his own words? What is your impression of Caesar?
2. As the conversation between Brutus and Cassius begins, Brutus is troubled by something, but doesn’t say what. How do lines 85 through 89 change Cassius’ tone?
3. Patrick Henry is famous for a 1778 speech in which he demanded, “Give me liberty or give me death.” Brutus’ words in lines 95 through 96 have a similar message. What is it?
4. In lines 97 through 138, Cassius claims that Caesar is weak and not fit to be a king. Do you agree? Is political strength based on physical strength?
5. What clever techniques and words does Cassius use that show his persuasiveness as he recruits Brutus?

Act 1 Scene 3
1. Why would the conspirators think that the prodigies might give away their assassination plans?
2. In lines 60 through 80, what is Cassius interpreting the prodigies to mean?
3. How is Cassius using forged letters to help the conspiracy?
4. What do the conspirators think Brutus will do for them if he joins? (Lines 162 through 167)
5. Go over Cassius’ lines in this scene. How would you describe his attitude and mood?

Act 2 Scene 1
1. What does Brutus think will happen if Caesar is crowned? (Lines 10 through 36)
2. If we were to take lines 64 through 65 literally, how long has it been since Brutus slept?
3. As the conspirators meet and discuss their plans, how is Brutus different than the others? What do you think they might decide if he were not there? (Lines 124 through 203)
4. What is meant by the “voluntary wound” Portia speaks of on line 323? What does this reveal about Portia’s character?
5. Describe the relationship of Brutus and Portia based on their conversation in this scene.

Act 2 Scene 2
1. Caesar refers to himself as “Caesar.” He does not use “I” or “me.” Why? What does this reveal about him?
2. The warnings so far are many: soothsayers’ “Beware the Ides of March,” Caesar’s suspicion of Cassius, the prodigies, the meteor shower, Calpurnia’s dream, and Augurs’ reports. What more does this tell us about Caesar?
3. How is Calpurnia treated in this scene by both Caesar and Decius? Give specific quotes to support your answer.
4. How do we know that Caesar trusts Decius, based on the conversation they have in this scene?
5. How does Caesar feel about death? (Lines 34 through 39)

(Scenes 3 & 4 on next page are also due Aug. 26)
Act 2 Scene 3
1. Why is Scene 3 included in the play? Why is it important?
2. Caesar is assassinated in Act 3. Therefore, what does this scene further tell us of Caesar's attitude, beliefs, and personality?
3. Speculate as to how and when Artemidorus obtained his information?

Act 2 Scene 4
1. What clues do we have that Portia is nervous?
2. Speculate as to how and when Portia obtained her information about the conspiracy?
3. What does Portia think of the conspiracy, and how does she feel about her husband’s part in it?

Act 3 Scene 1
1. Why do all the conspirators stab Caesar?
2. As he is being killed, Caesar says, "Et tu, Brute? - Then fall Caesar!" What could be going through his mind at that point? What might Brutus be thinking at the same time?
3. Explain Antony's actions and words after the assassination.

Act 3 Scene 2
1. Tell about Brutus' speech - the purpose, his tone, his effectiveness, etc. Do you think it is a good speech?
2. Analyze Antony's speech for purpose, tone, methods, effectiveness, etc. Is it a good speech?
3. What image does Shakespeare present of the citizens of Rome in this scene? Explain and provide examples.

Act 3 Scene 3
1. In what ways is Cinna's scene a horror scene?
2. In what ways is the scene a comedy?
3. What is your feeling of the scene?

Act 4 Scene 1
1. What is Antony's main motive at the end of Scene 1? How do we know?
2. How could this scene change your image of Antony?
3. What impressions do you get of Octavius and Lepidus in this scene? Why?

Act 4 Scene 2 and Scene 3
1. What might have happened if Cassius and Brutus remained outside to argue?
2. Describe the manner in which Cassius and Brutus speak to each other in this scene.
3. What is the argument all about? Who "wins?"
4. Has Brutus seen a ghost? How can you explain the incident?

Act 5 Scene 1 and Scene 2
1. What have been the military strategies of both sides up to this point? (You may have to look back to previous scenes - Act 4 Scene 1 & Act 4 Scene 3)
2. At this point in the play, who do you hope will win? Why?
3. Before the battle begins, the four generals exchange insults. In your opinion, who wins that battle of insults?

Act 5 Scene 3
1. Was it necessary for Cassius to kill himself? Why did he do it?
2. Brutus mourns Cassius and says he owes more tears than he can pay. Considering what they have been through, do you think Brutus is right?
3. Does Cassius' death mark the end of the Conspiracy? Why or why not?
Act 5 Scene 4 and Scene 5 due September 16
1. Why did Lucilius pose as Brutus? What does this tell us about him?
2. What might be Brutus' alternatives to suicide?
3. Analyze Antony's final speech over Brutus' body. Is he sincere?

Extra Credit: Research “Lupercal.” Report your findings in a paragraph or so. Turn this in before September 24.

Julius Caesar Essay Topics Essay due September 18
Choose from the following topics.
Provide line number, scene and act of any quotes you use in your essay.
This is a formal essay. Be sure to include the title of the play and the playwright in your introduction: Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare. Your essay should be organized in five-paragraph format.

1. Sacrifice: Men and women throughout history have sacrificed their own lives. Many who did not were willing and prepared to die for what they believed. In a well-organized essay, analyze the deaths in the play. Analyze the philosophy and reasons behind these deaths and suicides.

2. Women: Calpurnia and Portia are the only two female characters in the play. In a well-organized essay, compare the women, analyze their roles and reveal what they contribute to the play. How are these women important in the story?

3. The Supernatural: In a well-organized essay, analyze the role the supernatural has in the play. Why did Shakespeare include supernatural elements, how do these affect the play, and what is revealed about the characters through the use of the supernatural? What does it teach modern readers about the time period of the play and about human nature?

4. Friendship: Are Caesar and Antony really true friends? Cassius and Brutus? How is friendship defined through the characters in the play? Which of Shakespeare’s characters can truly be called friends? Analyze the friendships in the play.

5. Today’s World: What similarities or connections can you find between the world of Julius Caesar and our world today? How are war, politics, corruption, citizens, assassinations, opinions, communication, government and society the same? Has society evolved and changed in two-thousand years? What lessons about human nature can be revealed through your analysis?

6. Brutus & Antony: Compare and/or contrast the characters of Brutus and Antony from the play. Point out similarities and/or differences in the two men. Consider all aspects of Brutus and Antony including their positions in society, ways of life, professions, attitudes, behavior, words, relationships and how they are seen by others.