

## Julius Caesar

### A LEADER FOR DANGEROUS TIMES

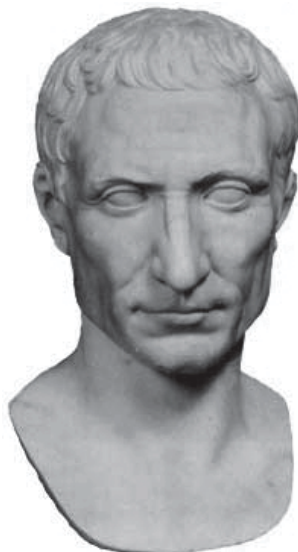
**Directions.** Read to learn how Julius Caesar came to power in Rome. After reading, answer the question below and then reread to find support for your answers.

Julius Caesar was a military hero. He successfully led a Roman army for 9 years in Gaul (France). He was generous to his soldiers. He took care of them during the many years of war. His soldiers were very loyal to Caesar. They knew he kept them alive and they trusted him completely.

Caesar knew of the troubles taking place in the Republic. In Rome, Senators fought one another for power. Military generals used their armies to back one Senator over another, trying to gain control of the government. Many were only concerned with getting rich and powerful. During this time of conflict, Caesar continued to impress the people with his military victories. This worried Pompey, a general in Rome, and the Senate. They didn't want anyone, especially a general, to be so powerful. They didn't want the people of Rome to ask Caesar to lead them. The Senate declared Caesar an enemy of Rome and ordered him to return to Rome without his troops. The Senate knew Caesar would be powerless without his troops.

Caesar knew he had a dilemma. If he returned to Rome without his army, he was risking his life. However, if he returned to Rome with his army, he would be breaking a law that forbade troops from crossing the Rubicon River. This river divided Italy and Gaul. Caesar decided it was time to act for the good of Rome. He ordered his troops to cross the Rubicon. In that moment, Caesar became a traitor

worthy of death according to Roman law. There was no turning back.



Caesar's army fought Pompey's army for three years. Caesar finally won and took control of the Roman government in 49 BCE. Caesar declared himself dictator for life. A dictator is someone with absolute power in an authoritarian government. In the past the Republic had allowed dictators during emergencies, but they stepped down from power when the crisis was over. Although the Senate still existed, it was filled with Caesar's supporters and had no real power. Many people say that when Caesar became dictator for life, he ended the Roman Republic. Caesar believed that a democratic form of government was not powerful enough to manage all the lands under Rome's control. He believed that what he did was necessary for the good of the Roman people.

During Caesar's brief rule, he accomplished many things, including bringing stability back to Rome. He lowered taxes, making life easier for the poor. He began new colonies, or settlements, in which people could live. He gave people land to farm in the colonies. Caesar gave work to other people to build temples and public buildings. He extended citizenship to more people conquered by the Romans. Caesar also allowed all Romans to enjoy his private gardens. The people of Rome were as loyal to Caesar as his army had been. They knew he was working for their common good.

### *What do you think?*

- Do you think Caesar did the right thing by taking control of the Roman government?
  - Underline the phrases or words that support your view.

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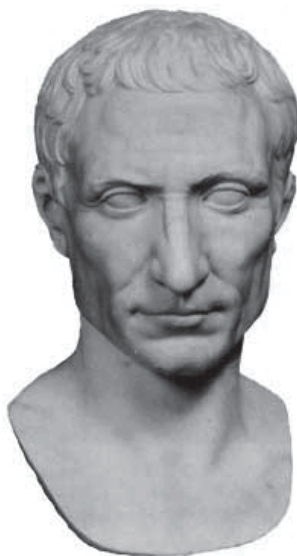
### A LEADER FOR DANGEROUS TIMES

**Directions.** Read to learn how Julius Caesar came to power in Rome. After reading, answer the question below and then reread to find support for your answers.

Julius Caesar was a dangerous and powerful military leader. He became a military general for one reason, to gain power. Caesar knew that he could never rule Rome without the support and loyalty of an army. So he became a general and led a Roman army for nine years. Caesar conquered much of Gaul (France). He grew richer and richer as he conquered more and more people and lands. When a Roman army conquered land, all of the riches of the land belonged to the general of the army. Caesar gained the trust and loyalty of his army by giving away some of the riches he gained.

In Rome, the Senate was worried about Caesar's increasing popularity and power. The more land he conquered, the wealthier and more powerful he became. Caesar was clearly a threat to democracy in Rome. The Senators decided to stop Caesar before he tried to take over the government. The Senate declared Caesar an enemy of Rome and ordered him to return to Rome without his troops. The Senate knew that Caesar would be powerless without his troops.

Caesar knew his time had come to take over the Roman government. He knew that if he returned to Rome with his army, he would be breaking a law that forbade troops from crossing the Rubicon River. This river divided Italy and Gaul. Caesar decided it was time to act. He ordered his troops to cross the



Rubicon. In that moment, Caesar started his quest for total power and control of Rome. There was no turning back.

Caesar's army fought the Senate's army for three years. Caesar finally won and took control of the Roman government in 49 BCE. Caesar declared himself dictator for life. A dictator is someone with absolute power in an authoritarian government. In the past the Republic had allowed dictators during emergencies, but they stepped down from power when the crisis was over. Caesar, however, didn't want to step down. Although the Senate still existed, it was now filled with Caesar's supporters and had no real power. When Caesar became dictator for life, he ended the democracy of the Roman Republic. Rome had been a democracy for over 400 years.

During Caesar's brief rule, he did many things to get the people to like him. He knew he would need their support if he hoped to continue ruling Rome as a dictator. Caesar lowered taxes, built new temples, and gave land to people. He also gave citizenship to more people, knowing they would be grateful and continue to support his rule. Although Caesar ended many years of civil war in Rome, he also ended democracy.

### *What do you think?*

- Do you think Caesar did the right thing by taking control of the Roman government?
  - Underline the phrases or words that support your view.