

## MARC ANTONY'S FUNERAL ORATION OF JULIUS CAESAR

ITEMS 1-6 are questions based on the following passage: a report of the Funeral Oration of Marc Antony over the Assassinated body of Julius Caesar.

1. What mood does the Historian Appian present at the start Julius Caesar's Funeral?
  - A. One of celebration for the life of a great leader
  - B. One of agitation as citizens move from sorrow to blame
  - C. One of hope for the restoration of the Republic
  - D. One of despair and hopelessness
  
2. How does Marc Antony compare Julius Caesar to Plato's ideal ruler?
  - A. Antony says that he was a true philosopher, like Marcus Aurelius
  - B. Antony calls him a god, Like Alexander
  - C. Antony calls him a conquering hero, like Achilles
  - D. Antony says Caesar was a reluctant ruler, not ceasing power like a tyrant
  
3. What oath does Marc Antony say they had all violated that left them cursed?
  - A. They conspired to harm what they swore to protect
  - B. They waged civil war against each other
  - C. They sought to place Marc Antony in charge of the senate
  - D. They took an oath to defend the Republic
  
4. Appian claims that Marc Antony said they were poised on the edge of a knife. To what did this metaphor refer?
  - A. The balance between the power of Octavian and Marc Antony
  - B. The danger of returning to a Republic
  - C. The present and the past; moving peacefully forward or falling back to war
  - D. The Peace of Rome, or Pax Romana
  
5. Appian also reports that Julius Caesar's dead body spoke during the commotion of the funeral. Of what did it speak?
  - A. Passing on the dictatorship to his friend Marc Antony
  - B. It listed the names of the Senators whom he had helped
  - C. Caesar mused at the irony of how he had saved those who killed him
  - D. It prophesied the destruction of Rome
  - E. A & B
  - F. B & C
  - G. All of the Above
  
6. What did Marc Antony's Oration inspire?
  - A. A riot that burned down the senate
  - B. A hunt for Caesar's murderers
  - C. The assassination of Brutus
  - E. A & B
  - F. B & C
  - G. All of the Above

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## Marc Antony's funeral oration

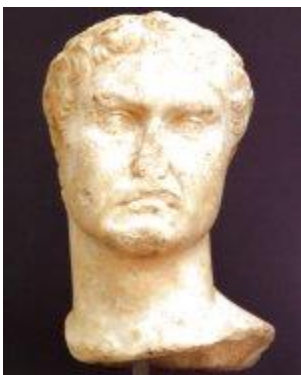


*Julius Caesar was murdered on March 15, 44 BCE and the funeral ceremony took place a few days later. The body was exposed and Marc Antony, as consul Caesar's colleague, was to deliver a funeral oration. It is not known what he said, but the result was that the Roman masses became very angry with Caesar's murderers, burnt down their houses and made them flee from the city.*

*The Greek historian Appian of Alexandria (c.95-c.165) has included several speeches in his History of the Civil wars, all of them being own compositions (2.101). However, the speech of Antony is not a composition, but a report of what was said. It is very likely that Appian's account is an accurate rendering of the words that were spoken during Caesar's burial.*

*The translation was made by John Carter, and edited by Matthew R. Holm for the classroom.*

When [Caesar's father-in-law] Piso brought Caesar's body into the Forum, a huge number of armed men gathered to guard it. It was laid with lavish ceremony and cries of mourning on the rostra [1], whereupon wailing and lamentation arose again for a long time, and the armed men clashed their weapons, and very soon people began to change their minds about the amnesty of the Senate [2]. Then Marc Antony, seeing their state of mind, did not give up hope. He had been chosen to deliver the funeral oration as a consul for a consul, a friend for a friend, and a kinsman for a kinsman (being related to Caesar through his mother), and so he again pursued his tactic and spoke as follows.



Marc Antony (Museum of fine art, Budapest; @!!!)

'It is not right, my fellow-citizens, for the funeral oration in praise of so great a man to be delivered by me, a single individual, instead of by his whole country. The honors that all of you alike, first Senate and then People, decreed for him in admiration of his qualities when he was still alive, these I shall read aloud and regard my voice as being not mine, but yours.'

He then read them out with a proud and thunderous expression on his face, emphasizing each with his voice and stressing particularly the terms with which they had sanctified him, calling him 'holy', 'incorruptible', 'father of his country', 'benefactor', or 'leader', as they had done in no other case. As he came to each of these Antony turned and made a gesture with his hand towards the body of Caesar, comparing the deed with the word.

He also made a few brief comments on each, with a mixture of pity and indignation. Where the decree said 'Father of his country', he commented 'This is a proof of his mercy', and where it said 'holy and incorruptible' and 'Whoever shall take refuge with him shall also be unharmed', he said 'The victim is not some other person seeking refuge with him, but the holy and incorruptible Caesar himself, who did not snatch these honors by force like a tyrant, indeed did not even ask for them. Evidently we are the most unfree of people because we give

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such things unasked to those who do not deserve them. But you, my loyal citizens, by showing him such honor at this moment, although he is no more, are defending us against the accusation of having lost our freedom.'

And again he read out the oaths, by which they all undertook to protect Caesar and Caesar's person with all their might, and if anyone should conspire against him, those who failed to defend him were to be accursed. At this point he raised his voice very loud, stretched his hand out towards the Capitol, and said in reference to the Amnesty, 'O Jupiter, god of our ancestors, and ye other gods, for my own part I am prepared to defend Caesar according to my oath and the terms of the curse I called down on myself, but since it is the view of my equals that what we have decided will be for the best, I pray that it is for the best.'

Noises of protest came from the Senate at this remark, which was very plainly directed at them. Antony calmed them down, saying by way of admission of guilt, 'It seems, fellow-citizens, that what has happened is the work not of any man, but of some spirit. We must attend to the present instead of the past, because our future, and indeed our present, is poised on a knife-edge above great dangers and we risk being dragged back into our previous state of civil war, with the complete extinction of our city's remaining noble families. Let us then conduct this holy person to join the blessed, and sing over him the customary funeral hymns,' or dirges.

So saying he hitched up his clothing like a man possessed, and girded himself so that he could easily use his hands. He then stood close to the platform as though he were on stage, bending over it and straightening up again, and first of all chanted praise to Caesar as a heavenly deity or god, raising his hands in witness of Caesar's divine birth and at the same tune rapidly reciting his campaigns and battles and victories, and the peoples he had brought under his country's rule, and the spoils he had sent home. He presented each as a marvel and constantly cried 'This man alone emerged victorious over all those who did battle with him.'

'And you, Caesar', he said, 'were also the only man to avenge the violence offered to your country 300 years ago [3], by bringing to their knees the savage peoples who were the only ones ever to break in to Rome and set fire to it.'

In this inspired frenzy he said much else, altering his voice from clarion-clear to dirge-like, wailing, grieving for Caesar as for a friend who had suffered injustice, weeping, and vowing that he desired to give his life for Caesar's. Then, swept very easily on to passionate emotion, he stripped the clothes from Caesar's body, raised them on a pole and waved them about, rent as they were by the stabs and befouled with the dictator's blood. At this the people, like a chorus, joined him in the most sorrowful lamentation. After this expression of emotion they were again filled with anger.

After the speech, other dirges accompanied by singing were chanted over the dead by choirs in the customary Roman manner, and they again recited his achievements and his fate. Somewhere in the lament Caesar himself was supposed to mention by name those of his enemies he had helped, and referring to his murderers said as if in wonder, 'To think that I actually saved the lives of these men who were to kill me.' [4]

Then the people could stand it no longer. They considered it monstrous that all

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the murderers, who with the sole exception of Decimus [Junius Brutus] had been taken prisoner as partisans of Pompey, had formed the conspiracy when instead of being punished they had been promoted to magistracies, provincial governorships, and military commands, and that Decimus had even been thought worthy of adoption as Caesar's son.

When the crowd were in this state, and near to violence, someone raised above the platform a wax effigy, or likeness, of Caesar - the body itself, lying on its back on the bier, not being visible. The effigy was turned in every direction, by a mechanical device, and twenty-three wounds could be seen, savagely inflicted on every part of the body and on the face. This sight seemed so pitiful to the people that they could bear it no longer. Howling and lamenting, they surrounded the senate-house, where Caesar had been killed [5], and burnt it down, and hurried about hunting for the murderers, who had slipped away some time previously.

### Notes

[1]

The speaker's platform on the Comitium, where the people could meet.

[2]

On March 17, Marc Antony had dictated the murderers a compromise: they were to receive amnesty while Caesar's acts were to be respected, and he would be worshipped as a god. This was a very clever move: the murderers accepted the deal, which meant that they were implicitly admitting that there had been no reason to kill the dictator.



Caesar as dictator (©!!)

[3]

In 387/386 BCE, a Gallic tribe had attacked Rome.

[4]

A quote from the *Contest of arms* by the playwright Pacuvius.

[5]

Appian confuses two buildings and two incidents. The building where Caesar had been killed, was the Hall of Pompey on the Field of Mars, where the Senate met now that the real Senate building on the Forum had been destroyed. This destruction had taken place in 52 BCE, when it had been set afire by an angry mob.