Julius Caesar Summary Class 10th

Lesson at a Glance

- Caesar’s wife Calpurnia sees a bad dream and asks Caesar not to go to the Capitol.
- Most unnatural and horrid sights were seen by the watchman.
- A lioness gave birth in the streets. The sky rained blood on the Capitol. Graves opened and dead bodies came out of the graves.
- Fiery warriors fought on the clouds and ghosts wandered and shrieked.
- Calpurnia says that these ill-omens signal death and disaster.
- Caesar is adamant on going out but relents and stays at home when Calpurnia begs on her knees.
- Decius Brutus comes to take Caesar to the senate-house where the conspirators are in ambush to murder Caesar.
- Caesar describes that Calpurnia saw in her dream blood rushing out of his statue through a hundred spouts.
- Lusty Romans were bathing their hands in Caesar's blood.
- Decius deliberately gives a flattering interpretation to Calpurnia’s dream. He tells that her dream was fair and fortunate.
- Caesar’s blood will bring a new life and vitality to Rome. Important people will preserve Caesar’s belongings as holy relics and memorials.
- Metellus Cimber prays Caesar to revoke the order of his brother’s exile.
- Caesar remains firm and chides Cimber for his ‘low courtesies’.
- Caesar is surrounded by the conspirators. Casca is the first to strike and then follow the others.
- The conspirators cry. “Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is Dead!”
- Mark Antony makes peace with the conspirators but wants to be satisfied with the reasons of Caesar’s death.
- Brutus assures Antony of his personal safety. He allows Antony to speak at Caesar’s funeral after him. But he is not to speak against the conspirators.
- Brutus tries to justify to the Roman mob the murder of Caesar. He killed Caesar not because he loved him less. He killed him because he loved Rome more than Caesar.
- Brutus says that Caesar was killed because he was ambitious.
- If his growing power was not checked, all the Romans would become bondmen and slaves.

Chapter Summary

Julius Caesar
A very influential and powerful section of the senators are jealous of the rising power and glory of Julius Caesar. Cassius, a master schemer, hatches a conspiracy to eliminate Caesar. He is backed by several others like Casca and Cimber. To give legitimacy to their dark designs, they finally rope in Brutus. Brutus is the most trusted and respected man in Rome. Brutus, the idealist, joins the conspiracy feeling that Caesar’s murder is necessary for the freedom of Rome and republicanism. Ironically, Caesar is murdered at the foot of his rival Pompey’s statue. Antony, a trusted friend and confidant of Caesar, is a master manipulator and a matchless orator. He arouses the basic passions of the Roman mob. He is able to create sympathy for Caesar and directs the anger and hatred of the mob against the conspirators.

[NOTE: Shakespeare’s famous play, ‘Julius Caesar’ is in five acts. The extracts given in this abridged version cover only the important incidents happening just before Caesar’s murder and ending with Antony’s funeral speech in which he turns the tide against the conspirators.

Calpurnia Cries Thrice in Sleep- It is quite a disturbing night. Neither heaven (sky) nor earth have been at peace. Calpurnia, Caesar’s wife cried out in sleep thrice : "Help, ho! they murder Caesar!" She requests Caesar not to go to the Capitol that day.

Most Unnatural and Horrid Sights- Calpurnia recounts horrid sights seen by the watchman. A lioness gives birth in the streets. Graves open. The dead bodies come out. Fiery warriors fight upon the clouds in the right form of war. The sky drizzles blood upon the Capitol. Horses neigh and dying men groan. Ghosts ‘Shriek and squeal’ about the streets. All such ill-omens and horrid sights are the most unnatural. They signify only deaths and disasters. These predictions can not be taken lightly.

Caesar Adamant on going- Caesar doesn’t give any importance to such omens. He says that things that threaten him will vanish when they see his face. And what is proposed by the mighty gods can’t be avoided. He is not a coward. The valiant never ‘taste of death but once.’ Moreover, these ill-omens and predictions are for the general and not, particularly, meant for Caesar alone. But when Calpurnia begs on her knees, Caesar relents. He decides to stay at home.

Caesar Narrates Calpurnia’s Dream to Decius Brutus- Decius Brutus, one of the conspirators, comes to take Caesar to the senate house. He has to make Caesar go to the Capitol at any cost. Brutus, Cassius and other conspirators are in ambush to murder Caesar there. Caesar tells Decius that he is staying at home that day. His wife Calpurnia saw a bad dream last night. She saw Caesar’s statue rushing out blood through many spouts. Lusty smiling Romans were bathing their hands in Caesar’s blood. She interprets that these ill omens may bring danger and death to her husband.

Decius Brutus Gives A Flattering Interpretation to Calpurnia’s Dream- Decius Brutus deliberately gives a flattering twist to Calpurnia’s dream. He declares that her dream is fair and auspicious. Caesar’s blood will give a new life, vigour and vitality to Rome. He will be worshipped as a hero, martyr and saint. Romans will compete to get his belongings. They will preserve them as holy relics, memorials and mementos. Then he injures Caesar’s inflated ego. He says that Caesar will make himself a stock of laughter among the senators, if he yields to his wife’s false fears. In the end, he throws a bait to feed his hidden ambition. He tells Caesar that the Senate has decided to offer him the crown. The Senators may change their decision if he doesn’t go to the Capitol. Caesar chides himself for yielding to his wife’s foolish fears. He gets ready to go to the Capitol.

Caesar is Murdered Metellus- Cimber falls on his knees and requests Caesar to revoke the order of his brother’s exile. Caesar gets furious. He chides Cimber for his ‘crouchings’ and ‘low courtesies’. If he doesn’t stop them, Caesar will spurn him like a dog out of his way. Cassius and Brutus plead for Cimber’s brother but are snubbed. Caesar compares himself to the Pole Star. He is always constant. Hence, he will not revoke his order at any cost. Casca is the first to strike. Then others stab Caesar. When Caesar sees Brutus stabbing him, he utters in disbelief : “Et tu, Brute!” Caesar dies. The conspirators cry “Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead!”
Marcus Brutus Justifies Caesar’s Murder; Antony Allowed to Address the Mob—Antony presents himself before the conspirators. He offers himself to be killed there and then with his friend and patron Caesar. Marcus Brutus assures him of his safety. Antony cleverly makes peace with the conspirators and buys time. Brutus grants him the permission to take Caesar’s body to the market place and speak at Caesar’s funeral. Cassius objects it but is overruled by the idealist Brutus. Antony is to speak after Brutus. He is not to utter a word against the conspirators. Brutus speaks first and tries to justify the murder of Caesar. He says that he has no personal grudge or enmity against Caesar. He doesn’t love Caesar less than anybody else. He murdered Caesar not because he loved Caesar less. He murdered Caesar because he loved Rome more than Caesar. Caesar was becoming too powerful and ambitious. His growing ambition was a threat to the freedom of Rome and republicanism. If he was not eliminated, all Romans would be reduced to bondmen and slaves. The mob is convinced. One of them even shouts. “Let him (Brutus) be Caesar.”

Antony’s Speech—A Master piece of Public Oratory—Mark Antony’s speech at Caesar’s funeral is a perfect masterpiece of public oratory. He is pained to see the greatest conqueror of his times reduced to that “bleeding piece of earth”. He calls the conspirators as “butchers”. He forecasts death and destruction in Rome. There will be riots and a civil war in Italy. Caesar’s spirit will wander for revenge. Antony asks the people to make a ring around Caesar’s dead body. He shows them the holes in Caesar’s cloak and wounds on his dead body. The “most unkindest cut” was made by the dagger of Caesar’s angel, Brutus. Then step by step, Antony tries to prove that Caesar was not at all ambitious. He tells them how Caesar refused the crown everytime when it was offered to him thrice. He could convince them that ‘honourable’ Brutus was actually, a liar and a murderer.

Antony Shows Caesar’s Will—The master orator, Mark Antony, keeps the mob spell-bound with his eloquence and dramatics. He very cleverly mentions that he has Caesar’s will with him but will not read it. If he reads it, the people will be incited. And he is under an oath not to speak against the conspirators. The mob is agitated. They shout that Antony should read the will. This is exactly what Antony wants. He tells that Caesar has left open, all his ‘walks, private parks and orchards for the common pleasures. He has made Romans as his ‘heirs’. He has left seventy five drachmas for every Roman.

Mob Incited and Agitated—Antony’s historical speech achieves its aim. He has been able to create sympathy for Caesar. The mob is convinced that Caesar was not ambitious. He was generous and caring. Brutus was a liar and a murderer. The mob is incited and agitated. They cry: ‘Most noble Caesar! We’ll revenge his death’. They run after the conspirators and get ready to burn their houses.