

Mr. Fisher
Sophomore Honors English/LA
Drama Unit
Julius Caesar Compare/Contrast Activity

What if Brutus Chose to Side with Caesar?

A Compare/Contrast Activity Using *Julius Caesar* and *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith*

Directions: Please read the following rationale and background information. Then, read and consider the thought questions in Section 1 before viewing the film. During the film, answer the questions in Section 2 on a separate sheet of paper. Finally, follow the directions for writing your compare/contrast essay in Section 3 after the film.

Rationale: Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* is an exploration into the nature of power, its ability to dictate a person's decisions and change the course of history. Student's have read Shakespeare's interpretation of the events that took place during the height of Rome's influence, and participated in activities that required them to read closely and make decisions for themselves about the actions of both the senators involved in the conspiracy against Caesar and Caesar, himself. This last activity, the viewing of *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith*, is designed to give students an alternate interpretation of Shakespeare's story and cause them to think critically about the consequences of the characters' decisions.

Background: Both *Julius Caesar* and *Revenge of the Sith* are, at their core, about love, betrayal and power. What if Brutus did speak with Caesar shortly before the Ides of March? What if he chose to support Caesar, rather than oppose him? In much the same way Shakespeare's play begins, George Lucas' story starts with a heroic victory by the Jedi, an ascetic group loyal to the Republic similar to the present-day Shaolin Monks of China. Anakin Skywalker and his master, Obi-Wan Kenobi, have just returned to Coruscant with the newly elected leader of the Republic, Chancellor Palpatine. They receive cheers from both the people and the Senate for their latest victory against the Separatists. The Republic is experiencing a civil war, which threatens to tear apart an intergalactic society that has existed for a thousand years. The true intentions of the Jedi, the Senate and Chancellor Palpatine are about to be revealed, and Anakin Skywalker must make an agonizing decision that will change the course of his life and the lives of all those living in the Republic, forever.

Section 1

Before the film, think about the following questions:

1. How did fear, love, revenge, jealousy and betrayal play a role in the outcome of *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*?
2. Since you know that we are viewing *Revenge of the Sith* because it has links to *Julius Caesar*, what do you anticipate will be the outcome of the story?
3. In both stories, it is important to try to understand what motivates each character, rather than labelling them or their actions as 'good' or 'evil.' Why do you think this is necessary?
4. How is it that, sometimes, others can see the outcomes of our decisions so clearly and far in-advance, but we are blind to them until it is too late?
5. Why do people let emotions drive their decisions when they know that logic is more likely to steer them down the correct path?

Section 2

During the film, complete the following activities on a separate sheet of paper:

- Create a table like the one below:

Character Comparison

<i>Julius Caesar</i> 1	<i>Revenge of the Sith</i> 2	Similarities 3	Differences 4
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During the film, find a complimentary character for each of the following ones in Shakespeare's original play: Julius Caesar, Brutus, Mark Antony, Cassius, Casca, Portia and the soothsayer. Identify the *Caesar* character in column 1, the complimentary *Revenge of the Sith* character in column 2, similarities in column 3 and differences in column 4. Don't rush! You may change your opinion several times throughout the film. What's important is that you can support your decision.

- Answer the following question
 1. What decision does Anakin make that is not 'the Jedi way' before freeing the Chancellor?
 2. Who does Obi-Wan say Anakin should enjoy his 'glorious day' with?
 3. Why is Anakin's appointment to the Jedi Council so unique?
 4. What is Anakin's dream about?
 5. Who are Anakin's mentors?
 6. Why is the story that Chancellor Palpatine tells Anakin significant?
 7. What is 'the prophecy' that Yoda, Mace Windu and Obi-Wan are discussing in the transport?
 8. In the film, Chancellor Palpatine says 'I am the Senate!' What line from *Julius Caesar* might this mirror?
 9. According to Obi-Wan, what do Sith 'only deal in'?

Section 3

After the film:

Write an essay comparing and contrasting Shakespeare's play to Lucas' film. To meet proficiency, the essay should be long enough to adequately explore the topic. Use the following questions, and your notes from the previous section, to guide your writing:

- Why are dreams and fortune-telling significant in both stories?
- In both stories the leaders, Caesar and Palpatine, are referred to as 'too dangerous to be left alive.' Why is this similarity significant?
- How do the choices of both Brutus and Anakin Skywalker shape the events of their respective stories?
- Are Caesar and Palpatine good? Evil? What about the Senators in both stories? The Jedi Council? Does it even matter?
- In both stories, characters were given warnings along the way about how destructive their decisions would be. Why is it significant that characters in both stories chose to ignore these warning signs? What does it say about human nature?

Formatting for the Essay:

- Typed, 10-12 pt font, Times New Roman
- (single spaced) Name, Course, Period and date at the top left
- (skip a line below) Title centered on the page: *Compare/Contrast Essay for Drama Unit*
- (next line) *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar and Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith*
- (skip a line) Begin your essay. The essay should be double-spaced and each paragraph should be indented with the tab button.
- Your essay, the notes from the film and this sheet will be stapled together and turned-in upon

return from the Winter Break.