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# JULIUS CAESAR



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# 1. The early years

My name is Marius and I'm eight years old. I'm one of Julius Caesar's **slaves**\*. I think I'm his favourite slave because I have the same name as his famous uncle, Caius Marius. Caius Marius was an important man in Rome who married Caesar's aunt Julia. He was **consul** six times and he was a great general. Unfortunately he didn't **see eye-to-eye** with another famous general and consul, Lucius Cornelius Sulla. In the end Sulla took control of Rome and killed all of Caius Marius's **supporters**. But that all happened a long time ago... well, before I was born anyway!

I should begin at the beginning. Caius Julius Caesar was born in 100 B.C. Caesar's family were **patricians** – that means they were part of the aristocratic class. But they weren't especially rich or powerful. I was born 23 years later in 77 B.C. (That's LXXVII in Roman numbers, in case you didn't know).

## STRANGE, BUT TRUE!

**M**any people think the term '**caesarean section**' originates from Julius Caesar's birth. The Romans knew about caesarean sections, but Caesar almost certainly wasn't born that way. That's because women usually died in the process – but Caesar's mum lived until she was 60-something years old!

\* Words that look like **this** appear in the glossary at the end of the book.

I don't go to school because I'm slave, but Caesar gives me homework. He says I don't have to be ignorant just because I'm a slave. In fact, when Caesar was growing up, his **rhetoric** tutor was an ex-slave, so there you go! I've also learnt how to read and write. Our alphabet has no letter 'J' or letter 'U', so we write Caesar's name like this: CAIVS IVLIVS CAESAR.

## STRANGE, BUT TRUE!

**R**oman children practised writing on a wax **tablet**. When they could write well, they were allowed to write on **papyrus**. Their 'pens' were made from feathers and their ink was a mixture of gum, **ashes** and, sometimes, the ink from an octopus!



I have to get up at **daybreak**. My first job of the day is to light a fire. When Caesar wakes up, I have to help him get dressed. Then I have to clean the **villa** and tidy the garden. Sometimes I help in the kitchen preparing the day's meals. When Caesar bathes at home, I dry him when he's finished. When Caesar invites friends for dinner, I make sure there's a constant **supply** of food and drink. If his guests have to return home and it's dark, I walk in front of them with a lighted **torch**.

We don't have to work on religious holidays though. This is great because Romans have LOADS of these holidays! My favourite is Saturnalia. It's in honour

of the god Saturn. It starts on 17 December and there are festivities right up to 23 December. There's a sacrifice at the Temple of Saturn, which is in the **forum**. Then there's a public banquet. We give each other presents and there are lots of parties. Even **gambling** is permitted! The best thing about Saturnalia, though, is that just for one day the slaves and masters change places. The masters have to serve their slaves!



You probably know that Romans have a lot of gods. You may not know that Caesar was appointed *flamen dialis*, or head priest of Jupiter, by the consul Lucius Cornelius Cinna. Being head priest has so many strange rules, I'm not surprised Caesar didn't last long in that job!

## Flamen dialis useful rules and regulations

Don't touch metal, flour, bread, beans, **raw** meat, dogs, goats or dead bodies.

Don't name dogs or goats.

Don't look at dead bodies or ride a horse along a path covered with **vines**.

Do get your hair cut by a free man and then **bury** your hair somewhere.

Caesar was appointed *flamen dialis* in 84 B.C., when he was only 16 years old. Other important things happened around that time too: Caesar's father died, so he became head of the family. He also got married to Cornelia. She was Cinna's daughter (so it was Caesar's **father-in-law** who made him *flamen dialis*!).

Like Caesar's uncle, Caius Marius, Cinna didn't **get on** with Sulla. A year after Caesar's wedding, Sulla was coming back to Rome with his victorious **legions**. They'd just **defeated** Mithridates of **Pontus**, one of the **republic's** number one enemies. Sulla wanted to take control of Rome from Cinna. But Cinna's troops didn't want to fight Sulla, so they **mutinied**. Poor old Cinna was killed by his own soldiers! The senate made Sulla **dictator**, and he started executing all his enemies.

This all left Caesar in a bit of a **tricky** position. His uncle Caius Marius had been Sulla's rival (although Caius Marius had already died by this point). He was also married to the daughter of Cinna, another one of Sulla's enemies. Sulla ordered Caesar to divorce his wife, but Caesar **bravely** said no. Sulla then made a list of the people he wanted to **punish**. Not surprisingly, Caesar's

name was on that list. So, at the age of 19, he left his young wife and the rest of his family and ran away from Rome – **disguised** as a woman!

Caesar knew he wasn't safe with Sulla **in charge**, so he went into exile. He served as a soldier with the governor of Asia for two years. Caesar was a very courageous soldier, and he was awarded the *corona civica* – a high military award for **bravery**.



When Sulla died in 78 B.C., we were able to go home to Rome. Caesar started working as an advocate in the courts there. An advocate is a bit like a lawyer: they make speeches to the court and try to win cases. Caesar was already pretty good at making speeches, but when he was 25, he decided to travel to Greece to study **oratory**. But on the way to Greece, our ship was captured by PIRATES! They **kidnapped** Caesar and asked for a **ransom** of 20 pieces of silver. But Caesar laughed at them and said they should ask for at least 50!

We were prisoners of the pirates for 38 days. Caesar wasn't afraid of them though; he even sent someone to tell them to be quiet when he wanted to sleep! He read poetry to them and he practised his speeches on them. But when he was finally freed, Caesar got hold of some ships and went back to look for the pirates. He found them and took all their money, including his ransom, and then had them all **crucified**. You can see that Caesar was sometimes **charming** and sometimes extremely cruel, even back then.

On his return to Rome, Caesar was elected military **tribune**. Although there are 24 military tribunes, it's quite an important office. Many people see this as the first step of a political career for a young aristocrat like my master. After that he was elected **quaestor** for 69 B.C. – that's a more important office than military tribune. But this has also been a sad year for us: Caesar's wife Cornelia died in childbirth, and his aunt Julia died as well. At Julia's funeral he delivered a speech about how great his family was – my master never misses an opportunity to make himself look good!

A decorative border made of hand-drawn scrollwork surrounds the central text. The scrollwork consists of various loops and flourishes that frame the text on all sides.

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*The family of my aunt Julia is descended by her mother from the kings, and on her father's side from the goddess Venus. Our family can claim both the sanctity of kings, who reign supreme among mortals, and the reverence due to gods, who hold even kings in their power.*

After that we went off to Hispania and that's where we are now. Caesar is serving as one of the quaestors to the governor here. He travels around **sorting out** problems and judging legal cases. My master loves it, but I can't wait to get back home to Rome, to be honest!





# Glossary

- aedile:** Roman official who organised festivals
- ally:** country or person that is friendly to another country or person
- argue:** disagree
- ash:** powder that is left over after something is burnt
- barbarian:** Roman term for non-Roman people
- battlefield:** place where a battle takes place
- Bibracte:** Roman name for modern-day Mont Bevray, France
- bloodthirsty:** very violent
- brave:** courageous, valiant
- bravery:** courage
- bride:** woman who is getting married
- boo:** make a sound that expresses dissatisfaction
- bury:** put under the ground
- caesarian section:** surgery to take a baby out of a mother's womb when a natural birth is not possible
- Capitol:** main hill in ancient Rome
- cavalry:** soldiers riding horses
- Celtic:** describes the ancient people of Western Europe
- centurion:** leader of a century of roman soldiers
- charming:** very pleasant
- citizen:** free person with certain rights
- civil war:** war between inhabitants of the same country
- collapse:** fall down

# Before reading activities

## 1. Match the words to the correct descriptions.

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Pompey            | a state where citizens vote for laws in assemblies  |
| Consul            | The day of the full moon in March, usually 15 March   |
| Cleopatra         | group of soldiers in the Roman army   |
| Gaul              | senior elected official in the Roman Republic   |
| Republic          | An Egyptian queen famous for her beauty   |
| Legion            | A region that included most of modern-day France and Belgium, and parts of Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands |
| The Ides of March | Roman general and politician who was Caesar's ally and later his enemy  |

## 2. Do you think these sentences are true or false? Correct the false sentences.

- Julius Caesar was once held prisoner by pirates for 38 days.
- Julius Caesar was only 35 when he was killed.
- Julius Caesar never visited Hispania.
- Julius Caesar was the first Roman Emperor.
- Julius Caesar was the first ruler to appear on coins.
- Julius Caesar was a writer as well as a general and a politician

# While reading activities

**Read the introduction. Then choose the correct word to complete these sentences.**

- a) Julius Caesar was one of the greatest *generals/writers* of all time.
- b) According to legend, the city of Rome was founded in *753 B.C./A.D.*
- c) In the Roman Republic, the government was led by the *monarch/consuls*.
- d) In the republic of Caesar's youth, there *were/weren't* many problems
- e) German and *French/Russian* rulers had titles that originated from the word 'Caesar'.
- f) *More/fewer* than a million people died as a result of Caesar's military campaigns.
- g) During Caesar's life, the amount of territory controlled by Rome *decreased/increased*.

**1. Read chapter 1. Find the mistakes in each sentence and correct it.**

- a) Caius Marius was Julius Caesar's slave.
- b) Julius Caesar was probably born by caesarean section.
- c) Saturnalia is celebrated with a banquet held at the Temple of Saturn.
- d) When he was only 16, Caesar married Cinna.
- e) The dictator Sulla was good friends with Caius Marius.
- f) In Asia, Caesar worked as an advocate. Then he returned to Rome and served as a soldier.
- g) The pirates asked for a ransom of 200 pieces of silver.
- h) Caesar was elected military tribune, the last step in his political career.
- i) Caesar's wife, Julia, died in childbirth.