

What Americans Think They Know about History: How Hollywood Films Have Replaced History Books

*by Elouise E. White-Beck
Taylor Allderdice High School*

Overview

Rationale

Objectives

Strategies

Classroom Activities

Annotated Bibliography/Resources

Appendices-Standards

Overview

This unit will address the issue of Hollywood films, their depiction of history, and how generations of Americans have assumed that what they see on the screen is the absolute truth. How beneficial or detrimental is it for people to learn about history from what they see at the movies? How can teachers help to guide students through material that may or may not be true? Ultimately, who makes the decision whether or not the untrue material is still valuable if it contributes to the overall validity of the story?

Using William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* as an example, this unit will explore how fact and fiction intermingle to tell the truth—or not. Students will read and discuss each act of the play and then watch a portion of one or both of the two films available. Using both the Hollywood film version of *Julius Caesar* (1970) as well as the BBC production (1953), a comparison of film styles will be evident as well, further illustrating how the point of view of the production team focuses the viewer on the parts of history s/he wants to illuminate. As an accompaniment to these viewings, students will respond on video viewing forms (Appendix A) and will read excerpts from Robert Brent Toplin's *History by Hollywood: the Use and Abuse of the Past*, and *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies*, edited by Mark C. Carnes.

Rationale

How do we learn about history? Those of us who are not historians may remember what we were taught in high school and college or read on our own, but for me, Hollywood was the source of most of my knowledge. While realizing that Hollywood's depiction of history may not be accurate, films remain a springboard for learning about many events of the past.

In the hundred years or so that Hollywood has been producing feature films, filmmakers have experimented with every possible use of film to both

satisfy their own expressive ideas and to appeal to the paying public. Moving pictures started out as a novelty. People were interested in seeing what seemed to be photographs in motion. It didn't seem to matter much what the motion was, people liked watching the flickering lights and movements. After this novelty began to wear off, filmmakers started telling stories, largely through grossly overacted histrionics with plenty of scenery chewing. The story was aided by the occasional line of dialogue printed on the screen. Some of these early films are still surprisingly effective today. Abel Gance's 1927 *Napoleon*, Sergei M. Eisenstein's 1938 *Alexander Nevsky*, and William Wyler's 1959 *Ben-Hur* are all stirring tales with plenty of action and a feeling that the viewer has witnessed real history.

What is real history, though? Any recorded events from the past are necessarily imperfectly told simply because they have been written by human beings with imperfect memories and sensibilities. To gauge the validity of any historical event it is necessary to examine the reports from many eyewitnesses. When it comes to filming history, the artistic element comes into play and the filmmaker makes choices about what to include in his or her work. Sometimes telling the whole unvarnished truth would be too tedious and rambling. Viewers would lose the thread of the story. In these cases, the filmmakers choose to shine the lights where they want them. They will play up a particular event or detail in order to underline it for their viewers. There is much controversy about this tampering with the truth. In Robert Brent Toplin's *History by Hollywood: the Use and Abuse of the Past*, the author uses Robert A. Rosenstone's description of how Richard Attenborough included a scene in which Gandhi is forced out of a train car to make room for whites. While there was no actual documentation of this particular event, it served to illustrate the kinds of things that were happening in that place at that time. The stress here is on the nature of what was being depicted rather than the exact historic details.

What does this mean to those of us who, as children and teenagers, relied on the movies for most of our information about history? The thinking members of the population were spurred to read more about what we had seen on film. I became enamored of Napoleon after watching Marlon Brando in *Desiree*. I was also fascinated by the story of Anastasia after seeing Ingrid Bergman's portrayal. Did these films lead me to read more about the historic times in which they were set? Yes. But does this happen for most people--especially today's students who seem to read less and less and watch more and more?

In beginning the study of a book rooted in history, a teacher must set the groundwork. Offering background information about the time and place is important. When discussing filmed versions of novels and plays with my students they often ask why we can't *just* watch the movie and skip reading the book. I ask them if they would prefer to hear a new song or have someone tell them about it. I compare that experience to seeing the movie instead of reading the original story. This leads to a discussion of how filmmakers create a specific point of

view for their audiences and the viewer then gets an interpretation of the original text.

Then why film it at all? This leads us back to the old question, why do people perform? Early in the school year I ask my students this question. We discuss early man and the kinds of performances that he may have created. Before history, the written record, people told stories or sang them. They danced and acted out the events. The present-day continuation of all these types of performances attests to their popularity and society's need for them.

But why did people begin their performing in the first place? Theater history books teach us that there are four reasons: to entertain, to teach, to commemorate an event, and to please the gods. If we take a look at today's entertainment industry, it's easy to justify all of these reasons, in plays, sacred musical compositions, ballets, and films. Most writers, composers, choreographers, and directors have artistic goals in mind when they create. As often as not, the *art* is of primary importance with any historical facts taking a back seat. The very nature of art is expression and a reflection of the world experienced by the artist. Because of this, it is unreasonable to expect art to reproduce life.

Robert Brent Toplin references historian Russell B. Nye in his book *History by Hollywood: the Use and Abuse of the Past*.

Historian Russell B. Nye has suggested that we can learn much from historical novelists (and perhaps his observations apply similarly to the cinematic historians). Both history and literature seek understanding of the reality of the past, said Nye. Novelists assimilate varieties of evidence and speculate about the reasons and thought for behavior.

Nye further notes that the creative artist is free to probe the "internal currents of men's minds." Such creative speculation and construction of motives bring historical figures to life. Without these additions, the characters of the past would appear without personalities. Possibly this is what makes them so believable.

So how much do viewers believe of what they see? They believe about as much as they do when they read. Neil Simon observed in his play, *Biloxi Blues* that people believe everything they read. His young character, Eugene Jerome, discovers that his bunkmates in boot camp have read his diary. His solitary reflection is thus:

EUGENE: I learned a very important lesson that night. People believe whatever they read. Something magical happens once it's put down on paper. They figure no one would go to the trouble of writing it down if it wasn't the truth.

If this is true (and it was spoken by a fictional character in a play) then is it the same for film? Does the viewing public believe that no one would bother to commit to film something that wasn't true?

Do filmmakers have an obligation to present the truth? Look at "historical" films ranging from D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* to Alan J. Pakula's *All the President's Men*; it is stunning to think that viewers see these artistic endeavors as the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Toplin examines several films of this type in his book, illustrating how public opinion is easily focused by the filmmaker's point of view.

Teachers of American history can find a wealth of material from which to choose to accompany history lessons. In the high school English classroom, choices are narrower but are still abundant. In the Pittsburgh Public Schools curriculum, there are film versions of many of the required readings. Students may read and view *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Great Gatsby* among many other titles. Beyond these twentieth century works and Shakespeare, both Hollywood and international filmmakers have reached farther into the past and produced epics such as Abel Gance's 1927 *Napoleon*, Sergei M. Eisenstein's 1938 *Alexander Nevsky*, and William Wyler's 1959 *Ben-Hur*, and at least four films of *The Ten Commandments*.

The twentieth century saw many changes in this country. Two of the films that most clearly illustrate these changes are *The Grapes of Wrath* and *The Best Years of Our Lives*. The first, John Ford's 1940 film of the 1939 John Steinbeck novel, shows the plight of the migrant farm workers, the *Okies*, tracing one family's painful quest for a place to live in which they can make a living. William Wyler's 1946 *The Best Years of Our Lives* is a masterpiece interweaving the postwar stories of three returning WWII veterans to the same small town in the Midwest.

The Grapes of Wrath is a moving tale; the film is shot in stark black and white, depicting the lack of color and variation in the lives of the characters. Henry Fonda as Tom Joad, a young man returning from a prison sentence, portrays the anger, family loyalty, and a mixture of hope and despair that John Steinbeck wrote about so eloquently. Subtle changes from the book to the screen are well executed, and the obvious exclusion of the final scene in the book is the only missing element. In 1940, it would not have been possible for an actress to bare her breast and offer to suckle an adult male. This powerful ending to the book makes it unforgettable. The film had to rely on more conventional practices, using the starkness of the cloud-streaked sky to reflect the bleakness of their future.

The Best Years of Our Lives packs in enough emotion to last a long time. A hard look at the fate of WWII veterans, this film takes its time to develop its three characters, their relationship to one another, and the complex relationships within each of their families. The eldest veteran, Al Stevenson, is aptly played by

Fredric March. He's a happily married man who returns home to his wife, Milly (Myrna Loy), two grown children, Peggy and Rob (Teresa Wright and Michael Hall), and job at the bank. This is a happy reunion although he is a little disconcerted at first at how much his children have grown.

The pilot, Fred Derry, played by Dana Andrews, returns to a wife (Virginia Mayo) he married only a short time before being shipped overseas. They soon find they have little in common. Adding to that, he is unable to secure a good job and ends up at the drugstore selling perfume. Complicating this is his realization that he could really love Peggy, Al's daughter. The third vet, played by real veteran Harold Russell (Oscar winner) rather than an actor, is Homer Parrish, a double amputee with prostheses for hands. His problem is that he thinks his girl won't care for him anymore. The intermingling of these stories works beautifully, culminating with the wedding of Homer and Wilma where Peggy and Fred meet again after Fred has been divorced. This is an altogether satisfying piece worthy of viewing again and again.

Films that paint such exquisite pictures of the human condition are invaluable both as slice-of-life dramas and as food for the spirit. The plight of the three veterans could have been that of any number of returning soldiers following WWII. It is the same with *The Grapes of Wrath*; the Joad family embodied countless poor migrant working families of the era. This is the true value of stories like these; they allow us, as viewers to put ourselves into the story, to identify with the characters.

Students often want to know why they are required to read stories that aren't true. I try to explain that they help us to understand that human nature doesn't change. That's like explaining why a joke is funny; you can't say it, you have to experience it. Living vicariously through these characters' ups and downs allows us to expand and grow and understand a little more about human nature and ourselves. Hopefully, it will help students to understand more about themselves and how people get along with one another. Our goal as educators is, after all, to help our teenagers mature into worthwhile adults.

In the tenth grade English curriculum, William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* is required reading. This is a great opportunity to teach a little geography and a little history. Placing students in the time and place of the action helps to orient them and aids in their realization of the reality of the characters and events involved. With a powerhouse such as Julius Caesar, plenty of written material is available for prereading activities, from websites (see Bibliography), Encarta (the encyclopedia our students have available on the school computers), and a choice of films. In addition to the two film versions of *Julius Caesar* included in my unit, the 1963 Hollywood extravaganza *Cleopatra* directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, is valuable for its first half which shows Cleopatra's relationship with Julius Caesar. Recently, a new TNT network production called *Julius Caesar: His Time Has Come*, starring Jeremy Sisto (Billy Chenoweth in HBO's

Six Feet Under) had been made available. Reviews on this miniseries, now released on DVD can be found online.

As an historical figure, Julius Caesar's importance is undeniable. For students reading William Shakespeare's tragedy about him, the characters of Brutus and Cassius may overshadow him. The film versions add a dimension to the character that the actors, Louis Calhern, Caesar in the 1953 production, and John Gielgud (who, incidentally, played Cassius in the Calhern film), who played Caesar in the 1970 remake. These actors literally flesh out the characters that Shakespeare wrote, infusing qualities about the man not present in the script. Through character study before filming, actors and directors make choices about the characters that are often successfully incorporated into the actor's film performances.

How true is Shakespeare's Julius Caesar to the real man? And how true to Shakespeare's script are the films? Michael Grant addresses these questions in his chapter on Julius Caesar in *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies*, edited by Mark C. Carnes. He corroborates the stance that films might stray from the original text yet still maintain the integrity of the story as written. An expert on Julius Caesar, Grant credits *Plutarch's Lives of the Grecians and Romans* as Shakespeare's primary source for writing the play. Yet, the translation Shakespeare read was one by Sir Thomas North who, in turn, had translated it from a French translation. Nevertheless, Grant recognizes Plutarch's gift as a biographer. In an excerpt from his own book, *Readings in the Classical Historians* he explains why.

Plutarch was, and is, regarded as the greatest of all biographers. His special gift lies in his choice of intimate anecdotes, calculated to catch the attention of his readers and to bring out the moral character of his subjects. He sees their deeds as huge theatrical performances and gives us the illusion of entering into their hearts and their thoughts. Nevertheless, his historical sense invites criticism. Unfounded conjectures, imaginary conversational tableaux, and shaky personal judgments abound, as do distortions of the truth, when virtue or vice is exemplified.

Grant further examines the truth of the events through questioning the motives and judgments of Brutus and Cassius. How, he wonders, could they have truly believed that the assassination of Julius Caesar would lead to the restoration of the Republic.

Students should also come up with these questions if they are well-informed. In this study, students will have opportunities to draw comparison and evaluate filmmakers' choices and compare different versions of the stories. As Toplin notes, filmmaker Richard Attenborough included a scene in his 1982 *Gandhi* in which Gandhi is forced out of a train car to make room for whites.

While this scene has no historical verification, it nevertheless illustrates the important theme of racial unfairness.

Scenes, like the one remembered by Toplin, can be etched into memory as the following scene has been into mine. A trip to the drive-in with my father to see *The Last Days of Pompeii* when I was about nine years old is still vivid. His further explanations of what happened in Pompeii sparked an interest in me to read and learn more about it. Did the events I viewed in the 1960 production (starring Steve Reeves) of this disaster actually happen? My strongest memory is of a mother who was swept away by lava, leaving her toddler crying in the doorway of their home. Of course this is Hollywood's construction, but the impact of this film is valuable; it made me want to know more about what I had seen.

It is important to examine the focus of our classroom studies to understand why we teach what we teach. Increasingly, films are utilized to help teach literature and history. Beyond the accuracy of the facts presented in these films, the pictures themselves illuminate entire time periods, giving students information on how people looked, dressed, and spoke. Modes of transport, living, and dining are depicted throughout the course of telling the story. Do Hollywood's spotlights reflect real history and the most important facets of our past or do they show distorted images that interfere with the teaching of history?

As with any teaching tool, films are just tools and should only be used in conjunction with teaching. Discriminating between fact and fiction on film requires active teaching with both film and print sources. Nothing will replace the teacher or the texts, but stirring a student's interest with lights, action, and camera can jumpstart a lesson.

My hope is that my students (and yours) will react the way I did when they see engaging films, by wanting to read more.

Strategies

This unit will explore one way to use film in the classroom in conjunction with teaching a novel set in a time and place of historical significance. Using available films and clips from film anthologies, students will explore how Hollywood and the film industry illuminate what the American public sees as history and how this determines or influences what is taught in the classroom. Since the entire English curriculum has been revised this year with new textbooks with enough study guides, overhead transparencies, grammar books, and workbooks to overwhelm many of us, this is a perfect time to examine what we teach and what influences have determined what we teach.

This unit can be adapted to any grade or curriculum, but I will be basing my work on the 10th grade English 2 curriculum that includes reading William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.

In one month (twenty class days), students will read and study the play along with viewing portions of two film productions. In addition to the study of

the play as literature, the students will experience how filmmakers from different decades and geographical locations chose to depict this story. These explorations will help students to understand different points of view and how these varied viewpoints can report or distort information from the original text, which is, in effect, a construct intended to entertain drawn from the true events in history as far as they are known.

As with any study of literature from an earlier time period, prereading activities are necessary to prepare the students for the world they are about to enter. A wealth of information is available on Roman times. A selection of these sources will be found in the Bibliography. Students will also respond in writing to what they read and view. These video viewing sheets are in Appendix A and the written assignments will be found in Appendix B.

Objectives

The students will be able to:

- Gain an understanding of William Shakespeare's life and times
- Develop an understanding of Shakespeare's writing style and objectives
- Recognize iambic pentameter and blank verse
- Interpret dramatic literature
- Effectively compare readings and viewings to discern points of view
- Respond in writing to several prompts on what they have read and seen

Through prereading activities and teacher lecture as described in the lesson plans, the students will accomplish the first three items. Following each reading, students will discuss and interpret the literature through discussions and written assignments.

Classroom Activities

Day One—prereading and previewing activities. This will be a lecture on point of view about film; how the filmmaker makes decisions about what the audience experiences and offer examples of things they have read and seen. Validity and what to look for while watching a film will be discussed along with a viewing worksheet to use when we watch any film or film clips. Students will receive a packet of background information about the real Julius Caesar to read before Day Three (see note in Bibliography about copyrighted material).

Day Two—Students will watch a background film about William Shakespeare (see Bibliography for film information) and will receive handouts from the two texts. (These excerpts are not included in the unit due to copyright issues but the titles and publishing information is in the Bibliography and the books can be found online.)

Day Three—Students will begin reading aloud William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, stopping to CFU (check for understanding) and discuss techniques and vocabulary. Act I, sc. 1 & 2.

Day Four—Continue above with I, 3 and begin writing assignment to finish as homework

Day Five—Continue above with II, 1 and II, 2.

Day Six—Continue above with II, 3, and begin writing assignment to finish as homework (see Appendix B).

Day Seven—Students will watch Acts I & II of the BBC production (see Bibliography) and complete the first viewing guide (see Appendix A).

Day Eight-- Students will watch Acts I & II of the 1953 Marlon Brando film (see Bibliography) and complete the first comparison guide (see Appendix A).

Day Nine—Read aloud Act III, 1 & III, 2, stopping as before.

Day Ten—Continue with III, 3 and begin writing assignment to finish as homework (see Appendix B).

Day Eleven-- Read aloud Act IV, 1 & IV, 2, stopping as before.

Day Twelve-- Continue with IV, 3 and begin writing assignment to finish as homework (see Appendix B).

Day Thirteen-- Students will watch Acts III & IV of the BBC production (see Bibliography) and complete the second viewing guide (see **Appendix A**).

Day Fourteen-- Students will watch Acts III & IV of the 1953 Marlon Brando film (see Bibliography) and complete the second comparison guide (see **Appendix A**).

Day Fifteen-- Read aloud Act V, 1, 2, & 3, stopping as before.

Day Sixteen---- Continue with V, 4 & 5 and begin writing assignment to finish as homework (see **Appendix B**).

Day Seventeen—Watch Act V of the BBC production and complete third viewing guide (see **Appendix A**).

Day Eighteen—Watch Act V of the Brando version and complete third comparison guide (see **Appendix A**).

Day Nineteen—Distribute take-home essay exam and discuss any issues or problems with understanding (see **Appendix C**).

Day Twenty—Distribute group project possibilities, form groups of 3-4 students, and begin work (see **Appendix D**).

Day Twenty-One—Allow time for groups to work together.

Day Twenty-Two--Allow time for groups to work together.

Day Twenty-Three--Allow time for groups to work together.

Day Twenty-Four—First four groups will present their projects.

Day Twenty-Five—Last three or four groups will present their projects.

Portfolio pieces

Following the unit, students may attach one or more of their viewing guides to the portfolio entry slip in **Appendix E**. Two of the five writing assignments in **Appendix B** can be used for the portfolio entries in **Appendix F** and **Appendix G**. The take-home essay exam can be attached to the portfolio entry slip in **Appendix H**.

For a longer unit:

If more days are needed to fulfill a unit or grading period, there is a recent TNT film called *Julius Caesar: His Time Has Come* starring Jeremy Sisto. I have not yet seen it and it is three hours long, so consider viewing it and showing parts of it. The reviews particularly favor the battle scenes. This can add one to five days to the unit.

For a shorter unit:

If you are under time constraints, eliminate the group project or the days for them to work on it in class. This will cut three to five days from the unit

Annotated Bibliography/Resources for Teachers/Other Consulted Sources

Carnes, Mark C., ed., *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies*, Holt and Co. Inc., This is a collection of essays by various authors each dealing with one film.

Julius Caesar, Republic Pictures, 1970. This version stars John Gielgud as Caesar.

Julius Caesar, BBC, 1953. This production stars Louis Calhern and is in b/w, filmed like a stage play.

Maltin, Leonard, ed., *Leonard Maltin's 2004 Movie Guide*, Signet, 2003
An alphabetical listing of movies including dates, directors, casts, ratings, and short synopses.

Shakespeare, William, *Julius Caesar*

I hesitate to include a specific edition of the play as it is widely available and I am referring only to the text in the unit and not to any ancillary readings.

Simon, Neil, *Biloxi Blues*, Penguin Group, 1987

Toplin, Robert Brent, *History by Hollywood: the Use and Abuse of the Past*, Univ. of Illinois Press, 1996. Toplin examines the several American films and offers reasons for making films from the past and ideas about their validity.

Annotated Bibliography/Resources for Students

Carnes, Mark C., ed., *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies*, Holt and Co. Inc., This is a collection of essays by various authors each dealing with one

film.

Shakespeare, William, *Julius Caesar*

I hesitate to include a specific edition of the play as it is widely available and I am referring only to the text in the unit and not to any ancillary readings.

Toplin, Robert Brent, *History by Hollywood: the Use and Abuse of the Past*, Univ. of Illinois Press, 1996. Toplin examines the several American films and offers reasons for making films from the past and ideas about their validity.

Internet Resources for Teachers

The Julius Caesar Site

Texts, historical sources and analogues, and student projects.
www.perseus.tufts.edu/JC/

Julius Caesar Web Guide

... research historical aspects of **Julius Caesar** as well as those aspects of ... characters of Brutus and Cassius in William Shakespeare's **Julius Caesar**. ...
www.lausd.k12.ca.us/lausd/resources/shakespeare/caesarwebguide.html

Julius Caesar: The Last Dictator

A Biography of Gaius **Julius Caesar** and all major contemporaries in the Last Days of the Roman Republic.
heraklia.fws1.com/

Julius Caesar: Historical Background

... 102/100 BCE: Gaius **Julius Caesar** was born (by Caesarean section according to an unlikely legend) of Aurelia and Gaius **Julius Caesar**, a praetor. ...
www.vroma.org/~bmcmanus/caesar.html

The Julius Caesar Site

Texts, historical sources and analogues, and student projects.
www.perseus.tufts.edu/JC/

The Roman Empire

Gaius **Julius Caesar** (warning this page contains an image over 110 kB in size)was... of Rome and **Julius Caesar** had got the rewards he was looking for. ...
www.iol.ie/~coolmine/typ/romans/romans6.html

Amazon .com: DVD: Julius Caesar: His Time Has Come
Julius Caesar: His Time Has Come, Jeremy Sisto. ... **Julius Caesar: His Time Has Come**, brings to the screen the rise to power of one of the most well known ...
www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/B0002S93TO?v=glance

Julius Caesar –Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

For other uses of **Julius Caesar**, see **Julius Caesar** (disambiguation) ...
Julius Caesar, depicted from the bust in the , in Cassell's History of England (...
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Caesar

SparkNotes: Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar. Julius Caesar. - Navigate Here -, Context, Plot Overview ...
Julius Caesar. Performing Arts. Shakespeare. Staging Shakespeare's Plays ...
www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/juliuscaesar/

Shakespeare's Julius Caesar: A Paraphrase

A paraphrase of Shakespeare's play **Julius Caesar**, along with summaries of each scene. Site includes links to other online Shakespearean resources.
members.tripod.com/~lklivingston/caesar/

Julius Caesar Web Guide

... research historical aspects of **Julius Caesar** as well as those aspects of ... characters of Brutus and Cassius in William Shakespeare's **Julius Caesar**. ...
www.lausd.k12.ca.us/lausd/resources/shakespeare/caesarwebguide.html

Caesar

... When Caius **Julius Caesar** was born, the leading man in Rome was Caius Marius, By diplomatic ways, Rome divided the rebels: Lucius **Julius Caesar** (an
www.cs.uh.edu/~clifton/caesar.html

Julius Caesar—virgil.org

... **Julius Caesar** An Annotated Guide to Online Resources 3 August 2003 ...
A companion to the **Julius Caesar** pages: primary sources, background and images, ...
virgil.org/caesar/

Internet Resources for Students

The Julius Caesar Site

Texts, historical sources and analogues, and student projects.
www.perseus.tufts.edu/JC/

Julius Caesar Web Guide

... research historical aspects of **Julius Caesar** as well as those aspects of ...
characters of Brutus and Cassius in William Shakespeare's **Julius Caesar**. ...
www.lausd.k12.ca.us/lausd/resources/shakespeare/caesarwebguide.html

Appendices

Appendix A

White-Beck

NAME

Video Response Sheet for *Julius Caesar*—Acts I & II

1. How does the film compare to the play? What about the historical information you have learned? Is the film the same or different? If it is different, does it work? Choose an example and explain whether or not you support the filmmaker's choices.

2. How would you describe the music and the way it is used to someone who had not seen the film but had read the play? What does the composer do that is effective?

3. Which character(s) do you like and why? Which character (s) do you dislike and why?

White-Beck

NAME _____

Video Comparison Sheet for *Julius Caesar*—Acts I & II—second version

1. How does today's film compare to yesterday's? Is it the same or different? If it is different, does it work? Which version did you prefer? Explain.

2. How are symbols portrayed in the props and set pieces?

3. Do you prefer any of the portrayals you saw today to what you saw yesterday?

White-Beck

NAME _____

Video Response Sheet for *Julius Caesar*—Act III & IV

1. Now that we're further along in the story, do you understand the actors more easily than when you watched Acts I and II? Is there one actor you understand more than any other? Explain.

2. How is the music helping to define the tone of the action? Is there a particular scene in which the music is effective?

3. Have you changed your opinion about the characters you liked and disliked since watching Acts I & II? Offer examples and explain.

White-Beck

NAME _____

Video Comparison Sheet for *Julius Caesar*—Act III & IV—second version

1. Which version of Acts III & IV do you think is more faithful to Shakespeare's text? Does that make it better than the other version or not? Offer examples and explain.

2. What do you think of the crowd scenes in each of the films? Is one more effective than the other? Offer examples and explain.

2. If you had to choose to watch just one version of the final act of the play, which one would you choose and why?

White-Beck

NAME _____

Video Response Sheet for *Julius Caesar*—Act V

1. Does the action seem more real and moving when you see and hear it than when you read it aloud? Why do you think this is so?

2. How does war seem to you as you watch these battles? Is it worth it? Why or why not?

3. What do you think will happen to Rome following these events? What led you to this conclusion? Name characters or events.

White-Beck

NAME _____

Video Comparison Sheet for *Julius Caesar*—Act V—second version

1. How does the action in this version compare to the first one?

2. Are the battles more real or do you have to rely on your imagination?
Which do you prefer? Why?

3. Does this version lead you to a different conclusion about the fate of Rome than the first film? Why or why not?

Appendix B (For Day 4, Day 6, Day 10, Day 12, & Day 16)

Writing Options

DIRECTIONS: Choose one of the following items and respond in ink on lined paper. Due tomorrow.

Act I

1. What can you tell about the Romans beliefs in superstitions from what they say and do in Act I? Be specific, citing lines numbers and identifying characters.
2. Do you agree with Cassius' in his argument about Caesar's quest for power? In his long scene with Brutus, cite specific examples to support your views.

Act II

1. What role do women play in this tragedy? Examining the scene between Portia and Brutus, how do you assess their relationship? Be specific, citing lines numbers.
2. Consider the figurative language, "Cowards die many deaths/ The valiant never taste of death but once." What do you make of this? What did Caesar mean, and why did Shakespeare have him tell the audience in Act II?

Act III

1. What does Caesar mean with his final words to Brutus? What do these words reveal about Caesar's character and about his relationship with Brutus?
2. Describe what Antony accomplished with his speech. He did not break his promise to Brutus but his masterful oratory produced exactly the result he had in mind. Cite specific examples that illustrate this.

Act IV

1. Cassius and Brutus are not in total agreement but decide not to air their differences in the presence of their armies. What are they disagreeing about and why do they feel they must hide it? Be specific, citing lines numbers.
2. Why does Brutus insist that others join him in his tent at night? Was he justified in this request? What do you think really happened when everyone besides Brutus went to sleep?

Act V

1. Which character is the tragic hero in this piece? Demonstrate the character's flaw and trace the chain of events that lead to his downfall.
2. How does Shakespeare want the audience to feel at the end of the play? How will Rome proceed with its government? Did any of the characters learn anything? Be specific with your answers.

Appendix C

Take-Home Exam—Persuasive Essay

In a well-planned essay, persuade the reader of ONE of the following topics:

1. Using specific citations from the text, argue whether or not Cassius was right to believe that Julius Caesar had to be assassinated for the good of Rome.
2. Construct an argument that shows the value of watching the filmed portions of the play in between readings the way we did in class. Use specific examples from either one or both of the films to support your choices.
3. Persuade the reader of the importance of well-placed references to Shakespeare's use of superstition to advance the plot. Include how the play would have been weakened without this device.
4. Discuss Shakespeare's lack of female characters. Argue either for or against this position using examples from the script.

Appendix D

Choices for group projects

DIRECTIONS: Today you will form groups of 3 or 4 and begin working on a group project to be presented in a few weeks. Take a look at the suggestions for the projects. If you have an idea that is not listed here, bring it to my attention for approval. You will have three class periods to work together but you may work on your own outside of class if you want to.

1. Choose a scene to perform that has two characters if there are three people in your group and three characters if you have four people in your group. One of you will be the director and the others will play the parts. Decide what each character's goal is in the scene and write subtext for your character. The directors will write up detailed staging to hand in.
2. Construct a three-dimensional set of one of the scenes in the play. Include figures for the characters and label your model with the act and scene numbers.
3. Rewrite a scene in modern-day English and read it aloud with members of your group taking different parts.
4. Research Julius Caesar and his methods of battle. Draw up some battle plans and a map showing his conquests. Present these chronologically to the class.

Appendix E

Speaking, Listening, and Viewing Exhibit--Entry # 2

NAME _____ DATE _____

Speaking, Listening, and Viewing Exhibit

Speaking Accomplishment: Information

A Speech of Information is one in which the writer provides knowledge to the audience about a particular topic. This type of speaking requires careful planning and a thorough understanding of the topic.

Attach evidence that shows your ability to present a speech to inform. Evidence may include planning notes, an outline, speech notes, or an audio or videotape. Also, you must include teacher, peer and self-evaluation. Be sure to attach your assignment sheet and the rubric or criteria sheet you used to guide your work.

Please check off all of the following that you did that demonstrated your ability to deliver a Speech of Information.

Delivery

I have

- _____ made appropriate eye contact.
- _____ maintained appropriate posture.
- _____ used language and gestures expressively and persuasively.
- _____ adjusted my speech to the reaction of my audience.
- _____ used effectively such devices as pace, volume, stress, enunciation, and pronunciation.
- _____ spoken audibly.
- _____ exhibited enthusiasm in my delivery.

Content

I have

- _____ chosen a unique topic that was interesting and appropriate for my audience.
- _____ set a clear purpose for the speech in my introduction.
- _____ demonstrated evidence of extensive research.
- _____ used an attention-getting introduction.
- _____ arranged content in logical order.
- _____ provided excellent supporting details.
- _____ used an effective conclusion.
- _____ defined all unfamiliar terminology.
- _____ made no (or few) mechanical or usage errors.
- _____ used effective audio-visual aids. (optional)

Describe the assignment that prompted this work.

Tell how your audience reacted to your speech.

The work in this entry was done (check all categories that apply):

_____ in _____ class _____ as homework _____ with teacher
feedback _____ as a first draft only _____ with revision _____ with peer
revision

Appendix F

Entry Slip #1--Reading Exhibit

NAME _____ DATE _____

Reading Accomplishment

Literature

Literature deals with big ideas, concepts and themes that emerge from social, political, and personal conflict. Literature can take the form of novels, nonfiction books, plays, poetry, and magazine articles.

DIRECTIONS:

Attach one or two pieces of your writing that demonstrate your ability to read challenging literature. For example, you could attach reading journals, literature logs, book reviews, and response to literature essays. **Please include the assignment sheets and the rubric or criteria sheet that guided your work.**

Check off all of the following that you have done.

I have

_____ developed and explored concepts, issues and themes in texts.

* *Concepts* are the large ideas in writing.

* *Issues* are problems that can be seen from different points of view.

* *Themes* are ideas or messages that authors think and write about repeatedly.

_____ analyzed, interpreted, and evaluated a text or parts of a text (chapters, stanzas, acts).

* *Analyzing* a text means that you break it down into its elements and think about how these elements work together.

* *Interpreting* a text means that you express an opinion about what it means and support it with evidence.

* *Evaluating* a text means that you judge the quality of the writing and support it with evidence.

_____ identified and discussed author's craft: word choice, author's purpose, and text structure.

* Identifying the *author's craft* means that we notice how the author uses words, focuses on a purpose, and organizes a text.

_____ related the material that I read to cultural and/or political issues.

* *Cultural* issues are problems and concerns that are specific to individual cultures and the ways people of various cultures relate to the entire society.

* *Political* issues are problems that deal with the role of government in its citizens' lives.

_____ made connections.

* among parts of a text (for example, chapter to chapter, beginning to end).

* among several texts I have read.

* between texts.

* to my own experiences.

_____ challenged and/or questioned the author.

* Challenging and questioning an author means that you think about both the author's viewpoint and the quality of the writing.

_____ extended ideas based on what I have read.

* *Extending* ideas means that you add your own ideas to what the author has said.

Describe the assignment that prompted this work.

Tell why you think the work you have attached shows that you can read challenging literature well.

The work in this entry was done (check all categories that apply):

_____ in _____ class _____ as homework _____ with teacher feedback _____ as a first draft only _____ with revision _____ with peer revision

Appendix G

Writing Exhibit--Entry #1

NAME _____ DATE _____

Writing Exhibit A Response to Literature

A Response to literature requires you to write about what you have read. You may interpret the meaning of a particular piece, critique the author's ideas or craft, or evaluate how the author has presented material. You may respond to fiction, nonfiction, poetry, or drama. A Response to Literature may be

- > an evaluation of a piece of literature.
- > a comparison of a piece of literature with its media presentation.
- > a response that focuses on personalizing the theme of a literary work.
- > an analysis of the effect of a minor character on the plot of a novel.
- > an interpretation of a recurring motif in a novel or a play.
- > a comparison of two critical interpretations of a poem or a work of

fiction.

Attach one piece of work that shows your ability to write an excellent Response to Literature. Include your assignment sheet and the rubric or criteria sheet that guided your work.

Check off all of the following that you have done.

I have

_____ engaged the reader by establishing a context, creating a persona, and using other techniques to create interest.

> Context means structure. You must present your ideas in a logical way and give enough information so the reader can understand your point of view.

> Persona refers to the writer's personality. When a piece reflects a personality, we say it has voice. A piece may be written in your own voice or in someone else's, for example, a character in a story to which you are responding. By controlling language and exhibiting strong voice, you will establish a person.

> Other techniques to create interest may include a dynamite beginning to peak reader interest; the use of specific, concrete details; an example or anecdote that supports your ideas, and a powerful conclusion.

_____ made an analytic, evaluative, and reflective judgment.

> Analytic judgment involves examining the text carefully in order to tell about the writer's use of craft (language, organization, detail, etc.) and presentation of ideas.

Appendix H

Writing Exhibit--Entry #6

NAME _____ DATE _____

Writing Exhibit A Persuasive Essay

A Persuasive Essay is a piece of writing in which the writer tries to change the way the reader thinks or acts. When you write to persuade, you write to prove a point, to change someone's opinion, or to clarify an issue. This type of writing requires careful planning, strong evidence or support, and a thorough understanding of the topic.

Attach one piece that demonstrates your ability to write persuasively. Include your assignment sheet and the rubric or criteria sheet that guided your work.

Please check off all of the following that you have done that demonstrates your ability to write an excellent Persuasive Essay.

I have

_____ engaged the reader by establishing a context, creating a point of view or persona, and using other appropriate techniques to develop reader interest.

> Context means structure. You must present your ideas in a logical way and give enough information so the reader can understand your point of view.

> Point of View means the viewpoint or perspective from which the story is written.

> Persona refers to the writer's personality. When a piece reflects a personality, we say it has voice. A piece may be written in your own voice or in someone else's, for example, a character in a story to which you are responding. By controlling language and exhibiting strong voice, you will establish a person.

> Other techniques to create interest may include dynamite beginning that introduces your topic and defines all necessary terminology, several support paragraphs that include evidence to prove your point, and a powerful conclusion that returns that returns with force to your position.

_____ included a controlling idea that organizes your writing and makes clear and logical judgment.

> Write a clear statement of the purpose behind your persuasive writing. This statement (often called a proposition or a thesis) should spell out what you propose to prove in your writing. State your proposition in positive terms.

(“School officials should be prohibited from secretly searching student lockers, “rather than . . . officials should not be allowed to”

_____ organized your writing in a way that is appropriate to the needs and interests of your specified audience.

> Appeal to the needs of your reader. Let each of them know what's in it

for him or her. Prove to them that they have something to gain by taking the same stand as you.

_____ used a range of strategies to elaborate and persuade, such as

- > facts,
- > statistics,
- > quotes,
- > stories,
- > anecdotes,
- > case studies,
- > testimonials, and
- > specific details

_____ arranged details, reasons, examples, and/or anecdotes effectively and persuasively.

_____ included appropriate information and arguments; excluded those that are irrelevant.

_____ anticipated and addressed reader concerns and counter-arguments.

_____ supported arguments with detailed evidence, citing sources of information.

Describe the assignment that prompted this work.

What is the strongest argument in your piece?

The work in this entry was done (check all categories that apply):

_____ in _____ class _____ as homework _____ with teacher
feedback _____ as a first draft only _____ with revision _____ with
peer revision

Appendix I

Lecture Notes for Day One

Start by asking the students if they go to movies and how often. Then talk about watching movies on TV or VHS/DVD. Find out what they like best about movies. Then offer the following information.

Filmmakers make a lot of choices when they decide to create a feature film. A feature film is one made for commercial profit and designed to target a specific audience. (At this point choose a recent release to reference. Right now, *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* is opening here. Based on the book of the same name, this film appeals to teenage girls and stars popular television actresses familiar to the targeted audience.)

Many artists converge to create a film. The director works with camera operators, costume, makeup, and hair designers, scenic and lighting designers, and composers. All of these people contribute to the overall impression of the film. When we watch the two films that will accompany our reading you will complete Video Viewing Guides. One of the goals will be to compare and contrast the two different versions of the same text. Look at *everything* from the scenery to the extras. Listen to the sound effects and the music. Be aware of as many elements as possible.

Here is a list of important film terms and their definitions:

Frame - A single image (of a series of them) on a piece of film. There are 24 frames per second.

Shot- the action that takes place while the camera is rolling with no interruptions

Scene- the section of film that encompasses one event or one “beat” of action in which the characters are completing one goal in continuous time.

Close-up- a shot where the camera is zoomed in on a person or item to show it as large as possible

Long shot- a shot taken from far back to show as much scope or landscape as possible

Split screen—two different shots are shown using either a vertical or horizontal split in the screen

Fade- the scene ends with the light fading out to nothing

Dissolve- the scene fades into another scene

Point of view- the perspective of the camera. As in literature, it can be omniscient or from one character’s eyes.

Appendix J

Standards

Pennsylvania Content Standards for Communications: Reading, Writing, Listening, And Speaking

1. All students use effective research and information management skills, including locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies.
2. All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.
3. All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.
4. All students write for a variety of purposes, including narrate, inform, and persuade, in all subject areas.
5. All students analyze and make critical judgments about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence.
6. All students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications.
7. All students listen to and understand complex oral messages and identify the purpose, structure and use.
8. All students compose and make oral presentations for each academic area of study that are designed to persuade, inform or describe.
9. All students communicate appropriately in business, work and other applied situations.