Chapter 7
Julius Caesar

Introduction
- Julius Caesar is perhaps the most famous of all Romans. His life and career are controversial subjects. Scholars are divided over his role in the fall of the Republic and the significance of his legacy for the origins of the Roman Empire.
- Many of the sources are decidedly hostile and their interpretations and conclusions must be examined critically. Some of the ancient verdicts about Caesar, and their modern versions, cannot be sustained from the evidence, especially those which accuse him of acting only from ambition and vanity.
- There is ambivalence as well; many critics, both ancient and modern, while condemning his motives, acknowledge Caesar's outstanding abilities and accomplishments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Born in Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>Marriage to Cornelia, daughter of Cinna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>'Interview' with Sulla, sent to the East.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Returned to Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Captured by pirates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Elected Pontifex Maximus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Served as quaestor in Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Married Pompeia, granddaughter of Sulla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Elected praetor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Governed Spain as pro-praetor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Formed amicitia with Crassus and Pompey – First Triumvirate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Consul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Married Calpurnia, daughter of L. Calpurnius Piso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marriage of Caesar's daughter Julia to Pompey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58-</td>
<td>Proconsul / Governor of Gaul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Gallic Wars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crosses the Rubicon, begins Civil War</td>
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<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Civil War, campaigns in Greece and Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entered into a form of marriage with Cleopatra VII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Made Dictator for 10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Sole Consul, declared Dictator for life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Assassinated on the Ides of March</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Terms and concepts

amicitia  Political alliance, often sealed by marriage.

auctoritas  Personal authority, based on reputation and accomplishments.

clementia  Clemency, act of pardon. May have carried a sense of obligation for the pardoned.

dignitas  Reputation, 'good name', personal esteem.

gloria  Accumulated achievements that a family could celebrate and use to remind others of their pedigree and record of service to the state.

imperium  Power and authority to command an army.

nobile  Roman political elite, families that had secured the consulship.

optimates  Senatorial clique, the 'best' men. Relied on combined family connections and influence for advancement.

pater familias  Head of a family who controlled all aspects of family life, of all members of the extended family.

patronus  Patron, head of a network of clients.

potestas  Power to carry out the duties of political office.

sacrosanctia  Sacrosanctity, immunity from violence or prosecution; given to tribunes

senatus consultum ultimum  Final decree of the Senate empowering magistrates, usually consuls, to restore order by any means available – martial law.
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Geography and resources of Rome and its provinces

- By the beginning of the first century BC, Rome dominated Italy and was at the centre of an empire that extended around the Mediterranean.
- Most of this empire had been won in response to conflict and competition with Carthage during the previous century, particularly in the western Mediterranean, where Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, Spain and parts of North Africa were ruled and exploited as Roman provinces.
- In 133 BC Rome inherited the Kingdom of Pergamon from which it created the lucrative province of Asia.
- The empire provided Rome with a great range of resources including grain, gold, silver, copper, iron, marble, timber, horses, and the human resources of slaves and auxiliary troops.
- Control of this empire provided Rome with immense wealth in material and human terms and placed it at the centre of a dynamic trading network which extended from the Atlantic coast to India and China.

Overview of Roman political and social structures

Patricians and plebeians

- There was a historical division in Roman society between the patricians, a small group of families that claimed great antiquity, and the plebeians, the majority of the people.
- In the early Republic, the patricians had exclusive access to political power and enjoyed a status above ordinary people.
- A series of legal and social struggles between the patricians and the plebeians resulted in political, military and most religious offices being opened to all citizens.
- By Caesar’s time, the privileges that had once divided the classes had been dissolved by both law and convention.
- New social divisions emerged during the first centuries of the Republic, based on membership of the Senate. This allowed the wealthiest families, both patrician and plebeian, to form an elite.
- Within this elite, the distinction of being elected consul, set those families apart from the others. These families were the nobles.

Equestrians (Equites)

- In these centuries the equestrians emerged as a class based on wealth. In a state where most citizens served in the army as infantry, those who could afford a horse, the equestrians, were set apart.
- This equestrian class became Rome’s businessmen and commercial brokers. They had a vested interest in stability in both Italy and the provinces - peace was good for business.
- There was tension in the state between the senators who wielded power and the equestrians who generated wealth. Some politicians exploited this tension for their own ends.

Patronage

- An important feature of Roman political life was patronage, a system in which the rich and powerful acted as patrons of the less rich and powerful. This was a many tiered system with the clients of the upper levels of society acting as patrons of those in the lower levels.
- The relationship was based on fides, good faith, rather than law. Clients gave deference and respect to patrons in return for services provided.
- Together, class and patronage created complicated and extended ‘families’ which became the basic structures of Roman society and political life.

Political structures

- The political structures of the Republic attempted to balance the interests between the classes and to check the power available to individuals and groups.
- The power to make laws was shared by the assemblies of the people and an assembly of the experienced and wealthy, the Senate.
- The power to enact and enforce the laws was given by the people to magistrates who were elected annually and shared power with a colleague. Very rarely did any man hold sole office or power.
- Two annually elected consuls held supreme power in peace and war. Financial, judicial and civic powers and responsibilities were managed by lesser magistrates such as praetors and quaestors.
- In 49 BC to balance the influence of the Senate and the magistrates, the plebeians elected and empowered ten tribunes. Their role was to represent and protect the interests of the plebeians with both the Senate and the magistrates.
- The plebeian leaders were to be sacrosanct (untouchable) during their year term of office. The combined power of the plebeians guaranteed the tribunes’ safety.
- It was customary to wait until qualified by age to begin a political career. The accepted hierarchy of offices and the accompanying age qualifications controlled progress up the succession of offices known as the cursus honorum. (See Fig 7.1)
### THE CURSUS HONORUM – AFTER SULLA’S ‘RESTORATION’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number &amp; min. age</th>
<th>Authority, duties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CONSUL</td>
<td>Voted by Comitia</td>
<td>Bearer of imperium – supreme civil and military magistrate. Commanded army, presided over Senate meetings, enacted Senate decisions, carried out the chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centuriata</td>
<td>2 Age: 42</td>
<td>elections. Assigned as governor (proconsul) after term of office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRAETOR</td>
<td>Voted by Comitia</td>
<td>Bearer of imperium – urbanus (city) praetor was the supreme judge in civil cases. The peregrinus (foreign) praetor dealt with procedures relating to foreigners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centuriata</td>
<td>8 Age: 40</td>
<td>Praetors could lead an army, summon Comitia Centuriata, introduce new laws. After Sulla, all headed courts before becoming governors (proconsuls).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEDILE</td>
<td>Voted by Comitia</td>
<td>Bearer of potestas – responsible for maintenance of temples, streets and traffic, public buildings, water supply, market regulations and distribution of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tributa</td>
<td>4 Age: 38</td>
<td>corn. Arranged festivals and games. The office entitled imagines to be displayed at funerals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUAESTOR</td>
<td>Voted by Comitia</td>
<td>Bearer of potestas – Financial and administrative magistrates for Rome and the provinces: responsible for public records, treasury, assistant to governors,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tributa</td>
<td>20 Age: 30</td>
<td>paymaster &amp; war booty supervisor on campaign. Automatically became Senators after term of office. Could command military if necessary (as praeproconsul).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7.1 The succession of offices known as the cursus honorum, after Sulla’s ‘restoration’.

### Provincial offices
- The Roman state was essentially a city-state where political privileges were limited to a citizen elite. The responsibility for governing a vast empire created major problems for this city-state structure.
- In response to the demands of an expanding empire, the Romans increased the number of lesser magistrates and employed ex-magistrates as administrators and governors of areas that were ruled as provinces.
- Provincial commands and governorships offered opportunities for the powerful to increase their wealth and influence.

### Overview of significant political & military developments

**Optimates**
- For most of the 2nd century BC, Rome was involved in a series of wars in northern Italy, Sicily, Africa, Spain, Greece and Syria. This long period of conflict had a lasting impact on political affairs at Rome.
- In response to these dangerous times the Senate, which was filled with ex-magistrates, provided leadership from the most experienced and able men available. These ‘best’ men, Optimates, were given and accepted the responsibility for guiding Rome through its dire situation. The Senate’s prominence was so well accepted during this century that it became a convention to give the Senate precedence in governing the state.
- Members of the most powerful senatorial families, the Optimates, relied on their connections to advance their political careers. A family like the Cornelii, for instance, provided 30 or more Consuls during the second century.
- The institutions of patronage, clientship and marriage combined to allow a small number of families to dominate the state. Once peace returned to Rome’s empire, this convention was soon tested.

**Populares**
- Some families and individuals who were not favoured by the Optimates chose a different course of action for political advancement. These families used the power that was available through the people’s assemblies and the tribunes.
- In the name of the people, the Populares used the tribunate to attempt to redress the Senate’s dominance of the Republic. These attempts usually coincided with the advancement of their interests and careers.
- One family, the Sempronii Gracchi, attempted to use the tribunate and the people’s support to carry out a revolutionary platform of social reforms, funded by a wider distribution of the wealth from the recently acquired province of Asia.
- The response from their opponents, the Optimates, was staunch and violent. The Gracchi brothers were murdered while serving as tribunes.
- By issuing decrees that authorised the killing of the Gracchi as enemies of the state, the Senate had sanctioned violence as a tactic in political life.
Another leader of the *Populares* who challenged the authority of the *Optimates* was Gaius Marius, uncle of Caesar. A successful military commander and consul, Marius was forced to take action in the name of the Senate against his own supporters and clients. His credibility was destroyed and he withdrew from political life.

**Rise of military leaders**
- During the century of wars there was need for, but also opportunities for military leaders. Usually only those in office as consul or praetor, or those qualified by previous experience, were granted *imperium*, the power to lead an army. In times of danger however, conventions were ignored in the interests of the state's survival.
- During the war against Hannibal for example, men were given power without holding official office and commands were extended beyond normal limits.
- These situations were soon examples of what could be achieved outside the normal channels. Great wealth, honour and fame were the rewards for a successful military commander.
- In 90 BC the Italian allies (*socii*) declared war on Rome. They had served in Rome’s armies but were frustrated by Rome’s failure to grant them citizenship rights.
- Rome fought desperately to survive. Even Marius was welcomed from retirement to assist his former subordinate Cornelius Sulla, among others, to put down this Social War.
- To end the war, the Romans were forced to grant various levels of citizenship to the towns and cities of Italy.

**Loyalty to military commanders**
- The Italian allies were a real threat to Rome because they had been trained and armed as Roman legionaries. A century of war had required many Italians to serve in Roman armies for long periods.
- In the wars in North Africa and against the Germans and Gauls, Marius had solved Rome’s manpower problem by opening service in the army to the urban poor and unemployed. He introduced new equipment and training to ensure Rome had a reliable army.
- In so doing he professionalised the army and effectively transferred the allegiance of the legions from the state to their immediate commanders. Successful commanders brought not only glory to their men, but rewards of booty and land.
- The relationship between the new armies and their commanders became a major force in the Roman state.

Military commands became increasingly sought after as sources of political power and, as a consequence, became potential sources of conflict.

**Civil war**
- In 88 BC the Senate appointed the consul Sulla to a command against the King of Pontus, Mithridates VI, who was threatening the provinces in the East.
- When Sulla left Rome for the East in 87 BC, Marius, with the support of the tribe Sulpicius, used the people’s assembly to overturn the Senate’s decision and to reassign the command to himself.
- Sulla responded by marching his army to Rome and taking control of the state. Marius and his supporters fled. Sulla killed Sulpicius and restored the Senate’s authority before setting out for the East again.
- In late 87 BC Marius, and the recently deposed consul Cornelius Cinna, raised an army and marched on Rome. Marius appointed himself and Cinna as consuls for 86 BC. Sulla’s supporters were mercilessly proscribed. Marius died very soon after entering his seventh consulship. Cinna remained as the ruler of Rome until his death in battle in 84 BC.
- Sulla returned victorious from the East. He invaded Italy and destroyed the Marians at the Battle of the Colline Gate outside Rome in November 82 BC. He later ruthlessly proscribed the opponents of the Senate and the supporters of Marius and Cinna.
- Sulla became dictator of Rome and instituted reforms which restored the power of the Senate, restored the principle of annual and collegiate magistracies, and effectively curbed the power of the people and their tribunes.

**BACKGROUND AND RISE TO PROMINENCE**

**Family background and position**

**Divine origins**
- The Julian family was one of the oldest Patrician families in Rome, able to trace their ancestry to the beginnings of Roman history.
- According to family tradition, they claimed descent from Aeneas, the surviving member of the Trojan royal family, who escaped with his father and son Julius and settled in Latium.
- Aeneas and Julius eventually became closely associated with the official story of the founding of Rome through their descendants, particularly Rhea Silvia, the mother of Romulus and Remus.
- According to the legend, Aeneas was also the son
of the goddess Aphrodite, associated with Venus by the Romans, and Romulus the son of Mars. This ancestry allowed Julius Caesar to claim both royal and divine descent.

**Links with Marius**
- The Julians were noble but there had not been a consul in the family for many years.
- Early in the 1st century BC, Caesar’s aunt Julia married Gaius Marius, who became Rome’s greatest hero, winning victories in Africa and defeating Gauls and Germans who had threatened to overrun Italy.
- During this period Marius had been allowed to hold consecutive consulships, ignoring a law that required a ten year interval between consulships. He had also been elected consul in absentia, without returning to Rome, another illegality.
- Marius had overcome opposition from the ruling faction in the Senate by mobilising support from the people, through the assemblies.
- When Caius Julius Caesar was born on 12/13 Quintilis (July) 100 BC, his uncle Marius was holding the consulship for the fifth consecutive year.

**Immediate family**
- Caesar’s father was a Roman politician who was elected praetor in 92 BC and served as governor in the province of Asia from 90 – 89 BC. He must have been a man of substance because he was allowed to marry well. He died without attaining the consulship.
- Close relatives of Caesar, Sextus and Lucius, both held consulships, in 91 BC and 90 BC respectively. Lucius Julius Caesar was Censor in 89 BC and the author of the Julian Law. His younger brother, Caius Julius Caesar Strabo was aedile in 90 BC.
- These brothers were among Rome’s leading politicians, but eventually died for their opposition to Marius. This split in the family indicates that it was particularly active politically.
- Caesar’s mother Aurelia was a member of the Aurelii Cotta, one of the richest and most influential plebeian families in Rome. His cousins, the Aurelii Cotta, brothers, were successful politicians of this period.
- That such a powerful and influential family would be interested in allying itself with the Julians, suggests that the Julians were a family rising to prominence.

![Julian Family Tree](image)

**Early life and education**
- Caesar’s early life would have been spent in the family domus in Subura in Rome and in other houses owned by his uncles and cousins. He may have accompanied his father when he went as governor to Asia.
- The sources suggest that his mother, Aurelia, was a consistent and powerful influence in his life. One of his uncles, an Aurelii Cotta, was also a possible mentor.
- His family would have expected him to have a political career, at least as successful as his father, and to maintain the family name and reputation.
- At his birth it would have been expected that, with Marius’ influence and support, he would reach the highest offices in the state.
- When Marius’ career crashed, perhaps the family accepted a lesser goal. This may explain Caesar’s enrolment as a priest of Jupiter, a prestigious position, but one which precluded a military or political career.
- After Marius’ return to public favour during the Social War and his coup in the 80s BC, perhaps the family changed its mind again.
Education
- Caesar’s abilities as a writer, orator and lawyer, suggest that he had received the education expected for a member of an aristocratic Roman family.
- From the age of 7, boys were taught reading and writing in both Latin and Greek and basic arithmetic. At 12 they were taught Latin and Greek grammar, using Homer and Virgil.
- As a teenager Caesar was educated by the grammarian M. Antonius Gnipho, one of Rome’s most important professors, who was also the teacher of Cicero. Caesar would have also been trained in rhetoric.

Paths to power
Priesthoods
- As a child, Caesar was enrolled as Flamen Dialis, the chief priest of the cult of Jupiter, a prestigious position, which according to Cicero, was unlikely to be a ‘path to power’. Caesar was supposedly prevented from taking up this priesthood by the return of Sulla.
- Caesar was elected Pontifex Maximus in 63 BC, a position which carried great prestige and a number of privileges, including an office in the Forum and a residence nearby.
- This election surprised his opponents who expected that one of the more experienced or more well-known of the Optimates candidates would win.
- Caesar immediately made his opponents aware of the range of powers and influence he possessed as Pontifex Maximus by threatening prosecutions, under religious sanction, of those who had persecuted supporters of Marius.

Marian connections
- Caesar’s connection by marriage to Marius and Cinna was a double-edged sword. It ensured him a ready clientele, but also the automatic opposition of the Optimates.
- During the early years of his career he took every opportunity to remind the people of his Marian background to mobilise the support that this connection should provide.
- At the funerals of his aunt Julia and his wife Cornelia, Caesar delivered eulogies in which he reminded the people of his political pedigree. On both occasions he flouted recent laws by exhibiting trophies and the death masks of Marius and Cinna.

Political alliances
- Caesar had many attributes of the successful Roman politician, but in his early career he lacked one essential element, wealth.
- He solved this problem by entering into a political relationship with and becoming a client of an extremely wealthy Roman patron, Marcus Licinius Crassus, one of Sulla’s supporters.
- Described as the wealthiest man ‘in the world’, Crassus had recently added to his vast fortune by claiming and buying the land of those proscribed after Sulla’s return to Rome.
- Crassus promoted Caesar’s career in anticipation that the young man would be a valuable asset to him when he began to hold office or military commands.

Marriages
- Caesar was first engaged and possibly married to Cossutia, the bearer of a large dowry from a wealthy plebeian family. In about 87/86 BC the engagement/marriage was ended. If Caesar was to be priest of Jupiter, he would have to marry a patrician.
- In 84 BC Caesar married Cornelia, daughter of Cinna who had succeeded Marius and now held the consulship. Caesar was now son-in-law of the ruler of Rome. This would become a liability when Sulla returned to Rome. Caesar and Cornelia had a daughter, Julia, then Cornelia died.
- In 68 BC Caesar married Pompeia, a granddaughter of Sulla who brought with her a large dowry. He divorced her in 61 BC after a scandal about her relationship with Clodius who had been accused of sacrilege.
- As part of the amicitia that he arranged in 59 BC, Caesar married Calpurnia, daughter of L. Calpurnius Piso, who subsequently served as consul in 58 BC.
- Caesar later entered into some sort of marriage with Cleopatra VII Queen of Egypt during his stay there in 48 BC. She came to Rome in 46 BC and Caesar reportedly acknowledged her child Caesarian as his son.
- Caesar was well-known, if not notorious, for the number and frequency of his affairs with significant Roman women, among them Servilia, mother of Brutus the future assassin.

Early political career to 60 BC
- There are contradictions in the sources about Caesar’s early political career. The tradition is that the young rebel, refusing Sulla’s demand that he divorce his unacceptable wife, Calpurnia, narrowly escaped death and went into exile in the East.
- His subsequent service in the army in Mytilene and Cilicia and the award for bravery he received do not support this story.
- Caesar survived Sulla’s return to Rome in 82 BC because he co-operated or compromised with Sulla’s regime; there is no other credible explanation for Sulla
allowing Caesar, nephew of Marius and son-in-law of Cinna, to live.

- When Sulla retired, Caesar returned to Rome. He was invited to join Sertorius in his efforts to rescind some of the Sulla’s laws, however Caesar did not support Sertorius.
- Caesar prosecuted a number of prominent Sullan supporters for various charges of extortion. These were not successful, but were public and well-reported.

**76 BC in the East**
- Caesar set out to complete his education at Rhodes. While in the East, he also arranged the integration of the kingdom of Bithynia into the empire. This included some intervention against Mithridates VI of Pontus, who disputed Rome’s claim to Bithynia.
- Caesar spent the next two years involved in actions against pirates in the East, including the famous episode, reported with different details by Plutarch and Suetonius, where he was captured by pirates but, after securing his own release, returned to capture them.

**Cursus honorum**
- In 73 BC Caesar returned to Rome and gained a seat on the college of priests and soon after was elected as a military tribune.
- Caesar publicly supported Gn. Pompeius Magnus (Pompey) in his efforts to restore the powers and prestige of the people’s tribunes.
- He spoke before the assembly in favour of amnesty for Marians and supported the Lex Plotia recalling the supporters of Lepidus.
- His aunt Julia and his wife Cornelia died and were given public funerals. Caesar delivered the eulogies in which he made reference to Cornelia’s husband Cinna and his uncle Marius.
- In 69 BC he was elected quaestor and served in Further Spain.

**Client base**
- On his return to Rome after serving in Spain, he negotiated with the people of Cisalpine Gaul in their quest for citizenship north of the Po River, strengthening his client base.
- He returned to Rome and married Pompeia, granddaughter of Sulla and distant relative of Rome’s most powerful man, Pompey. She offered a large dowry.
- He reputedly embarked upon a series of affairs with the wives of Rome’s famous and powerful men, including Pompey and Crassus.
- In 67 BC he supported the tribune Gabinius’ campaign to have a special command against the pirates given to Pompey.
- In 66 BC he entered the Senate.
- He supported tribune A. Manilius’ campaign to have Pompey appointed to the command against Mithridates and Tigranes.
- As curator of the Via Appia, Caesar spent large sums of money, which he borrowed, to upgrade the oldest of Rome’s main roads.

**Public popularity**
- In 65 BC Caesar served as aedile. Though heavily in debt, he maintained an extravagant public lifestyle.
- He provided spectacular games and entertainments. He assembled so many gladiators that the Senate became fearful of his private army and passed a law to limit the number that could be housed in Rome.
- Caesar’s popularity increased, but so did his debts.
- Contrary to the law of Sulla, Caesar restored Marius’ victory trophies to the forum.
- He supported the award of full citizenship for Cisalpine Gaul and the proposed annexation of Egypt.
- In 64 BC Caesar supported tribune Rullus’ law to redistribute land and move some of the city population back to rural areas.

**Pontifex**
- In 63 BC Caesar was elected Pontifex Maximus, chief priest of state cults, this was a life-long office which carried an official residence and great authority and dignity.
- Caesar showed the power of his new office by prosecuting Rabirius for killing the tribune Saturninus in 100 BC. Although a mock trial, it reminded his enemies how much power and authority the ancient laws gave him as Pontifex Maximus.

**Conflict with the Optimates**
- Caesar was implicated in the conspiracy of the unsuccessful consular candidate L.C. Catalinus (Catiline), but evidence proved there was no connection. The consul Cicero actually suppressed this evidence at first. Nonetheless, Caesar spoke in the Senate against the death penalty for Cataline and his supporters.
- In 62 BC Caesar served as praetor. He attacked the Senate leader, Q.L. Catullus for corruption and supported Metellus Nepos’ call for Pompey’s return to restore order.
- Caesar caused so much concern among the Optimates that the Senate dismissed him for causing public disturbances. He was reinstated after popular demonstrations.
- He divorced Pompeia after a scandal associated with sacrilege by Clodius. Caesar’s family had to be above suspicion, as did all such families.
61 BC Governor of Spain
- As governor of Spain, Caesar managed to recoup his fortune and pay off his debts to Crassus.
- He also revealed a talent for military command. He led successful campaigns and was hailed imperator by his troops.
- He was entitled to apply to celebrate a triumph on his return to Rome in 60 BC.

CAREER

Role in the First Triumvirate
- Caesar wrote to the Senate requesting a triumph on his return to Rome in 60 BC. He also requested the right to stand for the consulship of 59 BC, in absentia, while he waited outside Rome for his triumph. This was unconventional, but not illegal.
- The Optimates refused to support Caesar’s application. They believed that they could prevent Caesar’s possible election success by making him choose between the triumph or the consulship, predicting he would not give up the honour of a triumph.
- Caesar surprised the Optimates by returning to Rome to present himself for the election.
- The Optimates then used bribery in the consular elections to ensure the election of their candidate, Marcus Bibulus. Bibulus and Caesar were elected consuls for 59 BC.
- Knowing he would be consul for 59 BC, Caesar offered a political alliance, amicitia, to Crassus and Pompey, to secure his position and minimise the opposition expected from the Optimates.
- Crassus and Pompey had needs Caesar could satisfy. Crassus wanted tax concessions and a provincial command; he also needed an ally against Pompey for the future. Pompey wanted his Eastern Settlement ratified and land for his veterans.
- In a secret alliance, Caesar guaranteed both men their immediate needs. In turn, they gave him the support of their clients, their wealth and prestige. Cicero, who had also been approached, refused to join the triumvirate.
- The Senate, fearing Caesar’s ambition, denied him command of an army by announcing that the consuls of 59 BC, instead of taking up the usual provincial appointments, would be given the ‘woods and pastures’ of Italy as their proconsular provinces.

Laws to satisfy Pompey and Crassus
- As consul, Caesar forced the Senate to give back to the Asiatic tax-farmers one third of the sum they had paid for their contracts. This was of great benefit to Crassus and the Equestrians involved.
- Caesar introduced an act to provide land for Pompey’s veterans. The senate rejected it so he took it to the assembly. Caesar’s colleague Bibulus, and the Optimates Cato, tried to obstruct the act. Caesar used a detachment of Pompey’s veterans to deal with the opposition. The act was passed and became law. Bibulus, who had been assaulted, withdrew from political life, effectively leaving Caesar as sole consul.
- The tribune Vatinius, supported by Pompey’s veterans, forced the acceptance of Pompey’s Eastern settlement in the Senate.
- Caesar passed a second land law, giving public land, held under lease in Campania, to the poor.
- Caesar’s use of physical force in politics made it imperative that he avoid becoming a private citizen again. If he did he would then be at the mercy of his opponents, who would charge him in the courts for his illegal activities.

Secures wider support
- Caesar negotiated an agreement with Ptolemy Alcutes, Pharaoh of Egypt, in which his rule was recognised by Rome, in return for a huge donation.
- Caesar, Pompey and Crassus employed the people’s favourite, P. Clodius to help deal with their opponents. As Pontifex Maximus, Caesar transferred Clodius from the ranks of patricians to the plebeians so that he could serve as tribune, giving the Triumvirate an ally in the Popular Assembly.
- Caesar secured Cisalpine Gaul and Illyricum for five years as proconsul with four legions. The death of the governor of Transalpine Gaul, allowed Pompey to propose that it be added to Caesar’s province, which the Senate reluctantly approved.
- Caesar organised the election of his father-in-law M.C. Piso and his friend and supporter, Gabinius, as consuls for 58 BC.
- Cicero described Caesar’s consulship as disgraceful, and scandalous, but also noted that Cato’s stubborn opposition to Caesar had been a blunder.
- Plutarch defended Caesar’s actions, pointing out that Senatorial opposition and short-sightedness had left him little alternative than to act as he did.
- Caesar was the lynchpin of the amicitia, the political partnership that has become known as the ‘First Triumvirate’. When Caesar was not present, Crassus and Pompey engaged in competition and rivalry.
- In 56 BC Caesar had to intervene to prevent conflict between his partners. The conference he called at Luca re-established the partnership and satisfied the rivals’ concerns. Caesar’s daughter Julia married Pompey to consolidate the arrangement.
The Gallic Wars

- In 58 BC Caesar entered the provinces of Gaul, an area without political unity, where rival Celtic tribes fought each other and nearby Germanic tribes.
- The Helvetii tribe decided to migrate to Western Gaul, which meant the passage of more than 300,000 people through Caesar's province.
- Caesar blocked the advance of the Helvetii and forced them northward into the territory of the Sequani and the Aedui. After victorious battles, he forced the Helvetii back to their own territory.
- Caesar also forced the Germanic chief Ariovistus and his Suebi tribe back across the Rhine into Germany.
- Caesar left troops in Outer Gaul ('long-haired' Gaul to the Romans) in the territory of the Sequani while he wintered in Cisalpine Gaul.

Campaigns and tactics

- Caesar is accused by some of fabricating and exploiting the threat to Gaul. The presence of more than 300,000 migrating Gauls needs no fabrication. The threat to Rome's allies and provincial peace was real.
- His subsequent decision to pacify Gaul also attracts criticism as being unnecessary.
- Caesar's considerations included:
  - the need to pacify one of Rome's largest and most important provincial areas
  - the need to enhance his reputation through military victory
  - the auctoritas and support that an army of veterans could give him in the future
  - a successful campaign in Gaul would provide enormous wealth and a vast clientele for future political campaigns.
- Caesar took the offensive in Gaul, responding to revolts quickly and ruthlessly.
- Most tribes submitted as Caesar approached. His legates accepted the submission of tribes as far north as the Atlantic.
- When necessary, he did the unexpected. For example, he built a bridge across the Rhine which enabled him to punish German tribes in 55 BC, and he crossed the channel to Britain in both 55 and 54 BC.

Figure 7.3 Caesar's campaigns in Gaul 58-50 BC
Siege of Alesia
- In 52 BC Vercingetorix unified the Gallic tribes in central Gaul to rise against Roman control.
- Caesar travelled through thick snow to meet the rebels. He lost the initial engagements, but captured the tribal capital at Avaricum and killed the entire population.
- Caesar also lost the next battle at Gergovia, where he attacked rather than besieged the city, the usual Roman strategy.
- The next battle was fought at Alesia, a stronghold with high walls and 170,000 defenders. This time Caesar besieged the city, constructing a ring of elaborate fortifications.
- These works, built within sight of the enemy, showed the training and discipline of the Roman army in action. They included ditches to prevent cavalry attacks, a double ditch, one filled with water, and ramparts with palisade and towers. There were seven camps and 23 defence works in a circuit of 17 kilometres.
- Vercingetorix summoned his Gallic allies to attack the besieging Romans.
- Caesar responded by building a second ring of defence, roughly parallel with the first, against the expected attack from the relief army. It made a circuit of 21 kilometres.
- The relief army arrived and attacked the Romans. However, Vercingetorix, the tactical leader, could not communicate with them, and without his leadership the attacks failed.
- Caesar resisted the attacks of the relief army and it disbanded.
- Vercingetorix surrendered to Caesar and was held in captivity until he was displayed six years later in Caesar’s triumph.
- Caesar was conciliatory in his final arrangements with the defeated. He imposed a moderate tribute and tribes were allowed to retain their own organisation.

Results of the Gallic Wars for Caesar
- Caesar established his military reputation in Gaul. He fought 30 pitched battles in which he captured 1,000,000 men, killed 1,192,000 and captured 800 towns.
- He added to Rome’s empire an area twice the size of Italy, with a population larger than Spain, as well as vast resources for trade and development.
- Caesar now had an enormous client base and a military reputation to rival that of Pompey.
- He accumulated great wealth which enabled him to buy political services at Rome on a scale comparable to Crassus.
- He also had a devoted army willing to follow him anywhere.

Relationship with his army
- Caesar served in the army in various capacities and was decorated for bravery before he was given command of an army in Spain in 61 BC.
- There are many reports of his physical endurance while on campaign, and of his inspirational conduct during battles.
- He forged a personal relationship with the troops who served under him in Gaul and during the Civil War. He was a successful commander who inspired his men with confidence. He looked after them and did not waste lives in futile attacks or actions.
- He took an interest in all things military. He was skilled in logistics. He contributed an improvement to the design of the legionary’s chief weapon, the pilum.
- He was, like most Roman generals, committed to the offensive strategy but was tactically very competent, being able to change tactics during a battle to deal with contingencies as they arose.
- His soldiers were loyal to him as their commander and depended on him for the settlements and rewards they expected at the end of campaigns and terms of service.
- He is ranked as one of history’s great soldiers and generals. After the victory in the Civil War, Caesar stated that without the loyalty of his army he would have been lost.

Relationship with the Senate
- The Senate had shown their fear of Caesar’s popularity in 59 BC when they voted him the ‘woods and pastures’ as his proconsular province, thus denying him command of an army.
- He was not welcome when he entered the Senate in 66 BC. He was not a member of the Optimates, and at times he was accused of not showing proper respect for the Senate.
- He was prominent in debate on a number of occasions and seems to have been influential from the outset of his senatorial career.
- Plutarch tells us that Caesar was attended by the ‘most illustrious’ men in Rome, including about 200 senators at Luca in 56 BC. This suggests that Caesar had significant support in the Senate.
- When the crucial Senate vote on Curio’s motion was taken in 50 BC regarding the compromise Caesar proposed, the number of votes he received again shows there was considerable support for Caesar.
- Caesar gained a number of extraordinary powers and offices from the Senate after 49 BC, although by this time the Senate, while legally convened, did not include Caesar’s enemies who had left Rome.
Steps to war

- The First Triumvirate was weakened in 54 BC with the death of Caesar’s daughter Julia, wife of Pompey. Caesar offered his grand-niece Octavia as a new wife to Pompey, and he offered to divorce his own wife to marry Pompey’s daughter. Pompey refused both offers. The death of Crassus in 53 BC marked the official end of the Triumvirate.
- Caesar needed to stay in office to avoid prosecution as a private citizen by his enemies. He devised a plan by which he could stand for the consulship of 48 BC without leaving his province or surrendering his imperium. This was supported by Pompey.
- Caesar supported extending Pompey’s imperium in Spain for five years. This was unconstitutional but was advocated by the tribune Curio, whose support Caesar had bought.
- Pompey introduced a law to ensure an interval of five years between service as consul and taking up a proconsular command. This threatened Caesar because it meant that even if elected consul for 48 BC, he would have to become a private citizen in 47 BC, and as a private citizen he was able to be prosecuted for his use of force when he was consul.
- Curio used his tribunician veto and suggested that both Caesar and Pompey should surrender their imperium and provinces. Many senators supported this proposition.
- Consul C. Marcellus carried a motion to force Caesar to give up his command but it was vetoed by Curio.
- In December, Curio carried a motion (370-22) that both Pompey and Caesar should resign their commands. A deadlock ensued.
- Without official sanction, consul Marcellus gave Pompey the charge to defend the state against Caesar. Pompey accepted.

Attempts at compromise

- Caesar made several attempts at compromise and as late as 1st January 49 BC, he offered to resign his command if Pompey did likewise. The consuls refused to allow a vote on the offer and the Senate allocated Caesar’s provinces to others.
- Metellus Scipio proposed that Caesar should be declared a public enemy unless he surrendered his command. The proposal was passed, but vetoed by Marc Antony.
- On 7 January Caesar’s tribunes were warned to leave the Senate, which then passed the Emergency Decree, senatus consultum ultimum.
- Caesar, who had been willing to compromise on all things other than his future and his dignitas, had to act or accept prosecution and the subsequent loss of dignitas.
- On 10 January 49 BC, Caesar crossed the Rubicon, the stream that formed the boundary between Gaul and Italy, advancing on Italy in the name of the Roman people and their tribunes.

Caesar’s role in the civil war

49 BC

January
- Caesar crossed the Rubicon into Italy.
- Unable to raise armies, the Senate was helpless. Pompey and the consuls left Rome.
- Caesar drove Pompey the length of the Italian peninsula. Caesar’s losses were light and there were no confiscations or plundering by his troops.
- Pompey reached Brundisium where he escaped by sea.
- Within two months Caesar was master of Italy.

March
- Pompey and the majority of the senators fled to Greece, making their main headquarters in Thessalonika, with a second base at Dyrrachium in Illyria.

April
- Caesar entered Rome, pardoned his enemies, and called the Senate to authorise his actions. He also proposed a law granting Roman citizenship to the inhabitants of Cisalpine Gaul.
- Caesar decided to attack the senatorial forces in Spain where there were seven legions. He defeated two of Pompey’s commanders, Afranius and Petreius, at Ilerda within 40 days.
- Caesar showed clemency, sparing the enemy commanders and disbanding the defeated legions. On the way back to Italy, he besieged some of Pompey’s troops at Massilia and they surrendered to him.

August
- Caesar sent legions to Africa under Curio where they were defeated by King Juba of Numidia. Curio was killed, two of Caesar’s legions were destroyed and Rome’s corn supply was threatened.

December
- Caesar was made dictator.
- In Greece, Pompey raised an army of 9 legions and a fleet of 300 ships. Additional legions were on their way. He prepared to return to Italy.
- Caesar, aware of Pompey’s intentions, assembled 11 legions at Brundisium to cross the Adriatic to attack Pompey before he reached Italy.
48 BC
- Caesar was made consul (II)* with P. Servilius. He relinquished his dictatorship of 49 BC after 11 days.

January
- Despite the difficulties of winter navigation, Caesar crossed the Adriatic with seven legions to attack Pompey. Caesar’s navy was defeated and the remaining four legions could not be ferried to Illyria. Pompey and Caesar remained at Dyrrachium where they built large fortresses facing each other.

March
- Antony managed to reinforce Caesar with the four legions.
- Opposition in Rome led by Caius Rufus and Cornelius Dolabella was repressed by Antony who sent troops into the Forum.

July
- Caesar was defeated in the campaign of Dyrrachium. He decided to march inland, cross the Pindus Mountains and face Pompey’s pursuing army in Greece.

August
- Caesar defeated Pompey at the Battle of Pharsalus. Almost 6,000 of Pompey’s soldiers were killed, and when Caesar surveyed the battle field strewn with bodies of the dead senators, he remarked: ‘They would have it thus’. 24,000 of Pompey’s forces were captured.

September
- Pompey was killed in Egypt after fleeing from Pharsalus.

November
- Caesar arrived in Alexandria to learn that Pompey had been murdered by soldiers of King Ptolemy XIII, who hoped to gain Caesar’s support in his quarrel with his older sister Cleopatra VII.

47 BC
- Caesar was made dictator again for one year.
- Caesar met Cleopatra and chose her side in the war with her brother, Ptolemy XIII.

March
- Caesar defeated Ptolemy XIII in the Alexandrine War and made Ptolemy’s younger brother king, although Cleopatra, as co-regent, was the effective ruler.

46 BC
- Caesar was made consul (III)* and dictator for another 10 years.

April
- Caesar defeated a large Pompeian army at Thapsus in North Africa. Cato, the defeated commander and one of Caesar’s most prominent enemies, committed suicide.
- Caesar annexed some of the territories of the Numidian king Juba.

September
- Caesar returned to Rome.

November
- Caesar headed to Spain to suppress a revolt led by the sons of Pompey.

45 BC
- Caesar was made consul (IV)*

March
- Pompey’s sons were defeated at Munda.
- Caesar’s strategy and the skills and endurance of his soldiers had defeated the forces of Pompey in battles around the Mediterranean. Caesar was now undisputed master of the Roman Empire.

July
- Caesar was made dictator for life.

October
- Caesar returned to Rome and celebrated a triumph for his victory in Spain.
* Numerals II, III and IV refer to Caesar’s 2nd, 3rd and 4th consulships.
CAESAR’S ENEMIES AND SUPPORTERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enemies</th>
<th>Supporters</th>
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<tr>
<td>Optimates</td>
<td>Equestrians</td>
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<tr>
<td>• A relatively small group of families who formed a senatorial clique. They considered themselves to be the ‘best’ of the best.</td>
<td>• The second highestordo, or ‘class’, of Rome. Originally they were men able to afford a horse, so they served as cavalry.</td>
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<td>• While they claimed to be the defenders of the Republic, it was a republic that gave them almost exclusive access to high office and subsequently to the dignitas, gloria and auctoritas that could be gained by a successful military or political career or lucrative provincial command.</td>
<td>• In the Republic they were usually characterised as the finance or business class. In the late Republic they had responsibility for, sometimes control of, the courts.</td>
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<td>• They exercised their power through access to the consulship, primacy of voting and debate in the Senate and the Assembly of Centuries. They were capable of using any tactic to gain their ends.</td>
<td>• Both Populares and Optimates politicians courted their support at different times but no political consistency emerged.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cato</td>
<td>Sallust</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Marcus Porcius Cato, a leader of the Optimates was an implacable enemy of Caesar.</td>
<td>• Gaius Sallustius Crispus, tribune of the plebs in 52 BC, opposed Cicero and Milo. It is alleged he had an affair with Milo’s wife. He was expelled from the Senate and exiled.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• As tribune in 62 BC, he tried to win popular support by increasing the number eligible for the corn dole. He opposed Crassus in 61 BC and frustrated Pompey’s settlement as well.</td>
<td>• As dictator, Caesar recalled Sallust from exile, and gave him command of a legion in 49 BC.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• He opposed Caesar ‘obstilently’. He wanted Caesar brought to trial for his actions as consul in 59 BC and attempted to replace Caesar in Gaul.</td>
<td>• Sallust was praetor in 46 BC and later governor of Africa. After being accused of extortion he retired from public life to write history.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• He followed Pompey to Greece in 49 BC and after Pharsalus went to Africa.</td>
<td>• His histories deal with the moral decline of Rome, particularly the nobility and its values. He highlights the struggles of the Gracchi, Marius and Caesar against the power of the nobles.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• He committed suicide at Utica in 46 BC rather than be pardoned by Caesar.</td>
<td>The populus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibulus</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Marcus Calpurnius Bibulus was the Optimates’ candidate and Caesar’s consular colleague in 59 BC. He was also Cato’s son in law.</td>
<td>• Caesar was the champion of ‘the people’. Much of his career was aimed at gaining their support and associating himself with the popular tradition of his uncle Marius.</td>
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<td>• He tried to use his consular power to block Caesar’s legislation program.</td>
<td>• There is no questioning Caesar’s commitment to the plight of the Roman people. He addressed a significant number of their problems in his reforms.</td>
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<td>• He was threatened by Caesar’s supporters and eventually announced his intention to remain at home and check the auspices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• He fought alongside Pompey in the Civil War.</td>
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Figure 7.3 Caesar’s enemies and supporters

Personal relationships

Julia

• Julia was Caesar’s daughter by his wife Cornelia. Julia was married to Pompey in 59 BC as part of the arrangements of the political amicitia organised by her father.
• The love that developed between Julia and Pompey in this marriage of convenience was an important element in the success of the amicitia.
• Her death after a miscarriage played an important part in the eventual breakdown of the amicitia between Caesar and Pompey.

Cleopatra VII

• Cleopatra was a Ptolemaic descendant of the Macedonians who had conquered Egypt with Alexander. Cleopatra wanted to prevent her kingdom from being made part of the Roman Empire.
• The Romans had wanted to ‘conquer’ Egypt for some time and were waiting for an excuse to intervene.
• When Pompey was killed by her brother’s agents, Cleopatra saved Egypt and her own position by coming to an arrangement with Caesar. Their relationship was obviously more than political.
• Caesar acknowledged her child Caesarion as his son. Caesar left Romans in Egypt to support Cleopatra. Egypt’s future as a Roman possession was probably inevitable from this point onwards.
Brutus
- Marcus Junius Brutus, the assassin, shared his name with the traditional founder of the Republic.
- Brutus had supported Pompey during the Civil War, yet Caesar showed him clementia on two occasions.
- Seneca makes the judgement that ‘although in other respects Brutus was a great man’, he was wrong to have killed Caesar.
- Details from his correspondence with Cicero suggest he was much less than the ‘noblest’ of Romans.

Marcus Antonius (Mark Antony)
- Antony was a Julian, a capable military commander who joined Caesar’s staff in Gaul in 54 BC. He was tribune in 49 BC defending Caesar’s cause.
- He was Caesar’s magister equitum, (second in command), while Caesar held the dictatorship during much of the civil war.
- Antony often represented Caesar in Rome while he was on campaign. He may have been out of favour for a time, but served as Caesar’s consular colleague in 44 BC.
- The assassins made sure they separated Antony from Caesar before they killed Caesar in 44 BC.
- Antony led the campaign to punish the assassins. He may have assumed that he would be Caesar’s heir. It appears he made use of Caesar’s papers without legal sanction.

Cicero
- Marcus Tullius Cicero was, like Marius, a ‘new man’, the first of his family to hold the consulship. He was the foremost lawyer and orator of his day.
- He considered himself the saviour of the state because he had uncovered and thwarted the Catiline ‘conspiracy’ in 63 BC.
- He had a rather optimistic and naïve view of the Republic. His ideal was to re-establish a harmony of the state, between Senate and people that he believed had existed at some time in the past.
- Caesar may have offered him the opportunity to join the partnership, or triumvirate, with Crassus and Pompey. If this is so, Cicero declined.
- He had a grudging respect for Caesar’s abilities but feared his motives. He was a great friend of Pompey but feared his motives as well.
- He eventually joined Caesar who paid off Cicero’s brother’s debts. He may have been aware of the plot to kill Caesar.
- He did his best to mend the state after Caesar’s death; unfortunately he miscalculated by promoting the young Octavian to offset Antony’s ambitions.
- He was killed in the proscriptions of the Second Triumvirate.

Impact of Caesar’s personality on his career
- There is a tradition that Caesar was ambitious and desired power. It is implied in many accounts that these personal characteristics drove his career and explained his actions.
- There is no reason to believe that Caesar was any more ambitious than any other Roman nobile. There is no reason to believe that he sought power with any more determination than his contemporaries, Crassus, Pompey, Cicero or Cato. Much of this tradition is due to Plutarch’s portrayal of Caesar as an Aristotelian tragic hero, a man with a ‘fatal flaw’.
- Caesar was ambitious. As a Roman nobile he was expected to at least maintain his family’s name and reputation by his own achievements in politics and military service. As pater familias and patronus of a host of clients, his personal dignitas could not be separated from the Julian family’s name and reputation. The need to be successful was less a personality trait than a family responsibility.
- Many of the criticisms of Caesar can be explained by examining his actions in terms of the ‘ideals’ that a late Republican Roman would have tried to embody: gravitas, severitas, fides, clementia etc.
- He was expected to act in certain ways in certain situations. This was not the product of pride, arrogance or ambition, but what was expected of a Roman nobile.
- Caesar had great ability and determination. He displayed pragmatism and an ability to take chances. These characteristics made him a formidable soldier and politician. He was most certainly more successful than most of his contemporaries. But this does not mean his personal ambition was extraordinary.
- Caesar was a very able man in a range of areas. Even enemies like Cassius and Cicero were forced to acknowledge his qualities and abilities.
- Caesar’s success and prominence should be attributed to greater ability, not greater ambition or desire.

Significance of his writings
- Caesar’s works were powerful, well-written narratives. However they can also be seen as personal propaganda, written to publicise and explain Caesar’s actions for his Roman audience.
- Caesar wrote two main works, the Gallic War and the Civil War. Cicero praised Caesar’s writing for its style and use of everyday language.
- The Gallic War gave information about Gallic and British customs, as well as the military campaigns against them. The daily chronicle enabled Caesar to
keep Rome informed of his achievements. It was also a means by which Caesar ensured that his province would be seen in need of a proconsular presence, thus possibly prolonging his own governorship.

- His books on the Civil War give his perspective on events, especially his motives for invading Italy. They include a discussion of the legality of the Senate’s actions and the issuing of the Senatus Consultum Ultimum to Pompey. The account and explanation differ considerably from Cicero’s account.

Dictatorship

- The office of dictator was a temporary, extraordinary magistracy created to deal with a military crisis, but it had been used in the past for domestic crises.
- The term of office was a maximum of six months, one campaign season, but could be renewed.
- Dictators were not elected, but nominated by a consul on the proposal of the Senate. A law of the Assembly ratified the appointment.
- The dictator held undivided military and legal authority, without sanction, at home and abroad. The dictator was known as magister populi, master of the people/infantry, and he chose a magister equitum, master of the cavalry, as his subordinate.

- The office had not been used for anything but ceremonial purposes since the late 2nd century BC.
- Caesar was awarded the dictatorship on four separate occasions: 49 BC for 11 days; late 48 BC for one year; mid 46 BC for 10 years, but it had to be renewed each year, then at the end of 45 BC, he was made dictator for life.
- Caesar’s annual dictatorship was no different from Sulla’s, but the subsequent grant of 10 years and then lifetime dictatorship was unconventional and technically unconstitutional.

Policies and reforms

- Many problems that had been ineffectively dealt with or ignored during the previous century received immediate attention when Caesar was in the position to carry out reforms.
- He conducted his reforms using the conventional devices of the Roman state: the edict, the senatorial decree and popular law.
- As a personal commitment to his supporters, he restored the rights of those who had been proscribed by Sulla.
- Figure 7.5 outlines Caesar’s reforms and their impacts relating to Italy and the Empire, while Figure 7.6 outlines his major domestic reforms.

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<tr>
<th>Reform</th>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>The lex Julia Municipalis legislated for a uniform system of local government for all enfranchised Italian towns. These towns managed their own affairs, elected their own senate and magistrates.</td>
<td>Increased their loyalty to Caesar and increased stability within the empire.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provinces</td>
<td>Mandated the building of Roman towns in provinces, with fora, basilica, courts, schools and theatres, as a physical manifestation of Rome’s greatness.</td>
<td>Extended the process of ‘Romanisation’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Administration</td>
<td>Caesar did away with the inefficient and unpopular system of contracting out provincial tax collection by transferring the responsibility from private publicani to state officials. Land taxes replaced the tithe system in Asia and Sicily. Governors were no longer to milk the provinces to make their own fortunes. The terms of proconsuls and other provincial magistrates were reduced to prevent abuse.</td>
<td>Reduced corruption would increase loyalty to Caesar. (This measure was unpopular with the Roman senators). Caesar’s reforms challenged the power and privilege of a group of Roman families and allowed the rest of Italy and the provinces to share in power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship &amp; franchise (voting rights)</td>
<td>He granted Roman citizenship to all of Cisalpine Gaul and Transpadane Gaul. He extended Roman citizenship to important native leaders in Spain and Gaul. Franchises were also granted to colonial cities such as Lisbon and Cadiz.</td>
<td>Addressed the resentment of Italian allies who were disenfranchised from the benefits of Rome’s rule. Citizenship secured their support for Roman rule and enhanced the province’s status.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colonies</td>
<td>Founded around 20 overseas colonies for veterans and the poor, mainly in Carthage, Corinth, Spain and Spain. Colonies with sufficient Roman settlers received upgraded citizen status, including in many cases the citizen’s right of appeal against corrupt or tyrannical magistrates. Up to 80,000 of Rome’s poor and unemployed were resettled in the new colonies. The colonies were granted a variety of citizenship and colonial rights, creating satellite Roman cities throughout the Mediterranean and the East.</td>
<td>Settled problems of overpopulation in Rome. Helped to settle outlying areas of the empire. He thus provided land for his hungry veterans. Resettlement guaranteed reserves of trained ex-soldiers to pacify the new territory and guaranteed recruitment from their offspring for the future. Increased Rome’s influence throughout the Empire.</td>
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Figure 7.5 Caesar’s Reforms relating to Italy and the empire
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<th><strong>Reform</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Calendar</strong></td>
<td>As Pontifex Maximus converted the lunar calendar to a solar calendar of 365.25 days from 1st January 45BC.</td>
<td>Festivals corresponded with seasons. The Julian calendar has endured, almost unchanged, to the present.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Senate and magistrates</strong></td>
<td>Increased the number of annual magistrates: praetors from 8 to 16, aediles from 4 to 6 and quaestors from 20 to 40. Half the magistrates would be elected, the other half Caesar would nominate. Increased the number of senators to 900 by enrolling Italians as well as Roman citizens from Spain and Gaul, many of whom were his clients.</td>
<td>Increased opportunity for service in Rome and abroad, these new opportunities for plebeians and equestrians relieved some of the tensions of Roman political life. Also broke the power of senatorial cliques. Senators from Gaul and Spain gave the Senate's edicts significance beyond Italy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Judiciary</strong></td>
<td>Ensured that equal numbers of senators and equestrians, were responsible for legal administration and judgments. Penalties for severe crimes were made more severe; eg in murder cases, he introduced the confiscation of the whole of the criminal's property.</td>
<td>Created a more representative and stable court system. Wealthy men had been able to escape with exile, Caesar made them more accountable.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Citizenship</strong></td>
<td>Granted citizenship to doctors and educated men.</td>
<td>Educated men were enticed to Rome.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Economic reforms</strong></td>
<td>Creditors had to accept land, at its pre-war value, in settlement of debts, as assessed by arbitrators. A portion of the built-up interest was deducted on debts that, extending over years of civil chaos, would bankrupt debtors if repaid in full. Reinstated an old law limiting how much cash a citizen could hoard. Put money from war spoils into the Treasury and reformed the degraded currency. Issued coins in his own image, but they were coins based on a sound economic basis.</td>
<td>Lenders were assured of some, if not all, of their loan and profits; debtors were allowed easy terms to repay without losing property or lands. These measures put money back into circulation, put the currency on a sound basis and helped stabilise the economy. Images and legends were ideal means of propaganda for Caesar's regime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Army</strong></td>
<td>Raised the pay of his soldiers, from 120 to 225 denarii, having already given them extra rewards.</td>
<td>This ensured Caesar had a secure and loyal military force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public works</strong></td>
<td>He used his personal wealth to rebuild and build new public structures in the Forum. Planned a large library and commissioned scholars to collect and classify Greek and Latin books. Planned to drain city marshes, extend the harbour at Ostia, cut a canal through the Isthmus at Corinth and build a highway from the Adriatic across the Apennines to the Tiber.</td>
<td>He created Rome's first 'imperial' forum, the Julian Forum. This relieved overcrowding in the Forum. The scope of these works demonstrated Caesar's genuine statesmanship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roman masses</strong></td>
<td>Legislated that at least one third of the labourers on the large estates had to be free men, not slaves. Most of the remaining ‘public land’ in Italy was broken up to create individual small farms.</td>
<td>Reduced the incentive to idleness and ensured jobs for poor, free men. Slowed the drain of landless men into Rome.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Census</strong></td>
<td>Ordered an exact census of Rome's population and, based on the results, the free distribution of grain was re-regulated, reducing the total number of recipients from 320,000 to 150,000, not exceeded in the future.</td>
<td>This reduced the burden on state finances. It also regulated and controlled a source of political tension.</td>
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<td><strong>Municipal</strong></td>
<td>Lex Julia Municipalis created a local government to help manage Rome's urban problems e.g. use and maintenance of Rome's streets. It also set minimum standards for the qualifications of municipal magistrates and town councillors throughout Italy and the empire</td>
<td>More efficient oversight of the needs of the urban populace. Improved the quality of local government officials.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Civil laws</strong></td>
<td>Reduced the Civil Code from a mass of unwieldy, often contradictory laws, accumulated over centuries, by selecting the most essential laws and publishing them. Forbade the meeting of clubs and collegia, except for trade guilds and Jewish synagogues. Introduced laws against excessive display of luxury.</td>
<td>Simplified a complex legal code, made it possible for all to understand. Removed potential for civil strife. Luxury was seen as a corrupting influence, although the impact of the law was limited.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Figure 7.6 Caesar's domestic reforms
Assassination of Caesar
Motives for the assassination
- In 44 BC Caesar was both consul and dictator for life.
- At the Lupercalia, Antony attempted to crown Caesar. Caesar refused, but many of his opponents believed he was aiming to make himself king.
- There is no doubt he was looking for a solution to the problem of how to maintain a position that was consistent with the Roman constitution.
- His recent interaction with the Hellenistic world may have suggested a monarchy was the solution. He had minted coins with his own image on them in the Hellenistic tradition.
- Ironically, as Pontifex Maximus, he was living in a royal residence and performing the religious duties of the Roman kings.

Manner of his death
- At this time the Senate met in Pompey's theatre on the Campus Martius - the Curia was being rebuilt after being burnt down in civil unrest during 52 BC.
- On the Ides of March (15th), Caesar was to announce details of his plans for a campaign against Parthia which would take him away from Rome for some time.
- A group of Senators isolated Caesar on the pretext of presenting him with a petition and stabbed him numerous times.
- One of the blows thought to be fatal was delivered by Marcus Brutus, one of the organisers of the plot.
- Many of the 60 conspirators were ex-Pompeians whom Caesar had pardoned under his policy of clementia.

Impact of his death
- Public reaction was at first muted by the murderers' defence and references to the rights of 'tyrannicide', the killing of tyrants.
- Caesar's supporters were cautious until they realised there was no wide-spread support for the murderers.
- Antony unleashed a violent public reaction by delivering a eulogy over Caesar's blood-stained body and later by reading Caesar's will publicly in the Roman Forum.
- A temple was built on the spot where Caesar's body was laid and Caesar was deified.
- Events followed that brought the Republic to its end.

EVALUATION

Impact and influence on his time
- Caesar had an enormous impact on his time.
- He brokered a political amicitia, the First Triumvirate, which signalled the end of the Republic.
- He added more territory and more people to the empire by conquest than any previous military commander.
- The wars he fought set a standard of military excellence in warfare that others have ever since aspired to emulate.
- He plunged Rome into a civil war, perhaps for the sake of his personal reputation.
- He was accorded more honours than any previous Roman leader.
- His wide-ranging reforms formed the basis for the empire which followed.
- He was deified after death.

Assessment of his life and career
- By any standards, Caesar was extremely successful.
- He attained the highest offices in the state, using both conventional and unconventional methods.
- He was an outstanding politician and advocate.
- He was an outstanding orator and writer.
- He was a successful military commander, entitled to use the title Imperator.
- Emperors were called Caesar (in the forms of Kaiser, Czar) thousands of years later.
- Men such as Napoleon and Douglas Macarthur, in their own quest for glory, were admirers and conscious imitators of Caesar.
- The range of his interests and abilities was so varied that Caesar is often described as a genius.
- His apparent commitment to do unpopular things that he felt were for the good of Rome, revealed statesmanship that was unusual in Rome's political history.
- His enemies grudgingly admired his talents and abilities. He was capable of surprising them. Even Cassius wrote to Cicero during the Spanish campaign to the effect that he much preferred Caesar and his well-known policy of clemency to Pompey junior, whom he characterized as stupid, arrogant, vain and cruel.
- Throughout his career, Caesar displayed determination and ruthlessness which later led to charges of dictatorship.
- We can never know exactly what motivated Caesar, beyond his desire to exceed the reputation of all other Romans. Was there a genuine commitment to reform or were his reforms simply a means of extending his power over the 'mob'?
Legacy

- Caesar’s reforms gave Rome a chance of achieving a settled domestic and imperial regime.
- His untimely death deprived him of the opportunity to ensure a ‘succession’. This had a disastrous impact in the short term.
- The successes and failures of Caesar’s career provided an exemplar for the career of his heir, Octavian.
- Caesar left a solid body of legislation that helped lay the legal and political groundwork for the empire. Augustus’ remarkable political and social achievements are his own, yet he built in every direction upon Caesar’s reforms.

Ancient and modern images and interpretations of Caesar

- Caesar has many enemies in the ancient sources. There is a received tradition, from his contemporaries in particular, that is critical of his actions and motives.
- How valid is it to charge Caesar with single-handedly ending the Republic? What were its chances of continuing as it was? What was Cato’s vision for Rome’s future?
- It seems that in their judgements of Caesar, his contemporaries mixed valid criticisms with elements of the resentment and envy that many of them felt.
- Figure 7.7 outlines the interpretations of Caesar provided in the ancient sources.

### ANCIENT INTERPRETATIONS OF JULIUS CAESAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cicero</td>
<td>106 - 43 BC</td>
<td>Wrote ‘Letters’ to his friends, generally hostile to Caesar but they illuminate the late Republic. It is obvious from these that well-placed contemporaries regarded Pompey and Caesar as dangerous to the future of the Republic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caesar</td>
<td>100 - 44 BC</td>
<td>Wrote Gallic War and Civil War commentaries, considered now, and then, as excellent example of ‘everyday’ Latin composition. Obviously had a propaganda value for self-promotion, but deserve some attention if a level of objectivity is sought. The justification of Caesar’s actions in 49 BC and his analysis of Senate ‘illegality’ are worth noting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sallust</td>
<td>86 -35 BC</td>
<td>Tribune 52 BC, expelled from Senate 50 BC for his ‘morals’; joined Caesar in 49 BC. Describes Cato and Caesar as ‘remnants’ of the Res Publicae. May give more balanced treatment than other more well-regarded sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucan</td>
<td>39 - 65 AD</td>
<td>Glaring inaccuracies. He was not a historian. He chose to report what suited his purpose and ‘powers’ as a rhetorician.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plutarch</td>
<td>&lt;50 AD</td>
<td>Wrote a series of parallel ‘Lives’ for ‘education’ and training in rhetoric. Not a historian. The Oxford Classical Dictionary describes him as ‘tantalising &amp; treacherous’ to the historian. Very often events are preserved, but his conclusions about motives of those involved need to be treated with caution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suetonius</td>
<td>c. 69 AD</td>
<td>Wrote c.121/2 AD ‘Lives of the Caesars’, he was an ‘encyclopedist’ who reported everything, including gossip. The organisation of each ‘biography’ is a good indication of his purpose. Compares well and usefully with Plutarch. Very often events are preserved, but care is needed with his conclusions about the motives and intentions of those involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appian</td>
<td>c. 116 AD</td>
<td>Sources obvious but annalistic, reported year by year, probably based on Livy and Polybius. Ethnographic in form, reports characteristics of people and times, unreliable on the Republic. Preserved some material on the Civil War.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dio</td>
<td>229 AD</td>
<td>History exists only for years 68 – 10 BC. Yearly accounts, probably based on Livy. Generally considered unreliable on Republican events and affairs. Reporting of early ‘Empire’ is suspect, coloured by own experience of absolutism under the later emperors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7.7 Ancient interpretations of Julius Caesar
Modern interpretations

- Shakespeare has a lot to answer for! To portray Caesar as a man driven by pride or arrogance is to misunderstand entirely or misrepresent the sense of personal dignitas of a Roman noble of his times.
- To risk all in pursuit of personal glory was the ‘duty’ of a patrician; family and personal immortality depended on making an impact on Rome’s history. This was as true for Cicero, Brutus or Cato, as it was for Caesar.
- When Caesar’s assassins claimed that they had restored libertas, what did they mean?
- Brutus issued a coin showing the symbols of liberty and associated the act with the expulsion of the ‘tyrant’ Tarquinius in 509 BC, and the establishment of the Republic.
- The little we know of opposition to Augustus during the early years of his principate suggests that liberty for Senators meant the opportunity to pursue their right to a political career in the Republic, with the ultimate goal of power and reputation. Like Augustus’ permanent consulship, Caesar’s dictatorship and his control of the cursus honorum reduced opportunities for Senators, their clients and families. The motives for Caesar’s murder may, in one sense, be described as pride and ambition.

- In the Victorian era Caesar’s career was reported positively, often in terms that suggested something approaching a ‘cult of personality’. According to this view, Roman society was out of control and heading for destruction; Caesar grasped control and restored the balance that made the empire possible.
- This appealed to those powers that were building modern empires which they hoped would last for centuries also. The titles ‘kaiser’ and ‘czar’ have an obvious connection to this perspective.

- During the 1930s and 1940s with the experience of modern dictators like Mussolini, Hitler and Stalin, the view was distinctly different.
- Caesar was almost inevitably portrayed as a ruthless political adventurer. The idea of a political opportunist exploiting chaotic political conditions to impose his own will was familiar and, for liberals, distinctly out of fashion. This view of Caesar was powerful and prevailing for some decades, especially through the works of Syme and Gelzer.
- In the 1970s and 1980s there were more balanced interpretations, particularly in the work of Michael Grant whose influence was important.
- Meier’s biography of Caesar, written in the 1980s, is often criticised for not being biographical enough, but it does attempt to place Caesar’s career and actions within the context of Roman politics and society.

- Modern soldiers, Macarthur and Fuller for instance, have used comparison to Caesar as a benchmark, favourably and unfavourably, for their own achievements.

Figure 7.8 Modern interpretations of Julius Caesar
More recent views of Caesar have been broadcast in the media through documentary series on television and on the internet.

The more dramatic views, such as that of Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, admiringly portray Caesar as a ‘mafia bully-boy’, ruthless and unrelenting in his pursuit of power and influence. Others, such as Keith Hopkins, attempt to explain Caesar’s career in the context of his times and broader Roman history. The best documentaries include both perspectives.

Conclusion

Caesar brought extraordinary qualities, lacked by all his ambitious contemporaries, to his eventual control of the state.

His legislation as Consul and the reforms as Dictator seriously attempted to redress wrongs long ignored by the self-interested oligarchs who claimed that he had destroyed ‘liberty’ single-handedly.

In the judgment of historians, Caesar’s legislation is often neglected or undervalued. Scholars usually concentrate on his dictatorial acts or his military achievements. One does not exist without the other.

Resources

Ancient sources

Works by Julius Caesar available online at Project Gutenberg: http://www.gutenberg.org/author/Julius+Caesar


Modern sources
Goldsworthy, Adrian, *Caesar*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2006
Wyke, Maria (ed.), *Julius Caesar in Western Culture*, Blackwell, 2006

Videos/DVDs

Great Commanders: Julius Caesar
The Caesars: Julius Caesar, BBC
Rome: Power and Glory, Educational Services, Discovery