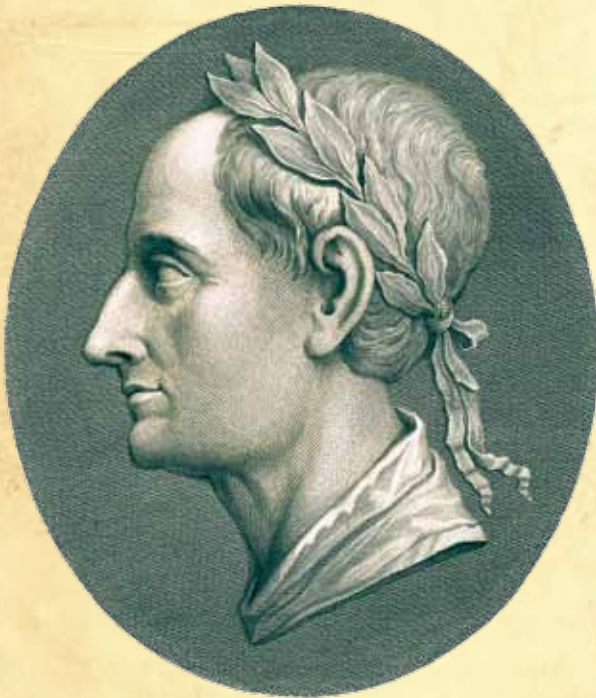




Time Runners

Who was Julius Caesar?

Julius Caesar was one of the most important leaders of Ancient Rome. He was a brilliant general, and the poor people of Rome loved him. He was also very ambitious, and in the end, this led to his death.



Rich and famous

Julius Caesar was born in about 100 BC and died in 44 BC. (You have to remember that BC dates go backwards - the dates mean that Caesar was born about 100 years before the birth of Christ, and died about 44 years before the birth of Christ.) He was a member of the powerful Julius family, and one of the small group of people who were rich and powerful enough to lead the Roman Republic.

An ambitious man

In the wars

When Julius Caesar was a young man, the Republic was going through a difficult time, with wars both at home and abroad. Caesar began to make a name for himself in the wars, and he was given important jobs which took him to different Roman provinces (including parts of what is now Spain and Greece).

Crowd-pleaser

In 65 BC he was elected aedile - a job which involved organising games and entertainments for everyone in Rome to enjoy. He spent a lot of time and money on this, and produced some spectacular shows. This meant that he became very popular with ordinary Romans. As a result, they voted for him in the People's Assembly, which made him more powerful still.



More and more powerful

Caesar became governor of the Roman province of Spain, and then he was elected consul – the most important job in the Roman Republic.

Later, Caesar became governor of the province of Gaul (part of modern France), and he conquered yet more land for Rome (including invading Britain twice, in 55 and 54 BC).

Fact

The dark side of power

As Caesar got more and more powerful, he began to do things that were against the law. For example, if people disagreed with him, he would put them in prison. Was power starting to go to his head?

Too powerful for his own good?

No turning back

By now Julius Caesar was extremely powerful. He felt as though nothing could stop him. But then the Senate asked him to stop being the governor of Gaul, and hand over his army to a new governor. Caesar refused, and he took his army out of Gaul, crossing over the river Rubicon, into Italy. The Senate took this to mean that Caesar was trying to invade Rome, and a civil war started, with Caesar on one side and the Roman Senate on the other.

Caesar defeats the Republic

Things might have looked bad for Caesar – but he had a strong army, and the ordinary people of Rome still loved him. So in the end, Caesar defeated the army of the Republic.

Now Caesar was stronger than ever. He made himself consul, and then dictator. He used his power to change things for the better in many ways, as far as ordinary Romans were concerned – for example, he made it possible for more people to become Roman citizens, and he put an end to some unfair taxes.

Going too far

The role of dictator was meant to last for just a couple of years. But in 44 BC Caesar made himself dictator for life. In fact, he had become a sort of king. But this was completely against the rules of the Roman Republic, and there were plenty of senators who wanted to stop him.

In March 44 BC, Caesar was stabbed by a group of senators as he entered the Senate. He was alone and unarmed, and he died at once.

The start of an empire

After Caesar's death, the senators hoped to bring back the Republic, but instead there were more civil wars. In the end, the Republic was replaced by the Roman Empire, and governed by a long list of Emperors, starting with Julius Caesar's great-nephew and heir, Augustus.

Some more websites to explore

- A BBC web page with a short summary of Julius Caesar's life:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/caesar_julius.shtml
- An American website with an overview of Julius Caesar's life, written for children:
<http://rome.mrdonn.org/caesar.html>
- A Guardian newspaper web page with pictures and information about an ancient medal that may have been worn by one of the people who killed Caesar:
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2010/mar/14/julius-caesar-coin-british-museum>

