



Character Question

Brutus

Tragic Hero

- * Complex man
- * Powerful public figure
- * Good husband, loyal friend, kind master, military leader
- * Stoic, cultured gentleman
- * Rigid idealism is his greatest virtue and deadliest flaw
- * Too high-minded to fully understand corrupt nature of Roman politics
- * Naive

First Impression

- ✱ A man at war with himself
- ✱ Torn between love for Caesar and concern for Rome
- ✱ His honour and his fear that Caesar will become dictator leave him open to manipulation by Cassius

The Conspiracy

- * Naive: he believes the forged letter and never questions its authenticity
- * 'Thus must I piece it out / Shall Rome stand under one man's awe?'
- * Determined: when he settles on a course of action, he throws himself wholeheartedly into it
- * Takes control of the conspiracy
- * Naive once more: he refuses to make the conspirators take an oath, believing that they are as honourable as he is
- * 'Do not stain / The even virtue of our enterprise...'

Trace of Doubt?

- ✱ Although Brutus seems sure that Caesar must die, he does not share his thoughts with Portia
- ✱ Portia is a symbol of Brutus' morality / private thoughts
- ✱ Brutus' ignoring of his misgivings is his worst mistake and will have terrible consequences

Et tu, Brute?

- ✱ Brutus still believes that murdering Caesar was the only possible course of action
- ✱ Foolishly insists that Antony be allowed to live
- ✱ Blinded by his belief that everyone will see the nobility of the assassination, Brutus does not see the fickleness of the populace, nor does he realise how shrewd and dangerous Antony is

'There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to
fortune.'

- ✱ Brutus persists in trying to make Cassius live up to impractical and idealistic standards of behaviour
- ✱ Incapable of seeing how selfish and hypocritical other men are
- ✱ Stoic in the face of Portia's death
- ✱ Ignores Cassius' advice that they wait for their enemies to come to them
- ✱ Believes in the power of will over fate
- ✱ Caesar's ghost torments him: is he brooding on his guilt?

'This was the noblest Roman of them all.'

- ✱ Brutus was torn between his love for Caesar and his belief in the ideal Roman republic
- ✱ His inflexibility and his inability to comprehend the true nature of Roman politics proved his undoing
- ✱ Antony's speech over Brutus' body honours him for his virtues, and recognises that he acted with the common good in mind

In conclusion...

- ✱ Brutus' best qualities drag him down
- ✱ However, his struggle for justice and self-understanding proves he is a good man
- ✱ He represents the dignity and virtue of which we are all capable