

## THE REPUBLIC OF ROME PART 4: JULIUS CAESAR

Julius Caesar (100–44 B.C.) can be considered one of the best military commanders of all time. His most significant accomplishment was the conquest of Gaul. The annexation of Gaul changed the whole concept and character of the Roman state. Roman civilization now incorporated not only the lands around the Mediterranean but also western Europe. (See map on page 90.)

Gaul was made up of a number of Celtic tribes. In 58 B.C. during the First Triumvirate, Caesar became governor of the provinces of Cisalpine Gaul (northern Italy), Illyricum (east of the Adriatic Sea), and Narbonese Gaul (southern France). He decided to march northwards and make the whole area into a Roman province, because he claimed that the tribes posed a threat to the Gallic provinces. Some maintain, however, that his attack on the Gauls was due to his own ambition and desire to increase his military prestige. So started the "Gallic War" (58–51 B.C.). The account of the war was reported by Julius Caesar himself in his book *De Bello Gallico*.

After the Gallic War, Caesar became involved in the civil war against Pompey, whom he defeated in Greece in 48 B.C. In 47 B.C. Caesar went to Egypt where he met Cleopatra, and they became lovers. After Caesar helped her defeat the king of Egypt, he made Cleopatra queen of the land. Egypt also became a client state of Rome. Then Caesar returned to Italy, where he was made dictator of Rome for life in 46 B.C.

During his dictatorship, Caesar accomplished much and devoted his career to reforms. One of his most important reforms was the establishment of colonies in Italy and the provinces to deal with the ongoing problem of the urban poor and the landless ex-soldiers. The colonies were small settlements for war veterans intended as a reward for their loyalty. Civilians, specifically the unemployed poor of the cities, were also allowed to live there. The colonies became important places of defense and acted as instruments in the Romanization of the provinces. Caesar also tackled the long-standing problem of debt. He erected a number of public buildings in Rome. He also revised the Roman calendar, which, with minor changes, is still used today.

Due to the nature of his reforms, Caesar incurred the hostility of the upper class and the Senate. A conspiracy against him was planned and instigated by two leading members of the Senate, Cassius and Marcus Brutus. Eventually there were sixty conspirators. The murder happened when the Senate gathered for a meeting in Pompey's theater. There the conspirators cruelly stabbed Caesar to death. Caesar died on the Ides of March (March 15), 44 B.C.



**Gaius Julius Caesar was a member of the First Triumvirate with Pompey and Crassus, but he soon eliminated his co-rulers and in 46 B.C. became sole dictator of Rome for life.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## CHALLENGES

1. Who was Julius Caesar?

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2. Which region did Caesar annex to the Roman state?

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3. Why did Caesar decide to march against the Gauls?

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4. What was the reason given by Caesar's critics for his conquest of Gaul?

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5. Which Roman leader did Caesar fight during the civil war?

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6. Who did Caesar make queen of Egypt?

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7. Which of Caesar's reforms is still used today?

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8. Who murdered Caesar?

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9. On which day was Caesar murdered?

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10. What was the function of a colony?

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