

Caesar the Unexpected

N.B. some of this presentation comes from my book, Julius Caesar, Master of Surprise. The quotations from Plutarch and Suetonius can be found on the LacusCurtius website.



Slide 1.

Section I Early Career

Section II The Cursus Honorum

Section III Proconsul and commander in Gaul and Illyricum

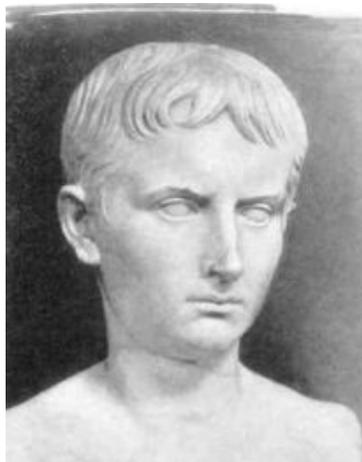
Section IV After Gaul

Julius Caesar is one of the most famous men of all time; he is also one of the most controversial. Everyone has an opinion of him, and few are favorable. We cannot pretend to fathom his motives, so this workshop will consider some of the ancient writings about what he did while we build our concept of him. Examining these will help teachers develop Caesar presentations for classes. *De Bello Gallico* will give us his picture of the situation. I like, before entering it, to make this short study of ancient writings about him and then ask students to comment when the qualities mentioned **surface** in their reading of *De Bello Gallico*.

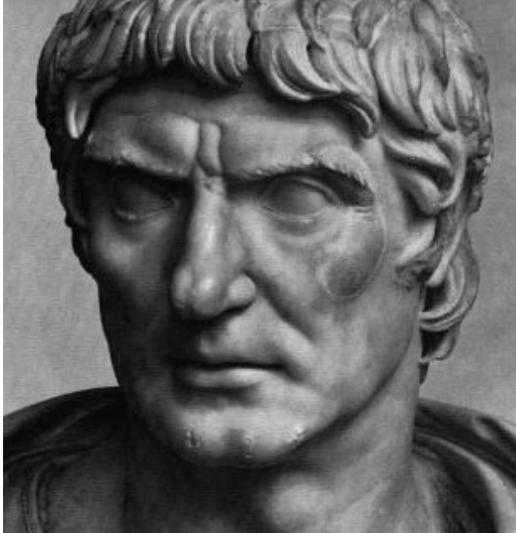
An important element in Caesar study is the unexpected and sometimes unique approach he took to problems. His deeds and attitudes, which took friend and foe by surprise, contributed much to his success and also to his death. Here we want to examine brief excerpts from writings of Caesar's contemporaries such as Sallust, Cicero, and Nepos, and of other ancient writers such as Suetonius, Cassius Dio, and Plutarch. These reflect the reactions of those around him to Caesar's moves. These moves may **be well known to us** but were astounding at the time.

Slide 2

Section I Early Career



When we are looking at his early life, three stories always surface: his refusal to divorce his wife on the order of Dictator Sulla, his being captured by pirates, and his association with King Nicomedes IV of Bithynia. We will look at these, as well as two of equal or perhaps greater importance that are seldom emphasized today.

Slide 3**1) Refusal to divorce Cornelia****Sulla Dictator****Plutarch, *Lives, Julius Caesar 1***

The wife of Caesar was Cornelia, the daughter of the Cinna who had once held the sole power at Rome, and when Sulla became master of affairs, he could not, either by promises or threats, induce Caesar to put her away, and therefore confiscated her dowry. Now, the reason for Caesar's hatred of Sulla was Caesar's relationship to Marius. For Julia, a sister of Caesar's father, was the wife of Marius the Elder, and the mother of Marius the Younger, who was therefore Caesar's cousin... when Sulla was deliberating about putting Caesar to death and some important said there was no reason for killing a mere boy like him, Sulla declared that they had no sense if they did not see in this boy many Mariuses

Slide 4**Suetonius *Divus Iulius I***

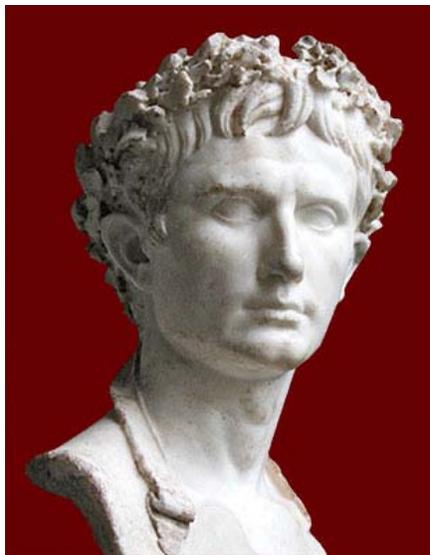
Annus agens sextum decimum patrem amisit; sequentibusque consulibus flamen Dialis destinatus dimissa Cossutia, quae familia equestri sed admodum dives praetextato desponsata fuerat, Corneliam Cinnae quater consulis filiam duxit uxorem, ex qua illi mox Iulia nata est; neque ut repudiaret compelli a dictatore Sulla ullo modo potuit.

In the course of his sixteenth year he lost his father. In the next consulate, having previously been nominated priest of Jupiter, he broke his engagement with Cossutia, a lady of only equestrian rank, but very wealthy, who had been betrothed to him before he assumed the gown of manhood, and married Cornelia, daughter of that Cinna who was four times consul, by whom he afterwards had a daughter Julia; and the dictator Sulla could by no means force him to put away his wife.

Discussion Questions

1. How did Caesar take control of his own future after his father was dead?
2. What was the attitude of this very young man toward Dictator Sulla? Did he conceal that attitude?

2) Early Service in military



Slide 5

a) King of Nicomedia, corona civica

Suet *DI* 2

Stipendia prima in Asia fecit Marci Thermi praetoris contubernio; a quo ad accersendam classem in Bithyniam missus desedit apud Nicomedem, non sine rumore prostratae regi pudicitiae; quem rumorem auxit intra paucos rursus dies repetita Bithynia per causam exigendae pecuniae, quae deberetur cuidam libertino clienti suo. Reliqua militia secundiore fama fuit et a Thermo in expugnatione Mytilenarum corona civica donatus est.

He served his first campaign in Asia on the personal staff of Marcus Thermus, governor of the province. Being sent by

Thermus to Bithynia, to fetch a fleet, he dawdled so long at the court of Nicomedes that he was suspected of improper relations with the king; and he lent color to this scandal by going back to Bithynia a few days after his return, with the alleged purpose of collecting a debt for a freedman, one of his dependents. During the rest of the campaign he enjoyed a better reputation, and at the storming of Mytilene Thermus awarded him the civic crown.

[The corona civica, a woven crown of oak leaves, ranking only after the grass crown, was the second highest military decoration of ancient Rome. It was awarded to a soldier who saved the life of another soldier in battle. Soldiers receiving this great honor had a place reserved next to the senators at all the public spectacles. Crowds always stood as a mark of respect to such a soldier; in fact the Romans in general had to stand when he wore this crown. Caesar made frequent and perhaps mischievous use of this right in later years.]

Discussion Questions

1. How did he fall under suspicion of questionable relations with King Nicomedes?(Remember his later statement, “Men readily believe what they want to believe.”)
2. What honor did he receive as a result of the storming of the city of Mytilene?What does this say about his performance as a soldier at the age of 19?

Slide 6



b) pirates

[During this era fierce pirates, many based in Cilicia on the south coast of Asia Minor, were a constant threat to all ships, often selling ordinary travelers as slaves and holding wealthy and important ones for ransom. Pompey the Great earned his title partly by clearing the sea of them]

Suet DI 4 1 Ceterum composita seditione civili Cornelium Dolabellam consularem et triumphalem repetundarum postulavit; absolutoque Rhodum secedere statuit, et ad declinandam invidiam et ut per otium ac requiem Apollonio Moloni clarissimo tunc dicendi magistro operam daret. Huc dum hibernis iam mensibus traicit, circa Pharmacussam insulam a praedonibus captus est mansitque apud eos non sine summa indignatione prope quadraginta dies cum uno medico et cubiculariis duobus. 2 Nam comites servosque ceteros initio statim ad expediendas pecunias, quibus redimeretur, dimiserat. Numeratis deinde quinquaginta talentis expositus in litore non distulit quin e vestigio classe deducta persequeretur abeuntis ac redactos in potestatem supplicio, quod saepe illis minatus inter iocum fuerat, adficeret

. On the acquittal of Dolabella Caesar determined to withdraw to Rhodes, to escape from the ill-will which he had incurred, and at the same time to rest and have leisure to study under Apollonius Molo, the most eminent teacher of oratory of that time. While crossing to Rhodes, after the winter season had already begun, he was taken by pirates near the island of Pharmacussa and remained in their custody for nearly forty days in a state of intense vexation, attended only by a single physician and two body-servants; for he had sent off his travelling companions and the rest of his attendants at the outset, to raise money for his ransom. Once he was set on shore on payment of fifty talents, he then and there he launched a fleet to pursue the

departing pirates, and the moment they were in his power to inflict on them the punishment which he had often threatened when joking with them.

Suet *D I* 74 1 **Sed et in ulciscendo natura lenissimus piratas, a quibus^o captus est, cum in dicionem redegisset, quoniam suffixurum se cruci ante iuraverat, iugulari prius iussit, deinde suffigi;**

Suet 74 1 Even in avenging wrongs he was by nature most merciful, and when he got hold of the pirates who had captured him, he had them crucified, since he had sworn beforehand that he would do so, but ordered that their throats be cut first.

Plutarch, *Lives, Julius Caesar* (Notice minor differences from Suetonius)

With Nicodemus in Bithynia he tarried a short time, and then, on his voyage back, was captured, near the island Pharmacusa, by pirates, who already at that time controlled the sea with large armaments and countless small vessels. To begin with, then, when the pirates demanded twenty talents for his ransom, he laughed at them for not knowing who their captive was, and of his own accord agreed to give them fifty. In the next place, after he had sent various followers to various cities to procure the money and was left with one friend and two attendants among Cilicians, most murderous of men, he held them in such disdain that whenever he lay down to sleep he would send an order to them to stop talking. For eight and thirty days, as if the men were not his watchers, but his royal body-guard, he shared in their sports and exercises with great unconcern. He also wrote poems and sundry speeches which he read aloud to them, and those who did not admire these he would call to their faces illiterate Barbarians, and often laughingly threatened to hang them all. The pirates were delighted at this, and attributed his boldness of speech to a certain simplicity and boyish bravado. But after his ransom had come from Miletus and he had paid it and was set free, he immediately manned vessels and put to sea from the harbor of Miletus against the robbers. He caught them, too, still lying at anchor off the island, and got most of them into his power. Their money he made his booty, but the men themselves he lodged in the prison at Pergamum, and then went in person to Junius, the governor of Asia, on the ground that it belonged to him, as praetor of the province, to punish the captives. But since the praetor cast longing eyes on their money, which was no small sum, and kept saying that he would consider the case of the captives at his leisure, Caesar left him to his own devices, went to Pergamum, took the robbers out of prison, and crucified them all, just as he had often warned them on the island that he would do, when they thought he was joking.

Discussion Questions

- 1) *What have we learned about Caesar's personality so far?*
- 2) *In what ways is he an unusual young man?*

Slide 7**c) private militia**

[Mithridates VI King of Pontus and Armenia Minor 134-63 BC was one of Rome's most formidable enemies. He fought against Sulla, Lucullus, and Pompey. In 74BC he attacked Asia Minor for a second time. On his own initiative and expense, Caesar, now 25 years old, raised a small army and defended some towns, giving the official Roman commander Lucullus time to organize an army and attack Mithridates in Pontus.]

Suetonius DI 4

Vastante regiones proximas Mithridate, ne desidere in discrimine sociorum videretur, ab Rhodo, quo pertenderat, transiit in Asiam auxiliisque contractis et praefecto regis provincia expulso nutantis ac dubias civitates retinuit in fide.

He then proceeded to Rhodes, but as Mithridates was devastating the neighboring regions, he crossed over into Asia, to avoid the appearance of inaction when the allies of the Roman people were in danger. There he levied a band of auxiliaries and drove the king's prefect from the province, thus holding the wavering and irresolute states to their allegiance.

Slide 8

- **Divorce question**
- **Corona civica**
- **Fleet against pirates**
- **Private militia**

Discussion Question

What qualities has Caesar shown up to this point which will resurface in the Gallic Wars?

Section II The Cursus Honorum**1) As Quaestor****Slide 9**



Funeral orations for wife and grandmother
[When he returned to Rome after his service in Asia Minor, Caesar had little trouble getting elected quaestor, the first office of the Cursus Honorum. Before he departed for Spain to serve under Antistius Vetus, his aunt Julia, widow of Marius, died, and he publicly celebrated her funeral. He soon did the same for his wife Cornelia. His aunt had been the widow, his wife the daughter, of leaders on the Populares party as opposed to the Optimates formerly led by Sulla. Many of these last were still in power. Once again Caesar has gone against convention, showing little concern for the likeliest path to safety.]

Suetonius *Divus Julius* 5,6 covers this.

Plutarch *Life of Caesar* 5

5 1 The first proof of the people's good will towards him he received when he competed against Caius Popilius and was elected over him; a second and more conspicuous proof he received when, as nephew of Julia the deceased wife of Marius, he pronounced a splendid encomium upon her in the forum, and in her funeral procession ventured to display images of Marius, which were then seen for the first time since the administration of Sulla, because Marius and his friends had been pronounced public enemies. When some cried out against Caesar for this procedure, the people answered them with loud shouts, received Caesar with applause, and admired him for bringing back after so long a time, as it were from Hades, the honors of Marius into the city. Now, in the case of elderly women, it was not unusual ancient Roman usage to pronounce funeral orations over them; but it was not customary in the case of young women, and Caesar was the first to do so when his own wife died. This also brought him much favor, and worked upon the sympathies of the multitude, so that they were fond of him, as a man who was gentle and full of feeling.

Discussion question

How is Caesar acting within the legal framework, but ignoring the safest course?

2) As Praetor-Elect [*Caesar served as Aedile, going into debt to provide the necessary spectacles. During Cicero's consulship in 63 BC, the candidate he had defeated, Catiline, mounted a revolt. Very powerful Romans caught red-handed in this plot were brought to trial before the Senate. Senators were asked to speak on their punishment in order of rank. Caesar, who was now praetor-elect, was one of the first. The sentiments he expresses here correspond with many of his actions when he had power.*]

Slide 10

Speech on the subject of Catilinarian conspirators quoted in Sallust *Bellum Catilinae* 51 1-3; 12-14

1 "Omnis homines, patres conscripti, qui de rebus dubiis consultant, ab odio, amicitia, ira atque misericordia vacuos esse decet. 2 Haud facile animus verum providet, ubi illa officiant, neque quisquam omnium lubrici simul et usui paruit.

“It is proper for all men, Senators, who are deliberating on doubtful questions to be free from hatred, friendship, anger, and pity. The mind will not easily see the truth, when such things cloud its view; neither can anyone satisfy his passions and his best interest at the same time

12 Sed alia aliis licentia est, patres conscripti. Qui demissi in obscuro vitam habent siquid iracundia deliquere, pauci sciunt; fama atque fortuna eorum pares sunt: qui magno imperio praediti in excelso aetatem agunt, eorum facta cuncti mortales novere. 13 Ita in maxima fortuna minima licentia est. 14 Neque studere neque odisse, sed minime irasci decet. Quae apud alios iracundia dicitur, ea in imperio superbia atque crudelitas appellatur.

But not all men, Fathers of the Senate, are allowed the same freedom of action. If the humble, who pass their lives in obscurity, commit any offence through anger, few know of it; their fame and fortune are alike. But those who pass their lives in a lofty station with great power, their deeds are known to all the world. 13 So it comes to pass that in the highest position there is the least freedom of action. 14 There it is proper neither to study (show) partiality nor dislike, and anger least of all; for what in others is called wrath, this in a ruler is termed insolence and cruelty.

Slide 11

[In the Bellum Catilinae, Sallust, who was acquainted with both of them, compares Caesar to his life-long arch-enemy Cato.]

Igitur eis (Caesari Catonique) genus, aetas, eloquentia prope aequalia fuerunt, magnitudo animi par, etiam gloria, sed alia alii. Caesar beneficiis ac munificentia magnus habebatur, integritate vitae Cato. Ille mansuetudine et misericordia clarus factus, huic severitas dignitatem addiderat. Caesar dando, sublevando, ignoscendo, Cato nihil largiendo gloriam adeptus est. In altero miseris perfugium erat; in altero malis perniciēs. Illius facilitas, huius constantia laudabatur. Postremo, Caesar in animum induxerat laborare, viligare; negotiis amicorum intentus, sua negligere; nihil denegare quod dono dignum esset. *Bellum Catilinae, 54*

“Therefore birth, age, eloquence were almost equal for them, greatness of mind (was) equal, likewise glory (was equal), but in other things they were otherwise (different). Caesar was considered great by (his) kindnesses and generosity, Cato by (his) integrity of life. That one (Caesar) by gentleness and compassion was made famous, for this one (Cato) sternness added authority. Caesar **by giving and forgiving, Cato by squandering nothing**, gained glory. In the one there was a refuge for the miserable, in the other there was destruction for the evil. The good nature of that one, the firmness of this one was praised. Finally, Caesar decided to work, to watch; intent on the needs of his friends, he sometimes neglected his own; he decided to withhold nothing that was a worthy gift.”

3) As Consul and “Triumvir”

Slide 12

Triumvirate

[Caesar became consul, and the Senate set out to frustrate everything he proposed. He passed and renewed some good laws, but there were many hurdles to clear. He saw that Pompey and Crassus were also disgruntled with the Senate, Pompey because they had not honored treaties he had made in his Asiatic wars and Crassus for many reasons such as their failing to give a rebate to his tax collectors who had lost money. Although Pompey and Crassus had been at odds since the days of Spartacus, had wrangled during their joint consulship, and were far from friends, Caesar brokered a very unofficial agreement for himself, Pompey and Crassus that none of them would support any measure all three did not approve. This private arrangement Caesar called the Amicitia; it became known as the First Triumvirate. It was in no way official, but it was very effective.]

Suetonius *Divus Iulius* 19

Qua maxime iniuria instinctus omnibus officiis Gnaeum Pompeium adsectatus est offensum patribus, quod Mithridate rege victo cunctantius confirmarentur acta sua; Pompeioque Marcum Crassum reconciliavit veterem inimicum ex consulatu, quem summa discordia simul gesserant; ac societatem cum utroque iniit, ne quid ageretur in re publica, quod displicisset ulli e tribus.

Thereupon Caesar, especially incensed by this slight, by every possible attention courted the goodwill of Gnaeus Pompeius, who was at odds with the senate because of its tardiness in ratifying his acts after his victory over King Mithridates. He also patched up a peace between Pompeius and Marcus Crassus, who had been enemies since their consulship, which had been one of constant wrangling. Then he made a compact with both of them, that no step should be taken in public affairs which did not suit any one of the three.

Slide 13

- **Funeral orations**
- **Comments on attitudes of leaders**
- **Triumvirate**

Discussion Question

*We have now arrived at the beginning of Caesar's proconsulship, where **De Bello Gallico** begins. How do these acts foreshadow how we can expect Caesar to behave as he and we move into the Gallic Wars?*

Section III Proconsul and commander in Gaul and Illyricum

Qualities shown

Slide 14



a) speed

[As proconsul Caesar was made governor of the Province of Gaul, the narrow strip of the country that Rome at that time controlled, and of Illyricum (part of modern Albania, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina). He fought the Helvetian Campaign in the first summer, defeated them and sent their remnant home, then led the troops to winter quarters and went back to the provincial capitals to take care of provincial business. As the next spring neared, his subordinates learned that the Belgians, in the northernmost part of Gaul, were planning a major anti-Roman offensive. After a forced march of some 800 miles, Caesar suddenly arrived in Belgian territories, before anyone thought he could possibly travel so far.

We now are reading from DBG itself.]

Caesar, De Bello Gallico

Eo cum de improviseo celeriusque omnium opinione venisset, Remi, qui proximi Galliae ex Belgis sunt, ad eum legatos Iccium et Andebrogium, primos civitatis, miserunt, qui dicerent se suaque omnia in fidem atque potestatem populi Romani permittere

DBG Book 2, Section 3

As he arrived there unexpectedly and sooner than anyone anticipated, the Remi, who are the nearest of the Belgae to [Celtic] Gaul, sent to him Iccius and Antebrogius, [two of] the principal persons of the state, as their ambassadors to tell him that they surrendered themselves and all their possessions to the protection and disposal of the Roman people:

b) clemency

[This quality had been celebrated in Roman commanders of old. Camillus when besieging the city of Falerii, was approached by a teacher leading the children of the city leaders and offering them to Camillus for gold, as the leaders would surrender the city to get their children back. Camillus said "the army of the Roman people does not make war on children." He had the children and their treacherous teacher taken back to the city, which surrendered. (Dionysius of Halicarnassus Roman Antiquities Book XIII)

Flamininus after defeating Philipp V of Macedon and chasing him out of Greece, freed the Greek cities and asked as his reward only Italian slaves whom they held. According to Plutarch, the Greeks hailed him as their liberator; they minted coins with his portrait, and in some cities he was deified. (Livy, Books 31-45) When Scipio Africanus (Livy 26.50) as a young commander was fighting in Spain, his soldiers brought him a young and beautiful female captive. On inquiry Scipio learned that she was engaged to a young prince of the Celtiberians, Allucius. Under a flag of truce he sent for her parents and her bridegroom. He spoke to the young man rather than to the parents. "A young man myself," said he, "I address myself to a young man, and therefore there need be the less reserve in this conversation. She has been kept in perfect safety for you. This only reward I bargain for in return is that you would be a friend to the Roman people, and if you believe that I am a true man, that you would feel assured that in the Roman state there are many like me." The young man invoked all the gods to recompense Scipio in his behalf, since he lacked the means proportioned either to his own wishes or Scipio's deserts. The relatives of the girl, who had brought a wagonload of gold for her ransom, entreated Scipio to accept it as a present. Scipio accepted it. Then calling Allucius to him, he said: "Let this be added to the dowry you receive as a present from me." On going home Allucius praised the young Roman who conquered not only by arms, but by kindness and generosity. He returned to Scipio after a few days, with fourteen hundred horsemen to join the Roman army.

Romans had long known that winning by generosity was less costly and more lasting than winning by conquest. **Caesar** took this trait to a new level. In the section which we are examining, he is already known for clemency]

exercitumque in Bellovacos ducit. 2 Qui cum se suaque omnia in oppidum Bratuspantium contulissent atque ab eo oppido Caesar cum exercitu circiter milia passuum V abesset, omnes maiores natu ex oppido egressi manus ad Caesarem tendere et voce significare coeperunt sese in eius fidem ac potestatem venire neque contra populum Romanum armis contendere. 3 Item, cum ad oppidum accessisset castraque ibi poneret, pueri mulieresque ex muro passis mallibus suo more pacem ab Romanis petierunt. De Bello Gallico Book 2 13

He led his army against the Bellovaci. Who, when they had conveyed themselves and all their possessions into the town called Bratuspantium, and Caesar with his army was about five miles distant from that town, all the old men, going out of the town, began to stretch out their hands to Caesar, and to intimate by their voice that they would throw themselves on his protection and power, nor would contend in arms against the Roman people. In like manner, when he had come up to the town, and there pitched his camp, the boys and the women from the wall, with outstretched hands, after their custom, begged peace from the Romans.

And of course they got it. Caesar accepted them in surrender, confiscated all their weapons, and then locked his soldiers out of the city each night. He was not sure what all those soldiers might get into in an undefended city.

Slide 15

c) doing the undoable

[Caesar from the beginning of De Bello Gallico refers to the Germans “who live across the Rhine.” The ancient Gauls and Germans believed that only gods could bridge the Rhine, because it was the longest, largest and swiftest river they knew. Caesar gained great advantages throughout his career by doing what people considered impossible.]



De Bello Gallico Book 4 16

Germanico bello confecto multis de causis Caesar statuit sibi Rhenum esse transeundum; quarum illa fuit iustissima quod, cum videret Germanos tam facile impelli ut in Galliam venirent, suis quoque rebus eos timere voluit, cum intellegerent et posse et audere populi Romani exercitum Rhenum transire.

The German war being finished, Caesar thought it expedient for him to cross the Rhine, for many reasons; of which this was the most weighty, that, since he saw the Germans were so easily urged to go into Gaul, he desired they should have their fears for their own territories, when they discovered that the army of the Roman people both could and dared pass the Rhine

DBG 4 17

Caesar his de causis quas commemoravi Rhenum transire decreverat; sed navibus transire neque satis tutum esse arbitrabatur neque suae neque populi Romani dignitatis esse statuebat. 2 Itaque, etsi summa difficultas faciendi pontis proponebatur propter latitudinem, rapiditatem altitudinemque fluminis, tamen id sibi contendendum aut aliter non traducendum exercitum existimabat.

Caesar, for those reasons which I have mentioned, had resolved to cross the Rhine; but to cross by ships he neither deemed to be sufficiently safe, nor considered consistent with his own dignity or that of the Roman people. Therefore, although the greatest difficulty in forming a bridge was presented to him, on account of the breadth, rapidity, and depth of the river, he nevertheless considered that it ought to be attempted or that his army ought not otherwise to be led over.

And as we know, he built that bridge, crossed into Germany, defeated the Germans, and destroyed the bridge.

Slide 16

a) speed

b) clemency

c) doing the undoable

Discussion Question -- How has Caesar demonstrated in his Gallic War Commentaries qualities which other ancients had seen in him before?

Slide 17

[When Caesar started back to Rome at the end of 50 BC, he had added an immense territory to the Roman Empire, and that territory was largely loyal to Caesar rather than to Rome. You can trace the area on this map.]

Slide 18

Suetonius *Divus Iulius* 25

1 Gessit autem novem annis, quibus in imperio fuit, haec fere. Omnem Galliam, quae saltu Pyrenaeo Alpibusque et monte Cebenna, fluminibus Rheno ac Rhodano continetur patetque circuitu ad bis et tricies centum milia passuum, praeter socias ac bene meritas civitates, in provinciae formam redegit, eique in singulos annos stipendii nomine inposuit. Germanos, qui trans Rhenum incolunt, primus Romanorum ponte fabricato adgressus maximis adfecit cladibus;

1 During the nine years of his command this is in substance what he did. All that part of Gaul which is bounded by the Pyrenees, the Alps and the Cévennes, and by the Rhine and Rhone rivers, a circuit of some 3,200 miles, with the exception of some allied states which had rendered him good service, he reduced to the form of a province; and imposed upon it a yearly tribute of 40,000,000 sesterces. He was the first Roman to build a bridge and attack the Germans beyond the Rhine; and he inflicted heavy losses upon them.

Section IV After Gaul

Slide 19 The Rubicon Crisis

a) crossing the Rubicon

[Caesar crossing the Rubicon is world famous, and we do not consider how shocking it was.]

As we will observe in DBG Romans broke off battle at the end of summer and led their troops into winter quarters. It was not the custom of the Roman people, as Caesar would say, to fight in the winter. Caesar was standing at the little Rubicon River which bounded his territory in January, and he had with him only one legion. No one expected him to cross the river at that season and take on the might of Rome. His situation was dire, however, and he decided to do so.

M. Cato identidem nec sine iure iurando denuntiaret delaturum se nomen eius, simul ac primum exercitum dimisisset; cumque vulgo fore praedicarent, ut si privatus redisset, Milonis exemplo circumpositis armatis causam apud iudices diceret Suetonius D I 30.2

Marcus Cato often declared, and took oath too, that he would impeach Caesar the moment he had disbanded his army. It was openly said too that if he was out of office on his return, he would be obliged, like Milo, to make his defense in a court hedged about by armed men,

Consecutusque cohortis ad Rubiconem flumen, qui provinciae eius finis erat, paulum constitit, ac reputans quantum moliretur, conversus ad proximos: "Etiam nunc," inquit, "regredi possumus; quod si ponticulum transierimus, omnia armis agenda erunt." Ibid. 32

Overtaking his cohorts at the river Rubicon, which was the boundary of his province, he paused a while, and realizing what a step he was taking, he turned to those about him and said: "Even yet we may draw back; but once cross that little bridge, and the whole issue is with the sword."

Slide 20

Plutarch

Life of Caesar 32

When he came to the river which separates Cisalpine Gaul from the rest of Italy (it is called the Rubicon), and began to reflect, now that he drew nearer to the fearful step and was agitated by the magnitude of his ventures, he checked his speed. Then, halting in his course, he communed with himself a long time in silence.



. But finally, with a sort of passion, as if abandoning calculation and casting himself upon the future, and uttering the phrase with which men usually prelude their plunge into desperate and daring fortunes, "Let the die be cast," he hastened to cross the river; and going at full speed now for the rest of the time, before daybreak he dashed into Ariminum and took possession of it.

Discussion Question

How does the Rubicon action fit into what the authors have told us of Caesar's general character?

Slide 21

As commander in the Civil War

[Caesar's unexpected action caused panic in Rome. Caesar marched southward, overcoming the force sent against him, capturing its commander Lucius Domitius, and then, after most of this army had defected to Caesar, setting him free. Pompey, the army he had, and the Senate all fled

the city of Rome, which shook in its sandals when it recalled the actions of Marius and Sulla. Caesar reassured the city and then marched southward, attempting to catch Pompey. Cicero, who had after much shilly-shallying joined Pompey, in March wrote a despairing note about Caesar to his friend Atticus. This quote is especially valuable because it is a private communication, not a public statement.]

Sed videsne in quem hominem inciderit res publica? Quam acutum, quam vigilantem, quam paratum? Si mehercule neminem occiderit, nec cuiquam quicquam ademerit, ab iis qui eum maxime timuerant maxime diligetur... et vide quam conversa res est: illum quo antea confidebant metuunt, hunc amant quem timebant. *Ad Atticum* 8.13

“Do you see to what kind of man the Republic has fallen? How insightful, how vigilant, how prepared? If by Hercules he kills no man, and takes nothing away from anyone, by those who greatly feared him he will be greatly loved. I talk much with the townspeople, and see how things have changed: that man in whom they trusted before, they fear; they love this man whom they feared.” (*Ad Atticum* 8.13)

Slide 22 Caesar Traits according to Suetonius

Proelia non tantum destinato, sed ex occasione sumebat ac saepe ab itinere statim, interdum spurcissimis tempestatibus, cum minime quis moturum putaret...Ancipiti proelio equos dimittebat et in primis suum, quo maior permanendi necessitas imponeretur auxilio fugae erepto. Suetonius *DI* 60

Inclinatam aciem solus saepe restituit obsistens fugientibus retinensque singulos et contortis faucibus convertens in hostem *DI* 62

Non minor illa constantia eius, maiora etiam indicia fuerint. Post aciem Pharsalicam cum praemissis in Asiam copiis per angustias Hellesponti vectoria navicula traiceret, L. Cassium partis adversae cum decem rostratis navibus obvium sibi neque refugit et comminus tendens, ultro ad deditionem hortatus, supplicem ad se recepit. *DI* 63

60 1 He joined battle, not only after planning his movements in advance but on a sudden opportunity, often immediately at the end of a march, and sometimes in the foulest weather, when one would least expect him to make a move... When the issue was doubtful, he used to send away the horses, his own among the first, to impose upon the troops the greater necessity of standing their ground by taking away that aid to flight. (*He did this in the Helvetian battles.*)

62 1 When his army gave way, he often rallied it single-handed, planting himself in the way of the fleeing men, laying hold of them one by one, and even catching them by the throat and forcing them to face the enemy; (*He did this in the battle with the Nervii in DBG Book 2*)

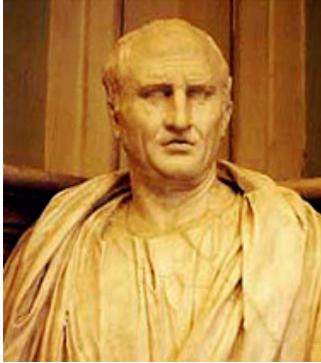
63 1 His presence of mind was no less renowned, and the instances of it will appear even more striking. After the battle of Pharsalus, when he had sent on his troops and was crossing the strait of the Hellespont in a small passenger boat, he met Lucius Cassius, of the hostile party, with ten armored ships, and made no attempt to escape, but went to meet Cassius and actually urged him to surrender; Cassius sued for mercy and was taken on board.

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[Although Cicero had joined Pompey, Caesar met with Cicero during the Civil War, hailing him as fellow Imperator although his one small success on the battlefield was hardly comparable to what Caesar had done, and mildly asking him at the very least to remain neutral. Caesar was still pursuing his policy of clemency, but we get hints that there were limits. Cicero writes to

Atticus that his communication with Caesar, who was on his way to Spain to deal with some of Pompey's adherents, contained the following:

Caesar said to Cicero, April 49 BC



Namque et amicitiae graviolem iniuriam feceris et tibi minus commode consulueris, si non fortuna obsecutus videberis – Omnia enim secundissima nobis, adversissima illis accidisse videntur -- (*Ad Atticum* 10.8b)

For you will both have made a more serious injury to our friendship and you will have considered less insightfully about yourself, if you do not seem to have yielded to fortune – for all things appear to be very favorable to us, and very much against them –

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[This advice was underscored by a letter Cicero received from his young friend Marcus Caelius Rufus who was traveling with Caesar]

Etiam atque etiam, Cicero, cogita, ne te tuosque omnes funditus evertas, ne te sciens prudensque eo demittas, unde exitum vides nullum esse... Eligas censeo aliquod oppidum vacuum a bello, dum haec decernuntur...Id si feceris, et ego te sapienter fecisse iudicabo et Caesarem non offendes. (*Ad Familiares* 8.16)

Again and again, Cicero, think, so that you may not overturn yourself and all yours utterly, so that you may not knowingly and fully aware descend to that place, from which there is no escape. I propose that you choose some city empty of war, while these things are being decided...If you will do that, both I will judge you to have behaved wisely and you will not offend Caesar.

Discussion Question

How do these last observations from Cicero fit with Caesar's character as our authors have depicted it?

What can Caelius' warning indicate to us? Remember the Atuatuaci, DBG 2.31-33. He accepted them in surrender and they handed over half their arms, and then made a sneak attack with the rest. He took the city and sold them into slavery)

Slide 25 Victor et Dictator

(Caesar defeated Pompey in Greece and followed that leader fleeing to Egypt, evidently intent on a pardon, as he had granted to so many enemies. His intention, whatever it was, was thwarted by Pharaoh Ptolemy XIII, who had Pompey beheaded, much to Caesar's dismay.

1 Moderationem vero clementiamque cum in administratione tum in victoria belli civilis admirabilem exhibuit... Acie Pharsalica proclamavit, ut civibus parceretur, deincepsque nemini non suorum quem vellet unum partis adversae servare concessit. Suetonius *DI*. 75

1 He certainly showed admirable self-restraint and mercy, both in his conduct of the civil war and in the hour of victory... At the battle of Pharsalus he cried out, "Spare your fellow citizens," and afterwards allowed each of his men to save any one man he pleased of the opposite party.

4 Denique tempore extremo etiam quibus nondum ignoverat, cunctis in Italiam redire permisit magistratusque et imperia capere; sed et statuas Luci Sullae atque Pompei a plebe disiectas reposuit; ac si qua posthac aut cogitarentur gravius adversus se aut dicerentur, inhibere maluit quam vindicare. 5 Itaque et detectas coniurationes conventusque nocturnos non ultra arguit, quam ut edicto ostenderet esse sibi notas, et acerbe loquentibus satis habuit pro contione denuntiare ne perseverarent,

At last, in his later years, he went so far as to allow all those whom he had not yet pardoned to return to Italy, and to hold magistracies and the command of armies: and he actually set up the statues of Lucius Sulla and Pompey, which had been broken to pieces by the populace. After this, if any dangerous plots were formed against him, or slanders uttered, he preferred to quash rather than to punish them. 5 Accordingly, he took no further notice of the conspiracies which were detected, and of meetings by night, than to make known by proclamation that he was aware of them; and he thought it enough to give public warning to those who spoke ill of him, not to persist in their conduct,



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[We know that these generous moves did not preserve his life, nor did his many achievements. He had long believed that his country was badly ruled through the greed and incompetence of the great men, and he decided to change this. When in control, he established police forces, and introduced reforms concerning the idle plebs that had grown used to living from the sale of votes and the distribution of alms. In a move that might be called Work for Welfare, one of Caesar's first acts was to reduce from 320,000 to 150,000 the number of those who would henceforth receive free allocations. These people

were reclassified and utilized in the economy; capable ones were employed in great urban works, the construction of a new Forum, and the improvement of the port of Ostia. Most received lands: 80,000 commons became men of the country on domains confiscated from Pompey's partisans; in order to reduce poverty, debts were cut by a quarter and non-payment of rent was authorized for one year; laws repressed unbridled luxury.

Caesar undertook to reestablish from top to bottom the provincial governments, which had descended into pillage. He named proconsuls himself, moved them about at will and published provincial budgets. (He loved publishing government activities. During his consulship he had published the daily acts of the Senate, a move that did not endear him to his senatorial colleagues). He created colonies with the poor or with veterans in places destined for great economic development. He even found time to rework the calendar. In addition he resurrected two city-states, Carthage and Corinth, important seaports which had been destroyed by his predecessors. He also reformed the Senate by increasing its size and opening it up so that it better represented Romans as a whole. This last, like a number of his other actions, was good for Rome but anathema to many powerful Romans.

Suetonius, who as we have seen delineates his good points, says that he deserved to die for “overweening pride.” He makes statements such as the following “But it was the following action in particular that roused deadly hatred against him. When the Senate approached him in a body with many highly honorary decrees, he received them before the temple of Venus Genetrix without rising (DI 78)’ These and other such statements seem rather petty, but what concerned Suetonius and the Senators opposed to Caesar was less about pride than about power. In 44 BC, Caesar received the title of perpetual dictator, as he had enough Senators on his side to secure the appointment. Other granted prerogatives extended his power: the right to declare peace and war, an oath imposed upon senators and magistrates to respect his decisions, and tribunician power, which made his person sacrosanct, allowed him to veto acts of the senate, and allowed him to dominate the Plebeian Council. Thus he controlled every arm of government. However wise he might be in reforming society, however generous he might be with enemies, certain powerful Senators who wanted to run things themselves were determined to get rid of him, but his popularity called for action both secret and desperate.

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Cicero Philippics 2. 116-117

[After Caesar was dead, Cicero in his Philippics was trying desperately to keep Mark Antony from succeeding to Caesar’s powers. He makes this comparison between the two].

Fuit in illo ingenium, ratio, memoria, litterae, cura, cogitatio, diligentia; res bello gesserat, quamvis rei publicae calamitosas, at tamen magnas; multos annos regnare meditatus, magno labore, magnis periculis, quod cogitarat effecerat; muneribus, monumentis, congiariis, epulis multitudinem imperitam delenierat; suos praemiis, adversarios clementiae specie devinxerat; quid multa? Attulerat iam liberae civitati partim metu, partim patientia consuetudinem serviendi.

Cum illo ego te dominandi cupiditate conferre possum, ceteris vero rebus nullo modo comparandus es. Phillipic 2, 116

There was in him(Caesar) reason, memory, education, concern, thought, diligence. He carried on affairs by war, although disastrous to the republic, nevertheless great; having studied for many years to rule, by great labor and with great dangers he brought about that which he desired; by gifts, monuments, spectacles, banquets he softened the unskilled multitude; his friends by rewards, his enemies by the spectacle of kindness he conquered. What more shall I say? He changed a free state partly by fear, partly by his custom of serving others with patience.

With him I am able to compare you only in desire of dominating; in the rest you are in no way worthy to be compared with him.

Discussion Questions

What was Caesar’s real sin, as far as the Senate was concerned?

Make suggestions as to why he wanted all power to come from himself.