between the lines

A lesson written for every student in the room

FREE LESSON SAMPLER

Julius Caesar: You blocks, you stones

How does Shakespeare present the common people of Rome in the opening scene?

Lesson 3 of 33 from the scheme of learning

Teacher notes, slides and student pages at all three levels

Written for the AQA specification



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What is in this sampler

This is one complete lesson from our Julius Caesar scheme for Literature Paper 1, Section A. It comes exactly as it appears in the full scheme, so you can teach it next week and see how our lessons work.

Teacher notes	Timings with slide numbers, Do Now answers, the exploded quotation, the hinge question and what each answer tells you, the task at three levels, a model and notes on misconceptions and adapting the lesson (next pages).
Slides	The editable PowerPoint deck for Lesson 3, with teacher notes on every slide (separate file).
Student pages	The lesson's pages from the student booklet: one question, with the Securing, Strengthening and Soaring support side by side (at the end of this document).

How every lesson works

Know	Do Now from memory, vocabulary, then the reading. The five Do Now questions build on what students learned in Lessons 1 and 2 of the full scheme.
Apply	Explode one quotation together; a hinge question checks understanding.
Master	One shared task, with Securing, Strengthening and Soaring support; then a model and an exit ticket. Most Master tasks are What–How–Why paragraphs, and some are creative or other forms: in this lesson, a diary entry.

Three levels of support

Every student answers the same question in every lesson. What changes is the support on the page, so the whole class does the same lesson:

Securing	The most support: a word bank, a choice of quotations, a worked example and sentence starters. For students working towards a grade 4.
Strengthening	Prompts for What, How and Why, a paragraph planner and a checklist. For students working at grades 5 and 6.
Soaring	A debatable statement, prompts to think further and an argument planner. For students aiming at grades 7 to 9.

The names describe the support, never the student. The hinge question shows who might start where, and students move between levels from lesson to lesson.

In the full scheme

- 33 lessons like this one, with editable slides and a teacher handbook (lesson notes, unit map, assessment guide and knowledge bank)
- A student booklet with every lesson and all three levels of support, plus the same lessons as one pack per level
- Six weeks of independent practice homework at three levels
- Four Feedback Loop progress checks with whole-class feedback sheets and improvement tasks

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- An exam-style end-of-unit essay with a teacher guide, level guidance and annotated model answers
- A Soaring stretch booklet for students aiming at the top levels
- A catch-up sheet for every lesson, for students who missed it
- An inclusion guide: pre-teaching, SEND, EAL and pupil premium notes for every lesson
- The revision workbook and the model answer pack, to print for every student
- Every licence for the scheme also includes its 30 Raising Achievement drills for intervention sessions

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Lesson 3: You blocks, you stones

SEQUENCE 1: CONTEXT AND ACT 1 · 60 MINUTES

How does Shakespeare present the common people of Rome in the opening scene?

By the end of the lesson, students can

- Explain how the cobbler's puns in prose and Marullus's rebuke in verse make the commoners and the tribunes sound different
- Analyse how Marullus accuses the crowd of forgetting Pompey
- Write a diary entry as the cobbler that uses at least three exact phrases from Act 1 Scene 1

Lesson at a glance

Time	Phase	What happens	Slides
0–8	Know	Do Now: five quick questions on Lesson 1 and the KS3 terms. Students self-mark from the answer slide.	2–3
8–20	Know	Pre-teach "plebeian", "tribune", "triumph" and "ingratitude". Read the extract aloud, with one student as the cobbler and one as Marullus, then ask: who is speaking in prose, and who in verse?	4–7
20–30	Apply	Explode the quotation together. Think aloud about what it means to call a crowd stones, then students annotate their copy. Before you reveal any notes, students try the four empty boxes on the first explode slide, on their own or after you model one box.	8–9
30–35	Apply	Hinge question on mini-whiteboards. Use the answers to decide who starts on which level of support.	10–11
35–53	Master	Students write the cobbler's diary entry for the night of the triumph, using their level of support in the student booklet. Share the model entry in the last five minutes and ask three students to read a sentence aloud.	12–13
53–60	Master	Exit ticket. Collect and sort into three piles to plan the start of Lesson 4.	14

Do Now answers

1	What title was Caesar given after he beat Pompey?	**Dictator for life**
2	Which old ally did Caesar beat before he was made dictator for life?	**Pompey**
3	Which council governed the Roman republic?	**The Senate**
4	Which king had the Romans driven out, long before Caesar?	**Tarquin**
5	Why did a play about the death of a ruler worry some people in London in 1599?	**Elizabeth I had no children and no named heir, and many feared civil war after her death**

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Vocabulary

plebeian	an ordinary Roman citizen, not a noble
tribune	an official elected to protect the common people of Rome
triumph	a grand parade to celebrate a victory
ingratitude	a lack of thanks for what someone has done for you

Reading

Act 1 Scene 1: the cobbler and the tribunes

It is a holiday in Rome. The tribunes Flavius and Marullus stop a crowd of workers in their best clothes. A cobbler, a mender of shoes, answers first, then Marullus turns on the crowd.

SECOND COMMONER.
Truly, sir, to wear out their shoes, to get myself into more work. But, indeed, sir, we make holiday, to see Caesar and to rejoice in his triumph.

MARULLUS.
Wherefore rejoice? What conquest brings he home?
What tributaries follow him to Rome,
To grace in captive bonds his chariot-wheels?
You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!
O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome,
Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft
Have you climb'd up to walls and battlements,
To towers and windows, yea, to chimney-tops,
Your infants in your arms, and there have sat
The live-long day, with patient expectation,
To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome:
And when you saw his chariot but appear,
Have you not made an universal shout,
That Tiber trembled underneath her banks,
To hear the replication of your sounds
Made in her concave shores?
And do you now put on your best attire?
And do you now cull out a holiday?
And do you now strew flowers in his way
That comes in triumph over Pompey's blood?
Be gone!
Run to your houses, fall upon your knees,
Pray to the gods to intermit the plague
That needs must light on this ingratitude.

William Shakespeare, Julius Caesar (1599), Act 1 Scene 1

Word help **Wherefore**: why · **tributaries**: conquered people forced to pay tribute to Rome · **replication**: an echo · **intermit**: hold back, stop

Explode the quotation

Method
A run of insults in one exclamation. Marullus speaks to the crowd as if they were lumps of rock.

Zoom in
"blocks" and "stones" are concrete nouns for things that cannot move or feel. "senseless" is an adjective meaning without feeling.

"You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!"

Effect
The audience hears a tribune's fury and a charge of ingratitude: the crowd cheered Pompey, and now cheers Caesar.

Purpose
Shakespeare opens with a crowd that changes sides. It is the first sign that the people of Rome follow whoever is in power, which matters at the funeral.

Hinge question

Marullus calls the commoners "blocks" and "stones". What is he accusing them of?

A. Having no feeling or loyalty, because they cheered Pompey and now cheer Caesar. (the right answer)

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B. Being too poor to afford holiday clothes.

C. Being too lazy to go to work.

What the answers tell you

B shows a literal reading of the insult: the student has missed the question that follows about Pompey. C means the student is remembering the first line of the scene, “idle creatures”, and has not followed Marullus’s speech: these may be your students who start on Securing. Re-read the Pompey lines together.

Why the answer is right

Marullus reminds the crowd that they once climbed up to cheer Pompey, so “senseless” stands for the feeling and loyalty they have forgotten.

Master task: diary entry

Write the cobbler’s diary entry for the night of Caesar’s triumph. Say what he and his friends did, what the tribunes said to them, what he remembers of Pompey and what he thinks of Caesar now. Use at least three exact phrases from Act 1 Scene 1.

Securing aiming for a 4

A frame for each part of the diary entry, exact phrases to use and a word bank.

“we make holiday, to see Caesar and to rejoice in his triumph”

“Knew you not Pompey?”

“Run to your houses, fall upon your knees”

Strengthening aiming for grades 5 to 6

Prompts for each part of the diary entry and a success checklist.

Begin with the night of the triumph and why you shut the shop

Describe what the tribunes asked you and how you answered

Quote what Marullus shouted and say how it felt

Remember what you and your friends did when Pompey passed

End with what you now think of Caesar and of yourselves

Soaring aiming for grades 7 to 9

Write the entry so that the cobbler cannot decide whether Marullus was right to scold the crowd. Let him argue both sides, and end without a settled answer.

Model diary entry

The night of the triumph.

I shut the shop early today, and not for the money. It was a holiday, and half the street was out in its best clothes. When the tribunes stopped me I told them the truth, though I dressed it as a joke. I said we make holiday “to see Caesar and to rejoice in his triumph”. Marullus did not laugh.

Then he turned on us. He called us “you blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!” and I wanted to answer, but he was right about one thing. I remember Pompey. We sat on the roofs with our children in our arms and shouted until the river trembled. I cheered him then, and today I cheered Caesar, and I could not tell you what has changed.

He cried “Be gone!” and told us to fall on our knees and pray. We went. Perhaps the tribunes are afraid of Caesar. I am not sure what I am afraid of. Perhaps it is that Marullus was right, and that we cheer whatever passes.

What makes it work

- Keeps the cobbler’s voice: a joke, a plain sentence, and a doubt at the end

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