

Notes on *Julius Caesar*

Act 1, scene 1

Setting:

- February 15, the Feast of Lupercal, an ancient fertility festival
- Julius Caesar's triumphant return to Rome after defeating the sons of Pompey in Spain
- Government-supplied food and drink is plentiful (The Feast of Lupercal is a high festival)
- Note: Historically, Caesar returned from Spain in October of 45 B.C. Shakespeare has compressed the time of events for dramatic purposes.)
- The religious festival, combined with Caesar's ceremonial entrance into the city, gives Caesar a god-like aura, according to some critics.

Language

- The tribunes speak in verse (iambic pentameter) and the commoners speak in prose.
- The commoners' puns add life to the scene.

Conflict

- The commoners are content with the harmony and abundance in their lives. They care more about the partying than about politics.
- The tribunes scold the commoners for their fickleness in celebrating Caesar now, even though they had celebrated Pompey as enthusiastically in the past.

Characters

- The commoners, also referred to as the plebeians or the mob, are characterized as having as acting as a group and being moved to change allegiance or position on an issue quickly, depending on the persuasiveness of a speaker.
- Flavius and Marullus consider themselves above these commoners and act with little respect for the power of anyone other than themselves.