Notes on Julius Caesar

Act 1, scene 1

Setting:

* February 15, the Feast of Lupercal
* 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 commoner 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 plebians 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.