

Choose a speech or a brief exchange where one character is trying to *persuade* another character (or to persuade him or herself). Write a 700 word essay describing how that act of persuasion works. What is the object of this persuasion? What are the persuader's tactics? Are they successful? How do you know? (You can choose any part of the play *except* the funeral speeches of Brutus and Antony.)

*Julius Caesar* is a tragedy; it is also, as much as any of the history plays, a play of politics. Much of the action consists of characters talking their way into conspiracy and through its aftermath. Along the way, there is much persuading to be done: of fellow conspirators, of possible allies, and of the people.

Rhetoric is the art of persuasion. The exercise for this week is to identify a scene where one character is trying to persuade another character to think or do something, and to understand how it is done and whether it is successful. This will mean closely tracking the speaker's rhetoric, and the response of the listener. You may find it useful to draw on some formal rhetorical vocabulary, the so-called schemes and tropes by which rhetoricians describe the various devices of persuasion. The tropes are figurative usages (metaphor, simile, metonymy etc.); the schemes are patterns in the ordering of language. Below are three schemes that you may see in use. If you draw on this terminology, the challenge will be not only observing the schemes, but explaining their persuasive power in context. (Do they make the language sound more or less formal, more or less ceremonial? Do they confer authority, and if so, how? And so on.)

- *Parallelism*: the use of phrases of approximately equal length and corresponding structure. Example: "not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more."
- *Epimone*: refrain; frequent repetition of a phrase or question. Example: "...but Brutus is an honorable man," many times repeated in Antony's oration.
- *Anaphora*: beginning successive phrases or sentences with the same word or phrase. Example (combining anaphora with parallelism): "As Caesar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honor him; but as he was ambitious, I slew him."

The excellent book *a Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, by Richard Lanham (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) is an excellent guide if you want to pursue this subject further.

Shakespeare is interested in how we persuade others and how we persuade ourselves, and how much argument has to do with it (as opposed to other factors: desire, ambition, deception, etc.). All sorts of other issues are bound up with persuasion in the play, including love, friendship, prophecy, and political liberty. The only speeches off limits for this exercise are Brutus's and Antony's orations over the body of Caesar (since they will be treated in lecture at some length).