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Julius Caesar By Vickie Chao

¹ Ancient Rome had many famous people. Julius Caesar, undoubtedly, was one of them.

² Julius Caesar was born on July 13, 100 B.C. (some say 102 B.C.) At the time, the Roman society divided its citizens into two large groups. One was for the nobles. The other was for the commoners. Though Caesar's family belonged to the first category, they had lost their fame and fortune a long time ago. The harsh reality forced them to live in an apartment house in a less reputable area in Rome.

³ Luckily, all hope was not lost. When Caesar was about 10 years old, his aunt, Julia, married a very rich man named Gaius Marius. Through him, the financial woes that the Caesars had suffered earlier became a memory of the past.

⁴ Marius started out his career in the army before pursuing a political life. Politicians in ancient Rome all had one position in mind - consul, and Marius was no exception. He won his first consul election in 108 B.C. and then five more times. After concluding his sixth term in the office, he announced his intention to retire. When he heard that his archenemy, Lucius Cornelius Sulla, was preparing for the war against the king of Pontus in Asia Minor (today's Turkey) in 87 B.C., he decided to come out of his retirement. He convinced the senate that he was a better candidate for the job than Sulla.

⁵ As the news of switching commandship reached Sulla, he was very angry. He led his troops back to Rome and forced Marius and his supporters to flee. With Rome now under Sulla's control, he took back the right to lead the military campaign against Pontus and departed once again. After Sulla was gone, Marius returned to Rome. Teamed up with Lucius Cornelius Cinna (Caesar's father-in-law), the duo persecuted Sulla's supporters. After Marius died, Cinna became the effective ruler of Rome for the next couple of years. He died in 82 B.C.

⁶ Upon Cinna's death, Sulla made a triumphant return to Rome. He secured an appointment from the senate and became dictator in 81 B.C. With things going his way now, Sulla began his revenge. He proscribed and outlawed anybody who opposed him. As Marius' nephew by marriage and Cinna's son-in-law, Caesar was an obvious target. To save his own life, he put on a disguise and went into hiding outside of Rome. His relatives and supporters persuaded Sulla to change his mind and spare Caesar.

⁷ In spite of Sulla's pardon, Caesar did not return to Rome. He joined the military and stationed in Asia Minor until Sulla died in 78 B.C. Caesar won many important battles and quickly became known for his genius in military operations. After Sulla's death, he came back to Rome and began trying his hands as a politician.

⁸ Caesar, by all accounts, was a great **orator** (public speaker). As a legal advocate, he prosecuted former governors notorious for extortion and corruption. His tough stand on crime won him lots of support from the commoners. For the next few years, Caesar took one position after another and slowly climbed up the political ladder. It is said that he once saw a statue of Alexander the Great and wept. When asked why he was so upset, he said that when Alexander was his age, he already had conquered so many nations. He felt ashamed because he had done nothing memorable to speak of. As if the realization was not depressing enough, he soon got two more blows in his personal life. Both his beloved wife and Aunt Julia died! Alas, 69 B.C. was indeed a difficult year for Caesar.

⁹ Though stricken by his personal loss, Caesar decided to remarry in 67 B.C. for political gain. This time, he chose Sulla's granddaughter but they divorced five years later.

¹⁰ Caesar was an extravagant spender. Over the years, he had accumulated a lot of debts. His personal financial crisis reached a boiling point by 63 B.C. He eventually had to rely on his friends to pay off some of his balance. While stationed away place from Rome, Caesar

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developed a remarkable reputation as a military commander. He fought and won numerous battles against the rebellious local tribes. Upon his triumphant return to Rome, he decided to run for the office of consul. To achieve his goal, he decided to seek help from Marcus Licinius Crassus and Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus ("Pompey the Great"). With much negotiation, the trio set up an alliance (later became known as "The First **Triumvirate**," or "rule of three"). In their deal, Crassus and Pompey used wealth and influence to help Caesar win the election, and once elected, Caesar lobbied for their political interests. To further strengthen the bond, Caesar allowed Pompey to marry his daughter, Julia Caesaris. Crassus, Pompey, and Caesar's arrangement worked out beautifully. Caesar became consul in 59 B.C. True to his words, he helped champion the causes beneficial to Crassus and Pompey. Caesar married for the third time during his one-year term in office.

¹¹ After Caesar finished serving as consul, he spent most of his time in the next couple of years outside of Rome. Using his brilliance, he conquered many lands and helped to expand the Roman Republic's already vast territory. Among his achievements during this period, the most famous were perhaps the two invasions of Britain - first in 55 B.C. and second in 54 B.C.

¹² Despite the success, Caesar had a lot of problems on his hands. Many people in Rome disliked him. They would pounce on any chance to take him down. Of his two staunch supporters from the First Triumvirate, Crassus was dead, and Pompey began to develop a different view of Caesar after he lost his wife Julia Caesaris in childbirth in 54 B.C. Caesar tried to mend the relationship with his opponents. But nothing worked. In early January of 49 B.C., the senate declared him a public enemy. When word reached Caesar, he set out to prepare for war. At the dawn of January 11, he and his men arrived at the northern bank of a small river called Rubicon that marked the official border of the Roman Republic. Right before crossing, he ordered his troops to halt and contemplated his options. If he proceeded, he would trigger a civil war and really make himself a public enemy. If he pulled back, he would face persecution and,

most likely, lose his life. Seeing no way out, he marched forward and invaded his own country.

¹³ The victory came swiftly. By 48 B.C., the scared senate appointed him dictator and gave him total control of Rome. Pompey fled to Egypt seeking refuge but was ultimately killed. Caesar lingered in Egypt for several months. During his stay there, he defeated the pharaoh and installed Cleopatra VII as the new ruler in Egypt. The two reportedly had an affair.

¹⁴ Caesar left Egypt in 47 B.C. to quash the remaining rebellion forces. Upon his return to Rome, the senate showered him with praise and honors. It appointed him dictator for the next 10 years. It allowed him to hold any public office he wanted. It renamed the month of his birth from Quintilis to July (or Julius in Latin). It made his birthday a national holiday. With his power reaching an all-time high, Caesar minted coins bearing his face. The act was the first in the Roman history, for no living Roman had ever had his image featured on coins. Furthermore, a statue of Caesar with the inscription "To the Invincible God" was put up in the capital.

¹⁵ In 45 B.C., Caesar was made dictator for life. His influence made many senators very uncomfortable. The spirit of the Roman Republic was to avoid having any one person with absolute control. That is, the spirit of the Roman Republic was to avoid monarchy. As Caesar began to act and to be looked upon as the king, the discontented senators decided to do something about it. On March 15, 44 B.C., they stabbed him in a gathering and laid his body at the foot of Pompey's statue.

¹⁶ Caesar, in the eyes of many, was a controversial figure. While several of his policies made him immensely popular among the commoners, he always had a strained relationship with the nobles who eventually had him killed. From the time of his death until now, he has continued to be hailed as one of the greatest commanders in history. His military achievement was as exceptional as that of Alexander the Great!

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Supporting Details/Linking: "Julius Caesar"

YOUR GOAL: IDENTIFY the statements that serve as **SUPPORTING DETAILS** for the thesis statement:

Remember: Supporting Details are not merely true statements or words that are present in the reading; they provide support for an argument (MAIN IDEA) to persuade the reader.

Directions:

A. For each statement, choose one of the following.

1. The statement provides support for the thesis.
2. The statement refutes the thesis.
3. The statement neither supports nor refutes the thesis.

B. Mark the appropriate column with an "X."

THESIS: *Julius Caesar was one of the most important Roman leaders.*

| <i>Statement</i> | <i>Supports</i> | <i>Refutes</i> | <i>Neither</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1. Though Caesar's family belonged to the first category, they had lost their fame and fortune a long time ago. | | | |
| 2. Caesar won many battles and became known for his military genius. | | | |
| 3. His tough stand on crime won him lots of support from the commoners. | | | |
| 4. Caesar decided to remarry in 67 BC for political gain. | | | |
| 5. Using his brilliance, he conquered many lands and helped to expand the Roman Republic's already vast territory. | | | |
| 6. By 48 BC, the Senate appointed him dictator and gave him total control of Rome. | | | |
| 7. The two [Caesar and Cleopatra] reportedly had an affair. | | | |
| 8. With his power reaching an all-time high, Caesar minted coins bearing his face. | | | |
| 9. On March 15, 44 BC, they [Senators] stabbed him in a gathering and laid his body at the foot of Pompey's statue. | | | |
| 10. Caesar, in the eyes of many, was a controversial figure. | | | |

