



Arizona Model United Nations 65

The Roman Republic: Assassination of Gaius Julius Caesar

Short Research Guide

Introduction

In the days following Julius Caesar's assassination on 15 March 44 BCE, the Roman Republic faces a profound political crisis. The conspirators, many of them senators, defend their actions as a defense of *libertas* and a rejection of permanent one-man rule. Yet Caesar's death has not resolved the divisions that defined Roman politics during the previous decade. Through reforms that expanded citizenship, established colonies for veterans, reorganized provincial administration, enlarged the Senate, and introduced the Julian calendar, Caesar won considerable support among soldiers, provincials, and political allies. His critics, however, viewed these developments as evidence of a dangerous concentration of power.

Rome must now confront three interconnected challenges. First, political leaders must determine whether the Republic can restore its traditional institutions or whether changing circumstances require a new constitutional settlement. Second, questions of political authority remain inseparable from military power. Several influential figures command experienced legions, maintain loyal veterans, and exercise significant influence across the provinces. Finally, Caesar's influence continues to shape public affairs despite his death. His laws remain in force, his supporters remain active, and competing factions seek to define his legacy. Consequently, debates over the future of the Republic, the struggle for political and military control, and the succession to Caesar's political inheritance will determine the course of Roman history.

Topic I: The political future of the Roman Republic

The death of Gaius Julius Caesar has reopened a longstanding debate regarding the distribution of political authority within the Roman state. Throughout much of the Republic's history, the Senate exercised influence through its *auctoritas*, a form of prestige and political legitimacy that guided magistrates and shaped public policy. Alongside the Senate, the consuls served as the Republic's highest annually elected officials, commanding armies, presiding over major political proceedings, and implementing state decisions. In the aftermath of the assassination, many political leaders contend that the Senate should reclaim the central role it once held in public affairs. Others question whether a Senate-centered government can effectively address the demands of an expansive Mediterranean empire. The relationship between senatorial guidance and executive leadership now stands at the center of Rome's constitutional debate. Delegates



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should examine how republican institutions functioned before Caesar's rise and whether those institutions retain the capacity to govern the Republic amid uncertainty.

Questions to Consider:

1. Should the Senate reclaim full authority after Caesar's assassination?
2. Should Rome be led by the Senate or a powerful consul?
3. Can the Republic survive without major constitutional reforms?

Topic II: The struggle for political and military control

Control of military force has become one of the most significant sources of political influence in the late Republic. Roman commanders often developed close relationships with their soldiers through years of shared campaigns, military victories, and promises of future rewards. These personal bonds frequently extended beyond formal chains of command and shaped political developments in Rome itself. Following Caesar's death, numerous armies remain stationed throughout the Republic's provinces, while several prominent leaders possess the resources necessary to mobilize troops and influence events from a distance. This reality raises important questions regarding the relationship between military power and political legitimacy. Members of the committee should consider how commands should be assigned, what obligations generals owe to the state, and how the Republic can prevent further conflict among competing factions. Understanding the military foundations of political authority will prove essential to evaluating the choices available to Rome's leadership.

Questions to Consider:

1. Who should command Rome's armies after Caesar's death?
2. How should Rome balance military necessity with constitutional government?
3. Should armies serve the Republic or individual leaders?



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Topic III: The succession and legacy of Gaius Julius Caesar

Although Caesar's assassination removed him from public life, it does not resolve the question of his political legacy. His influence remains visible in the institutions he reformed, the supporters he cultivated, and the expectations he created among many groups throughout the Republic. Senators, provincial communities, veterans, and political allies do not necessarily share the same interpretation of Caesar's career or his impact on Rome. Some view him as a statesman who addressed pressing administrative and social challenges, while others regard his accumulation of power as a threat to republican government. The issue of succession therefore extends beyond identifying an individual heir. It encompasses the future of Caesar's policies, the status of his appointments, and the broader question of how Rome should remember his place in its history. Delegates should investigate the competing claims to Caesar's political inheritance and how those claims may shape the Republic's future direction.

Questions to Consider:

1. Should Caesar's laws and reforms remain in force?
2. Who has the strongest claims to Caesar's legacy?
3. Was Caesar a tyrant or Rome's greatest leader?