JULIUS CAESAR

READING COMPREHENSION

ACT 5

YEAR 3 AND 4

And so, the battle lines are drawn, the armies wait for their commands. On one side stand the armies of Brutus and Cassius, on the other the armies of Mark Antony and Octavius. Every soldier thinks that he is fighting for the forces of good, but how can they all be right? But maybe, *maybe*, there is still a chance for peace, a chance that no-one will have to be slain upon the battlefield.

The four generals have one last attempt at avoiding a battle. They meet on a hillside; the mood is very tense. After a long wait, Mark Antony begins.

“The generals would have some words,” he says in a loud and confident voice.

“Words before blows, is it so countrymen,” replies Brutus angrily.

“Not that we love words better than you do,” shouts Octavius, his fingers tightening around his sword,

“Caesar’s thirty-three wounds will be avenged,” continues Octavius with tears in his eyes.

There is a silence as all four men look at each other, suspicion in their eyes. How did it come to this, Roman against Roman? Finally the silence is broken by Cassius.

“The storm is up,” he shouts as he turns and walks away, back to his army. That’s it, no more talk of peace, the battle will begin.

1. **What does every soldier think they are fighting for**

The forces of evil

The forces of good

The forces of peace

The forces of fortune

1. ***‘But maybe, maybe, there is still a chance for peace, a chance that no-one will have to be slain upon the battlefield’.***

**Underline the word for ‘killed’**

1. **Is there an opportunity to avoid a battle?**

YES NO

Justify your answer with reference to the text

1. **Which character ‘walks away’ therefore meaning the battle will go ahead?**

Octavius Mark Antony Brutus Cassius

Brutus and Cassius have a moment alone, knowing that this might be their last chance to talk. Brutus looked into the face of Cassius, took his arm and said,

“This same day must end the work the Ides of March began, and whether we shall meet again I know not, therefore our everlasting farewell take.”

Cassius understood that Brutus meant goodbye.

“Forever and forever farewell Brutus. If we do meet again, we’ll smile indeed. If not, ’tis true this parting was well made”

They shook hands one last time and then each man headed off to command his army.

1. **What day does Brutus remind Cassius that all this begun?**

Julius Caesar’s birthday The Ides of March

Christmas Day The Ides of May

1. **“…whether we shall meet again I know not, therefore our everlasting farewell take..”**

**Who is Brutus talking to?**

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1. **Tick the synonym for ‘goodbye’**

Forever Farewell Parting Evening

1. **What did Cassius and Brutus do ‘one last time’ before going off to lead their armies into battle?**

And so the mighty Battle of Philippi began! The armies charged towards each other and sword clashed on sword. Brutus and Cassius’s armies had given up the advantage they had by marching straight into battle and with an even playing field, the strength of Mark Antony and Octavius’s armies began to emerge.

The air was thick with the sound of shouting, the cries of pain, the smell of battle. The battle raged for hours. Cassius watched his forces from a hilltop where he could get a good look at the action and tell his troops what to do. As he stood next to his servant, a Roman called Pindarus, Cassius could see quite clearly how the fight was turning out and it was not going his way. Cassius saw bad omens everywhere he looked. He could see his tents on fire, he could see Mark Antony’s army charging again and again. As he looked to the sky, he could see only defeat.

1. **What is the name of the battle?**
2. **Who gave up their advantage ‘by marching straight into battle’? Write down two names**

i.

ii.

1. **How long did the battle go on for? Tick one box**

Hours Months

Days Years

1. **What was Cassius’ servant called? Tick one box**

 **Philippi Pindarus Phillip**

1. **What could Cassius see on fire?**

Cassius knew that it was all over for him. Octavius and Antony would win the battle and he would be taken prisoner. That was not going to happen: he could not bear to be dragged through the streets of Rome as a captive, after all that he had done for the city. He knew there was only one way out. He turned to his servant and friend Pindarus and said,

“With this good sword that ran through Caesar, take thou the hilt and when my face is covered guide thou the sword.” As Cassius knelt on the ground, with his last breath he shouted into the night sky,

“CAESAR, thou art REVENGED, even with the sword that killed thee.” With these last words hanging in the air, Cassius was gone.

But he had been mistaken! The battle wasn’t over yet! A message came through, whispered and passed from man to man,

“It is but CHANGE! For Octavius is overthrown by Brutus’ noble power!” The tide was turning, the army of Brutus had finally begun to win. Brutus was overjoyed until suddenly news reached him of Cassius’s death.

1. **What happened to Cassius? Tick one box**

His servant killed him

He died in a fire

He was taken prisoner

He ran away

A second wave of fighting began, with Brutus’s army now almost in control. But this was short lived with Cassius gone, his army didn’t know what to do and Brutus’s army couldn’t do it all alone. Brutus’s army was surrounded. As he looked on, accompanied by a small group of his loyal soldiers, Brutus knew that the end was near. He, like Cassius, would not be taken by the enemy and thinking of Cassius, Brutus took his sword in his hand.

“Caesar now be still,” he whispered and turned his sword upon himself. Brutus was no more.

With Cassius and Brutus gone, their armies were scattered and eventually they were beaten. It had been a terrible battle with so many casualties on both sides. Finally, Antony and Octavius found themselves in the place where Brutus lay on the ground.

“This was the noblest Roman of them all”, said Antony. “His life was gentle, and the elements so mixed in him, that nature might stand up and say to all the world, this was a man!”

They left Brutus there, there was nothing more to be said.

1. **What happened to Brutus?**

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1. **Does Mark Antony speak positively about Brutus after he’s died**

**YES NO**

**Justify your answer with a quote from the text**

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1. **Put the events in order**

Cassius and Brutus say goodbye to one another

Mark Antony, Octavius, Cassius and Brutus met on the hillside

Pindarus kills Cassius

Mark Antony and Octavius’ armies win the battle

Brutus’ army starts beating Octavius’ army

Cassius sees his tents on fire and assumes he has lost the battle

Brutus kills himself

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ANSWERS

1. **What does every soldier think they are fighting for**

The forces of good

1. ***‘But maybe, maybe, there is still a chance for peace, a chance that no-one will have to be slain upon the battlefield’.***

**Underline the word for ‘killed’**

1. **Is there an opportunity to avoid a battle?**

YES NO

**Justify your answer with reference to the text**

*‘The four generals have one last attempt at avoiding a battle’*

1. **Which character ‘walks away’ therefore meaning the battle will go ahead?**

 Cassius

1. **What day does Brutus remind Cassius that all this begun?**

The Ides of March

1. **“…whether we shall meet again I know not, therefore our everlasting farewell take..”**

**Who is Brutus talking to?**

Cassius

1. **Tick the synonym for ‘goodbye’**

 Farewell

1. **What did Cassius and Brutus do ‘one last time’ before going off to lead their armies into battle?**

Shook hands

1. **What is the name of the battle?**

The Battle of Philippi

1. **Who gave up their advantage ‘by marching straight into battle’? Write down two names**

Brutus and Cassius

1. **How long did the battle go on for? Tick one box**

Hours

1. **What was Cassius’ servant called? Tick one box**

**Pindarus**

1. **What could Cassius see on fire?**

His Tents

1. **What happened to Cassius? Tick one box**

His servant killed him

1. **What happened to Brutus?**

He died/killed himself

1. **Does Mark Antony speak positively about Brutus after he’s died**

**YES**

**Justify your answer with a quote from the text**

“This was the noblest Roman of them all”

1. **Put the events in order**

Cassius and Brutus say goodbye to one another 2

Mark Antony, Octavius, Cassius and Brutus met on the hillside 1

Pindarus kills Cassius 4

Mark Antony and Octavius’ armies win the battle 7

Brutus’ army starts beating Octavius’ army 5

Cassius sees his tents on fire and assumes he has lost the battle 3

Brutus kills himself 6