

THE LIFE OF CAESAR

Gaius Julius Caesar came from an old patrician family which claimed to be descended from the goddess Venus and the legendary hero Aeneas. He was a skilled politician, a talented public speaker and an outstanding general. Today, he is regarded as one of the most remarkable figures in Roman history.



A coin showing Julius Caesar

A RISING STAR

In 60BC, Caesar formed an alliance with Pompey and Crassus, and with their support he became consul the following year. After his year in office, he persuaded the Senate to give him command of Rome's lands in southern Gaul. This gave him a chance to prove himself, and soon he conquered the rest of Gaul, extending Roman territory as far as the English Channel. His popularity in Rome soared.

TROUBLE AHEAD

After the death of Caesar's daughter Julia, who was married to Pompey, the bond between the two men began to weaken. Afraid of Caesar's growing power, the Senate decided to support Pompey and turn the two men against each other. Caesar was ordered to give up his command in Gaul and return home without his army. If he refused, it would mean war.

TRIUMPH AND DISASTER

In January 49BC, Caesar defied the Senate and led his army across the Rubicon river into Italy. Pompey retreated to Greece, and Caesar took control of Rome. He defeated Pompey in 48BC and then crushed rebellions in North Africa and Spain. By 45BC, Caesar was the most powerful leader Rome had ever known.

A scene showing the murder of Caesar, from a modern production of Shakespeare's play Julius Caesar

