

# CORIOLANVS

THE COMPLETE GUIDE AND RESOURCE

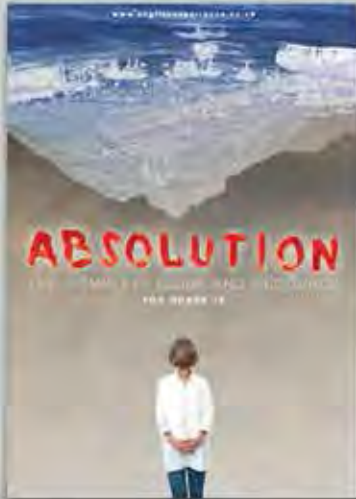
**SAMPLE SECTION**

A brave warrior. An uncompromising leader. A hero destined to die.

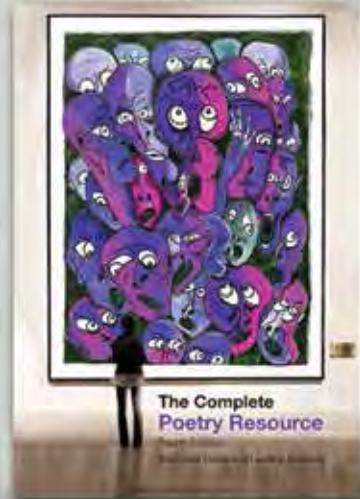
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# **CORIOLANUS**

**The Complete Guide and Resource for Grade 12**

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# Foreword

## About The English Experience

*The English Experience is an independent South African publishing house that specialises in developing high-quality English and Life Orientation educational resources for IEB educators and students. The team of passionate, talented experts behind The English Experience works tirelessly to ensure that every resource encourages insight, growth and debate — enriching and challenging both educators and students — without losing sight of the important goal of examination readiness and success.*

Focused on bringing the subject to life, every resource The English Experience publishes incorporates a range of features — including content and contextual questions and stimulating enrichment materials — designed to encourage a critical appreciation of the subject and to inspire the higher order thinking for which examiners are always looking.

The world-class English Experience team includes highly experienced educators, some with over 25 years of classroom experience, passionate literary experts in various fields, such as South African fiction, poetry and Shakespeare, fanatical historians and researchers, creative writers, skilled editors, pernickety proofreaders and obsessive fact checkers — together with spirited university lecturers and enthusiastic young minds who help to ensure our approach remains unique and fresh.

While examination readiness and success is a non-negotiable, our aspiration is to inspire a genuine interest in, and love of, English literature.



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## Our approach to Shakespeare

*The toughest challenge with Shakespeare can be overcoming the preconceived ideas many students have about how dull and tedious he is to study. Making sense of the language in which the plays are written can be hard going for learners so it's perhaps not surprising that many of them find studying Shakespeare an alienating experience and consider his plays to be works through which they have to slog to pass an examination.*

This resource has been written with this reality in mind and particular attention has been paid to breathing new life into Shakespeare and his world. Not only have we worked hard to make sure the content in this resource is fresh and engaging, we have also divided it into accessible, digestible sections and included numerous quirky, interesting and fun facts.

We have endeavoured to make both the man and his play as accessible and entertaining as possible. We start with the man, exploring his extraordinary life and achievements, and then put these into context by bringing the dirty, dangerous and vibrant world of Elizabethan England to life.

Having armed students with an understanding and appreciation of Shakespeare's intentions and world, we tackle the play. Again, we do so with one goal in mind at every step: to make it as accessible and entertaining as possible for modern Matric learners, while remaining academically sound and accurate.

We start by providing students with detailed historical and literary backgrounds, helping them to understand the places, events, literary genres and conventions on which the play is based. The play is also presented as a short story to help students grasp the plot, before we tackle the characters, themes and structure in detail.

We have not only worked very closely with the text of the play, adjusting punctuation and spelling and providing explanatory annotations to help students grasp its meaning, we have also incorporated act-based learning into the structure of the resource as we believe that working through the play act by act ensures that a solid foundation of knowledge is laid. Students can then build on this foundation methodically and effectively, only dealing with the whole play once they have worked through it scene by scene.

In the end, we have approached Shakespeare in the same way we approach every author and text: with two, interrelated goals in mind. The first, non-negotiable, objective is to ensure examination readiness and success, and the second is to inspire a genuine interest in, and appreciation of, the work being studied.

## Using this resource

*This comprehensive resource includes: the full text of the play; an extensive introduction to Shakespeare and the Elizabethan era; a guide to Shakespearean language; detailed historical and literary backgrounds; accessible summaries; rich literary analyses; diverse content-related short questions and mini essay questions (act-specific and general), together with challenging enrichment tasks. In short, everything needed to study the play intensively and bring the text to life.*

## Preparing with the right mindset

We recommend working through the **Introduction to Shakespeare** section first (even before watching a live/recorded performance) so that students become familiar with the man himself, Elizabethan England and the theatre for which he wrote. Some learners might have preconceived ideas about Shakespeare and even a block about studying him. This resource has been written with such students in mind and particular attention has been paid to breathing new life into Shakespeare and his world.

To complete the introduction to the playwright, learners should work through the **Shakespearean language** and **Background to the play** sections next. These will deepen the understanding the learners have of the play — the characters, themes and plot — before they tackle the text itself. By working through the comprehensive introductory section first, students will be prepared, engaged and able to approach the play with the right mindset.



## Tackling the text

Once students have been introduced to Shakespeare and his play, prepare them for working with the actual text by arranging for them to **watch it being performed**. Attending a live performance is often the most effective approach, though not always possible. If it is not, then watching one of the recent film versions of the play, such as Ralph Fiennes's bloodthirsty contemporary adaptation, is a more than adequate substitute.

With the students properly prepared and primed, it is time to **read through the play**. This can be done either act by act or in its entirety. The version of the play included in this resource also features relevant annotations to help students understand the meaning and nuances of the text.

Once students have read through the play, work through the act-based **Summaries and Analyses** section. Working through the play act by act ensures that a solid foundation of knowledge is laid and then built on gradually and effectively. Students are not required to deal with the whole play until they have assimilated it scene by scene.

Every act is broken down into its constituent scenes, each of which is summarised and analysed separately. Students are required to engage with each scene through scene-specific questions. At the end of each act, there are also act-specific essay questions and a series of enrichment tasks (marking rubrics are provided on the companion CD).



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## Ensuring examination readiness and success

To ensure examination readiness and success, the resource also features extensive information regarding the **Mini Essay**. This section provides guidelines on writing mini essays, two annotated examples from which to learn, and a wide selection of rigorous essay topics. It also includes suggestions on how to prepare for the final examination.

We hope you enjoy using this resource as much as we enjoyed putting it together. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

**KEY TO USING THE BOXES IN THIS RESOURCE:****Definition or Glossary**

Provides the meanings of words and/or terms that have been used

**Information**

Provides additional details or facts about a topic

**Alert**

Something to which you need to pay attention

**Quirky Fact**

Fun, interesting, extraneous information

**Checklist**

A list of items or activities required to complete a task satisfactorily

# Introduction to Shakespeare

## Meet William Shakespeare



Chandos Portrait of William Shakespeare (National Portrait Gallery, London)

*Who was William Shakespeare? Sadly, we know very little about the man considered one of the best English dramatists ever to have lived, which is all the more astonishing given the fame and fortune he achieved. In this section, we bring him to life by piecing together what we do know about his life and achievements.*

By 1600, the man Voltaire described as ‘a drunken savage, with some imagination’ was enjoying the height of his fame and success. He had hit the big time a few years earlier — as part of the hip group of actors, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men — and made enough money to buy the second biggest house in his home town, but now he was also co-owner of the rowdy, successful Globe Theatre, which was attracting huge audiences of over 1 500 paying customers to each performance.

Shakespeare was working hard for his success, though; in addition to acting and directing performances, running the business side of the theatre, commuting between his work in London and his family in the country, he was churning out a brand new play every few months.

Not bad for a high school dropout from a small obscure town who married a scandalously older woman whom he had made pregnant as a penniless, lusty 18-year-old.

Shakespeare seems to have been hungry for success. Around the time of his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, he left his wife and three children with his parents and headed to London to seek his fortune.

The movies of their time, plays were rapidly growing in popularity and the theatre was a booming industry — the Hollywood of its day. Whether it was his intention when he left home or not, it’s perhaps not surprising that a young man like Shakespeare should be attracted to such an exciting, vibrant new industry — where fame could be won and vast amounts of money could be made.

It’s likely he spent his first few years in the industry learning his craft by acting and writing for several companies of actors, including Lord Strange’s Men and the Queen’s Men. It didn’t take him long to make his mark, though, and he penned the first of his plays — *Henry VI, Part One* — a couple of years later around 1589, when he was in his mid-twenties.

The play was met with huge acclaim and was the start of a prolific writing career that produced an incredible 37 plays and 154 sonnets before his death in 1616.

While the mystery of Shakespeare’s genius is something we will probably never solve, it seems likely that he must have been writing poems and stories from a young age. It’s slightly improbable to think he could suddenly write something as accomplished and insightful as the three *Henry VI* plays in his early twenties without years of practice beforehand.



### WHY DO WE CALL HIM ‘THE BARD’?

Bard is a mediaeval Gaelic/British term for a professional poet. Shakespeare is often called ‘The Bard’ in recognition of his stature and (unofficial) standing as the greatest poet of England.



**SAY WHAT?**

You may not realise it, but you probably use words and phrases invented by Shakespeare every day as he made up more than 1 500 English words and countless phrases. Feel you 'wear your heart on your sleeve'? Want to 'break the ice' with someone you've just met? Feeling a little 'faint-hearted' or 'heartsick'? Talking about 'your own flesh and blood'? Think it's a 'foregone conclusion'? Well, you have Shakespeare to thank for that.

**THINGS WE SAY TODAY WHICH WE OWE TO SHAKESPEARE**

- "KNOCK KNOCK! WHO'S THERE?"
- "SET YOUR TEETH ON EDGE"
- "HEART OF GOLD"
- "FAINT HEARTED"
- "SO-SO"
- "GOOD RIDDANCE"
- "FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE"
- "SEEN BETTER DAYS"
- "TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING"
- "SEND HIM PACKING"
- "WEAR YOUR HEART ON YOUR SLEEVE"
- "NOT SLEEP ONE WINK"
- "COME WHAT MAY"
- "THE GAME IS UP"
- "FOR GODNESS' SAKE"
- "BATED BREATH"
- "WHAT'S DONE IS DONE"
- "FULL CIRCLE"
- "GREEN EYED MONSTER"
- "VANISH INTO THIN AIR"
- "BE ALL/END ALL"
- "IN A PICKLE"
- "OUT OF THE JAWS OF DEATH"
- "DEAD AS A DOORNAIL"
- "BRAVE MAKES YOUR HAIR CURL"
- "FAIR/FOUL"
- "NEW WORLD"
- "STAND ON END"
- "NAKED TRUTH"
- "PLAY/PLAY"
- "THE WORLD IS"
- "WILD GOOSE CHASE"
- "BREAK THE ICE"
- "BREATHE MY OYSTER"
- "OFF WITH HIS HEAD"
- "LIE LOW"
- "LOVE IS BLIND"
- "HEART OF HEARTS"
- "A SORRY SIGHT"
- "A PIECE OF WORK"
- "LAUGHING STOCK"

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**The early years**

Despite being one of the most popular and widely read English language authors ever to have lived, Shakespeare remains a man shrouded in mystery. He achieved tremendous fame and fortune, frequently performed for both Queen Elizabeth I and King James I, and yet we know very little about him and his life.

We don't know his date of birth, only that he was baptised at the Holy Trinity Church in the town of Stratford-upon-Avon on 26 April 1564. As baptisms usually took place a couple of days after a birth, many people like to celebrate his birthday on 23 April, which is also the day on which he died in 1616.

His parents were financially comfortable and lived in a wealthy part of town. His father, John, was a glove-maker and prominent local businessman who performed several public offices, including becoming the town's bailiff (mayor). His mother, Mary, came from an affluent family of landowners.



Portrait of Benjamin Jonson, a rival and friend of Shakespeare's. Although he mocked and scoffed at his friend's work, Jonson praised Shakespeare when he died, observing that he was 'not of an age, but for all time'. (National Portrait Gallery, London)

FOREWORD  
INTRODUCTION TO SHAKESPEARE  
SHAKESPEAREAN LANGUAGE  
BACKGROUND TO THE PLAY  
SUMMARIES AND ANALYSES  
THE MINI ESSAY  
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It's likely that young William Shakespeare attended the local grammar school, but he might not have been the most devoted student. His good friend and fellow playwright, Ben Jonson, clearly wasn't overly impressed with his schooling as he said that he had 'small Latin and less Greek'.

When he was 14, Shakespeare had to drop out of school and help his father support the family as John had somehow fallen out of favour and into financial difficulties.

We don't know when Shakespeare decided he wanted to be an actor, but it could have been at a young age as the local school put on a classical play at the end of each term and travelling troupes of actors would have visited Stratford-upon-Avon regularly.

## Shakespeare in love

On 27 November 1582, Shakespeare hastily married Anne Hathaway, a local woman eight years his senior. She was 26 at the time and would have been considered an 'old maid', past her prime. Anne was three months pregnant on her wedding day and it would have been difficult times for the newlyweds because William was a penniless teenager and his family had fallen on hard times. Some scholars suggest that Shakespeare may have had affairs, but there is no reliable evidence of these and he remained married to Anne until the day he died, 34 years later.

### IS SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE A TRUE STORY?

No. It is a work of plausible fiction. There is no historical record of such a love affair ever having taken place. If it happened while he was writing *Romeo and Juliet* in 1595, it's not likely he was short of cash, either, having already written nine plays and being just about to buy one of the largest properties in Stratford-upon-Avon.

### FROM STAGE TO SCREEN:

Think Shakespeare's plays are only found on dusty shelves in old libraries? His work has been the basis for many aspects of popular culture. If you've watched films like *10 Things I Hate About You*, *She's the Man*, *Romeo Must Die* and *O*, you've seen stories originally created by The Bard himself.



Portrait of Anne Hathaway, taken from *Shakespeare A Documentary Life*, written by Nathaniel Curzon, 1708

## Trials and tribulations

Inadvertently, we know that Shakespeare was an established, successful playwright by 1592 because a rival, Robert Greene, jealously attacked him in one of his pamphlets, calling him an 'upstart crow'. It wasn't all plain sailing for the talented Shakespeare, however; an outbreak of the bubonic plague in 1592 led to the closing of the theatres for two years and this meant that the actors had to take on far less profitable and more gruelling tours around the country to earn money.

Shakespeare would have been terrified of the bubonic plague. Most Elizabethans lived in fear of the illness also known as 'the Black Death'. It was a horrible way to die (see p.16) and Shakespeare had lost brothers and sisters, as well as close friends and fellow actors, to the disease. It broke out again in 1603, killing over 33 000 people in London alone, and, yet once more, in 1608.

His only son, Hamnet, died at the age of 11 in 1596 and the Globe Theatre burnt down in 1613. A cannon was fired to mark the entrance of the king on stage during a performance of his latest play, *Henry VIII*, and a stray spark set the thatched roof alight (see p.23). This would have been even more of a serious financial setback as insurance didn't exist in those days.

Shakespeare would also have had to put up with regular copyright theft as there were no laws recognising or protecting an artist's rights. Rival theatre companies would send their members to watch popular plays and secretly take notes, producing unauthorised copies and performances of them as quickly as possible.



### CONSPIRACY THEORY:

For sheer longevity, no conspiracy theory can match the belief that Shakespeare did not write the plays that have been attributed to him. The usual arguments are that his education and social standing weren't good enough to have produced such extraordinary literary works. Almost every prominent Elizabethan has been suggested, at one time or another, as the real author of his plays.

## The life of the playwright

The public's insatiable appetite for plays meant there was constant demand for new material. As if finding creative inspiration wasn't hard enough, the physical act of writing was slow and laborious as well. Playwrights had only quill and ink, and weak candlelight at night. Working alone, they would be hard pushed to produce more than two plays a year. As a result, most playwrights worked in teams of up to five writers. Solo artists, like Shakespeare, were the exception.

The new theatre industry needed a new breed of playwright and the majority of them wouldn't fit our modern image of poets and intellectuals. Like Shakespeare, most were self-made men from modest backgrounds. (There were no professional female dramatists because few women were educated or allowed to enter such professions in those days (see p.16).)

One of William's best friends and a successful and famous dramatist in his own right, Ben Jonson was a rowdy ex-soldier who killed a fellow actor in a duel and was notoriously thrown out of the royal court in 1603 for 'unruly behaviour'.

Another of Shakespeare's highly successful contemporaries, Christopher Marlowe, was a flamboyant celebrity who had been a spy before he started writing and was killed in an apparent tavern brawl – although some suggest he was assassinated by government agents for his publicly professed atheism and for publishing a pamphlet pointing out inconsistencies in the Bible.



### THE SPURS CONNECTION:

Formed in 1882, London football club Tottenham was originally named after Harry Hotspur, a character in *Henry IV*.



### SIX TIMES A DAY:

*Macbeth* is thought to be one of the most produced plays of all time, with a performance beginning somewhere in the world every four hours.

## All's well that ends well

In 1605, Shakespeare made another astute property investment in his home town, which doubled in value and earned him a significant annual income. A few years later, his career started drawing to a close. His final solo play, *The Tempest*, was produced in 1611 and, sometime shortly afterwards, he ceased to be a writer for his company. He retired from the theatre and returned to Stratford-upon-Avon, where he enjoyed the last few years of his life as a well-off country gentleman and one of the leading figures of the town.

William died around the time of his fifty-second birthday, on 23 April 1616. We don't know the exact cause of his death, but we know that in the days leading up to it he suffered from a fever. It is comforting to know that he spent the last week or so of his life socialising and celebrating with his good friends Ben Jonson and Michael Drayton (some argue perhaps a little too hard).

In an elegant and neat dénouement of which the great writer himself may have approved, his journey ended where it began, at the Holy Trinity Church in the small town of Stratford-upon-Avon, where he lies buried within the chancel rail.



### THE CURSE:

In his epitaph, Shakespeare put a curse on anyone daring to move his body from its final resting place. Even though it was customary to dig up the bones from previous graves to make room for others, Shakespeare's remains are still undisturbed.



### WAS SHAKESPEARE ON DRUGS?

South African scientists have analysed fragments of seventeenth century pipes found on the floor of Shakespeare's home and found traces of cannabis, cocaine and hallucinogenic nutmeg extracts high in myristic acid. If he did use any drugs, he wasn't the only literary genius to do so.

## Timeline

Please note that this timeline is offered only as a rough guide as the dates of many of the events are only approximate and speculative.

- **1564** born in Stratford-upon-Avon, England (birthday assumed to be 23 April)
- **1582** marries Anne Hathaway on 27 November (aged 18)
- **1583** first child, Susanna, is born
- **1585** twins, Judith and Hamnet, are born
- **1587-88** heads to London (aged 22) and starts his theatrical career
- **1589-92** establishes his career and begins to make a name for himself; writes *Henry VI, Parts 1, 2 and 3*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Richard III*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Titus Andronicus*
- **1593** writes *Venus and Adonis*, and begins writing the *Sonnets*, *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*

- **1594** founding member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men (an acting company)
- **1596-97** Hamnet dies; purchases New Place, a large house in Stratford-upon-Avon, and writes *The Merchant of Venice*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Richard II* and *Romeo and Juliet*
- **1598-99** writes *As You Like It*, *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2*, *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Much Ado About Nothing*
- **1599** Globe Theatre is built (Shakespeare is a shareholder); writes *Troilus & Cressida* and *Twelfth Night*
- **1601** Shakespeare's father dies; writes *Hamlet*
- **1602** writes *All's Well That Ends Well*
- **1603** The Lord Chamberlain's Men become The King's Men and perform regularly at court
- **1604** writes *Measure for Measure* and *Othello*
- **1606** writes *King Lear*, *Macbeth* and *Anthony and Cleopatra*
- **1608** Shakespeare's mother dies; The King's Men begin performing at the Blackfriars Theatre; writes *Coriolanus* and *Timon of Athens*
- **1609** the *Sonnets* are published
- **1609-1611** writes *Cymbeline*, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*
- **1612** retires from the theatre (aged 48) and returns to live in Stratford-upon-Avon
- **1612-1616** works on new plays with his friend, John Fletcher. They write *Cardenio*, *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*
- **1616** dies on 23 April



# Themes, motifs and symbols

## Themes and motifs

The central subject or topic in a work of literature (or art) is referred to as its theme. A sophisticated work will usually explore several, interrelated themes. A motif is a recurring idea or contrast examined in a work of literature and will usually relate to the themes being explored. There are several major themes and motifs in *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*.

### War

In Ancient Rome, war was a necessity and a fundamental aspect of life. Surrounded by rival city states and tribes, Rome was pretty much in a constant state of war. This meant that having a strong army and skilled soldiers was extremely important to Rome. As a result, military skill was highly prized and serving in the army was an excellent way of achieving honour and status.

Even though it was less common during Shakespeare's time, war was still a regular feature of life and a legitimate way of defeating enemies and expanding the wealth and influence of a nation. Elizabethan England is considered a relatively 'peaceful' time, but, even so, the country was still at war with Spain and Ireland in the period preceding the writing of *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*.

The subject of war and warfare is examined throughout the play. Perhaps one of the most important scenes is the discussion between Volumnia and Virgilia in Scene 3 of Act I. Virgilia laments the fact that her husband might be killed in action, which prompts Volumnia to declare, 'Hear me/profess sincerely: had I a dozen sons, each in my/love alike, and none less dear than thine and my/good Martius, I had rather had eleven die nobly/for their country, than one voluptuously surfeit out/of action' (Act I, Scene 3, lines 22-27). Preferring a dead son to a cowardly one might appear a strange declaration for a mother to make, but it would have been more acceptable during Roman times as a coward would dishonour himself and his family.

When their friend, Lady Valeria, joins the conversation, she praises Virgilia's son for tearing butterflies apart with his hands, saying, 'I saw him run after a gilded/butterfly, and when he caught it, he let it go again/and after it again, and over and over he comes,/and up again, caught it again. Or whether his fall/enraged him, or how 'twas, he did so set his teeth and/tear it! Oh, I warrant how he mammocked it!' (Act I, Scene 3, lines 63-68). Praising such violent behaviour would have made sense in context because it would have suggested the boy had inherited his father's aggression and would likely also earn honour on the battlefield in the future.



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'If my son were my/husband, I should freelier rejoice in that absence/wherein he won honour than in the embracements/of his bed where he would show most love.' (Act 1, Scene 3, lines 2-5)

FOREWORD

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# CORIOLANUS

FOREWORD

From the minute we meet Coriolanus, there is no doubt that he is a fearless warrior and a man who believes in solving conflicts by fighting and vanquishing his enemies. In Act I of the play, he responds to the protests of the plebeians by saying, 'I'd make a quarry/With thousands of these quartered slaves as high/As I could pick my lance' (Act I, Scene 1, lines 213-215). The respect associated with military success is such, nonetheless, that the plebeians will still vote to make Coriolanus Consul even though he is openly contemptuous of them.

INTRODUCTION  
TO SHAKESPEARE

Throughout the play, Shakespeare appears to use the theme of war to examine what makes a fight honourable. Does he glorify war itself? On the one hand, war presents the main characters in the play with opportunity and brings them success. On the other, it produces anxiety and dread when it looms over most of the characters and, ultimately, it leads to the death of Coriolanus. Accordingly, it appears that Shakespeare is less concerned with the question of under what circumstances war is justified or not and more interested in using the theme to explore morality and principles and the manner in which people fight.

SHAKESPEAREAN  
LANGUAGE

In *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, there are battles that involve swords (notably, the taking of Corioles, the sword fight between Coriolanus and Aufidius, and the final scene of the play, when Coriolanus is slain) and there are battles of another kind: battles fought with words (notably, the fights between Coriolanus and Menenius and the Tribunes). During the play, it becomes clear that some battles are fought more honourably than others.

BACKGROUND  
TO THE PLAY

In the first Act, Menenius debates the necessity of protest with one of the commoners, saying, 'Why, masters, my good friends, mine honest/neighbours,/Will you undo yourselves?' (Act I, Scene 1, lines 63-65). His debate with the protestors constitutes an honourable verbal war as each man is allowed an equal chance to state his case.

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In contrast, the 'war of words' fought by the Tribunes is less honourable. They use words to damage Coriolanus's reputation, stirring up discontent amongst the people in order to have him banished. After the people have voted that Coriolanus become Consul, for instance, Brutus sways them by deliberately exaggerating Coriolanus's haughtiness, 'He was your enemy, ever spake against/Your liberties and the charters that you bear' (Act 2, Scene 3, lines 199-200).

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Similarly, the one-on-one sword fight between Coriolanus and Aufidius that occurs in Act I is very different from the fight in which Coriolanus is slain in the final scene of the play. In the first instance, the two men are enemies on the battlefield who face each other openly and fight honourably. Coriolanus states, 'Let the first budger die the other's slave,/And the gods doom him after!' (Act I, Scene 8, lines 6-7). Prior to the latter battle, however, Aufidius plots behind Coriolanus's back and uses misleading words to incite violence in the marketplace of Antium, even deliberately taunting Coriolanus by calling him a 'boy of tears' (Act 5, Scene 6, line 120). Aufidius engineers Coriolanus's death without having to commit the act himself. Aufidius's conspirators slay Coriolanus after Aufidius calls him an 'insolent villain' (Act 5, Scene 6, line 155).

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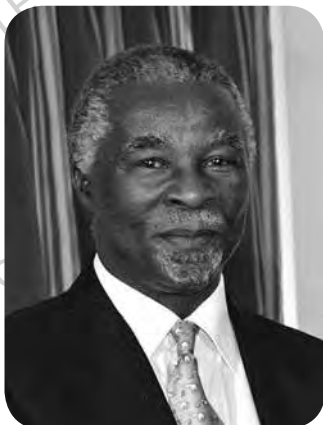
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*Shakespeare explores the nature of war through the many battles — both of sword and of word — in the text.* Stephen Moorer as Coriolanus (Wikimedia Commons)



## 'RATHER SAY I PLAY THE MAN I AM'



In the introduction to his biography of former President Thabo Mbeki, Mark Gevisser notes that *The Tragedy of Coriolanus* was Mbeki's favourite play when he was a young man studying at the Lenin Institute in Moscow in 1969. Mbeki believed Coriolanus to be the model for a 20th Century revolutionary and someone full of 'truthfulness, courage, self-sacrifice, absence of self-seeking, brotherliness, heroism, optimism'. His friends protested that Coriolanus was a tyrant driven by hubris, but Mbeki argued that the Roman general was a revolutionary because he was prepared to go to war against his own people, who had become a 'rabble', an 'unthinking mob, with its cowardice, its lying, its ordinary people-ness'.

Coriolanus's insistence on being who he was at all costs, 'Rather say I play/The man I am' (Act 3, Scene 2, lines 17-18), resonated strongly with Mbeki. The former president explained to Gevisser: 'It was this thing of not dissembling ... If you convey an image of yourself that's not correct, in the end you get caught. It's fatal. It's really better to behave as yourself, I believe.' Gevisser saw evidence of Mbeki's determination to 'play the man I am' throughout his presidency: in his dogged anti-populism and in his refusal to 'spin' the media or to 'play to the crowd'.

It's not without some irony that Mbeki's political career would chart a similar course to that of his favourite Shakespearean hero. Just as Coriolanus was turned on by the people of Rome and exiled, an aloof and isolated Mbeki was banished into the political wilderness by the ANC when it 'recalled' him and dismissed him from the presidency in the middle of his second term in office.

©Antônio Milena/Agência Brasil (Wikimedia Commons)

## Society and the self

Shakespeare explores the theme of the 'individual' versus the 'collective' in *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*. Time and again, a group is pitted against an individual, most notably, the plebeians or common people of Rome against Coriolanus, of course. The plebeians always appear as a group. Their 'voice' is always communal and there is never a dissenting opinion among them. The same is true of the group of patricians in the Senate, who speak in unity as if they are one person. In stark contrast are the characters who display uniquely individual voices and opinions throughout the play, such as Coriolanus and Volumnia.

This theme has a distinctly political flavour. In many respects, it is a fundamental political question: at what point is the individual's life no longer just about him or her, but also about the society of which he or she is a part? Is it ever right for an individual to put the interests of the community that supports him or her ahead of his or her own?

This question is likely to have been especially pertinent and interesting to Shakespeare's audiences as the 'divine right of kings' was being openly questioned in Elizabethan England. The current monarch, James I, was frequently in conflict with the English Parliament as a result, and the tension and upheaval of the Rome portrayed in the play would have echoed the political climate at the time.

In essence, Parliament viewed its relationship with the king as a partnership, with equal rights and different functions, but James believed he was superior and that he could overrule the legislature as he wished. It was a 50-year power struggle that, ultimately, led to his son's execution and the creation of a republic called the Commonwealth of England in 1649.

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At the start of the play, Menenius compares Rome with the human body, likening the Senate to the belly and the common people to the limbs (Act 1, Scene 1, lines 98-170). He uses this imagery allegorically and tells a story about the disgruntled limbs rebelling against the belly, claiming that they did all the work, while the belly received all the food. In the story, the belly counters this by observing that, although it receives all of the food, it distributes these nutrients throughout the body so that the limbs and brain can do their work; in other words, arguing that the limbs cannot exist without the belly, just as the belly cannot exist without the limbs.

Known as 'The Belly and the Members', this fable was extremely popular in Shakespeare's time. It even produced the widely known phrase 'the body politic', which is still used today to describe the group of people that make up a society or country. King James I even quoted the fable in a speech to parliament, except he likened the role of the king to that of the head in the body. Unsurprisingly, he argued that the head dictates how the rest of the body works and could even choose to cut off limbs if it so desired. It is not hard to imagine Coriolanus adopting a similar interpretation of the fable to King James I as he often appears somewhat contemptuous of the 'voice' of the common people.

Shakespeare, though, appears to question both King James's and Menenius's interpretation of the fable in the play. At times, the Senate or belly does appear to act in its own best interests and, equally, the plebeians or limbs eventually get rid of Coriolanus, believing that to be in their best interests. Likewise, the Tribunes, despite being the representatives of the people and the 'common good', seem to act in their own selfish interests only. Is Shakespeare questioning whether 'the body politic' can ever act in harmonious unity? Is he suggesting that the various parts, like the belly and limbs, are merely held in an uneasy, tense truce while their interests are aligned?



Entitled 'The Legislative Belly', this picture lampoons politicians for being lazy, self-interested and bloated. Lithograph by Honoré Daumier (1834) (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) (Wikimedia Commons)

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## THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER

The play depicts a society in the midst of change, struggling to adjust to a new form of government. Until recently, Rome was ruled by a king and the plebeians or common people had no say or 'voice'. Now, in the early years of the Republic, they participate in the election of Consuls and they have Tribunes to represent their interests and defend them against abuses of power by the aristocratic patricians or ruling elite.

The struggle for power between the patricians and the plebeians is central to the play. It opens with the plebeians angry, suspicious and in open revolt, accusing the patricians of hoarding grain while they starve. The patricians, equally, mistrust and scorn the plebeians, considering them ignorant and fickle and easily manipulated.

Are there parallels between the political transition that took place in South Africa in 1994 and the transition of Rome from a monarchy to a republic? Is the conflict between the patricians and the plebeians similar to the struggle for control in contemporary South Africa between the rich and the poor, the capitalist and the worker, the old elite and the dissatisfied majority?

Although he is a symbol of 'rugged individualism' and 'his own man' in many ways, Coriolanus is also an honourable Roman citizen and does what is right for Rome, even if it is at odds with what is right for himself. Until his banishment, he has a very clear individual point of view and yet behaves in a way that benefits all of Rome. After he has been banished, his individualism comes to the fore and he seeks selfish revenge, but, even then, does he do so partly for the collective good because he feels Rome has dishonoured itself and needs to be rebuilt?

As noted, the Tribunes (the equivalent of modern politicians) are reliably selfish throughout the play. This is not without irony since they are supposed to act as a 'mouthpiece' for the people. Instead of representing the interests of the plebeians, however, they manipulate the people in order to maintain their own power. They do not want Coriolanus to become Consul because they believe that he will ignore their concerns or even disregard their official role. In Act 2, Scene 1, Sicinius predicts that Coriolanus will become Consul, to which Brutus replies, 'Then our office may,/During his power, go sleep' (lines 244-245). It is this fear of losing power that motivates the Tribunes to instigate a bitter argument between the lauded general and the common people.

One could see a similarity between how the Tribunes use the people for their own political aims and how Julius Malema has championed socio-economic issues in order to gain power. The political party he founded, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), promotes itself as socialist and anti-capitalist and has attracted a significant following of disgruntled, financially marginalised people. Given the widely documented ostentatious life of luxury Malema has enjoyed, one could view his championing of the poor and calls for revolutionary socialism with wry scepticism.

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## Honour

The idea of honour is repeatedly explored throughout *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*. It was a powerful notion for Romans and some academics have argued it was akin to an invisible glue that held Roman society together. Unlike modern societies, which strive for equality, Roman society was maintained through prestige. Honour was how an individual gained status, influence and power. It remains a nebulous, hard to define concept that does not have a direct modern equivalent. It encompassed an individual's reputation, moral standing, accomplishments and wealth. On the one hand, honour was used by the ruling minority to justify their status and authority. On the other, it encouraged those in power to conduct themselves with integrity and in a manner that would benefit society as a whole.

After Caius Martius leaves for Corioles, Volumnia and Virgilia have a discussion about the nature of honour and war. Volumnia states that an honourable man bears battle scars and that she would rather have a dead son than a cowardly son because a cowardly son would have no honour (Act 1, Scene 3, lines 22-27). This appears to be a rather unusual and extreme attitude for a mother, but it would have made more sense at the time because losing honour meant losing social rank and status, which would compromise a family's lifestyle and future wealth.

The irony is that Coriolanus is banished from Rome as much for his sense of honour as anything else. He is a successful soldier because he is honourable and brave in battle and, in turn, his military success has elevated him socially, winning him fame and respect. Yet his strong sense of honour becomes a weakness in the political limelight because it makes him reluctant to be anything other than honest and brave. He prefers to speak plainly and truthfully and to behave in a straightforward, direct manner. As a career soldier, he has been taught to act swiftly and to fight ferociously. Yet he finds himself in a political situation where he would be best served by being placid and conciliatory. Menenius highlights this when he suggests Coriolanus should use the fact that he is a soldier to excuse his brash manner.

If Coriolanus is punished for being an honourable man, the Tribunes illustrate how honour or stature can be won through dishonourable means. They deliberately manipulate events to ensure Coriolanus is banished and are rewarded with political success as a result. In the eyes of the plebeians, the Tribunes have helped rid them of a perceived enemy and even the patricians believe that the Tribunes have helped win Coriolanus mercy and exile rather than death.



### DYING WITH HONOUR

The ancient Romans are not the only society to have placed a huge emphasis on the concept of honour. It was also popular in feudal Japan and was the central principle of 'bushido', the samurai warrior code. In fact, being honourable was so important among the Japanese ruling class (Daimyos) and their samurai soldiers that an individual who had brought shame upon himself and his family — by being dishonest or cowardly in battle, for example — would commit 'seppuku' or ritual suicide in order to regain his honour.

Also known as 'harakiri', the practice involved killing yourself by slicing your stomach open. The individual would eat a last meal, wash and dress himself carefully and seat himself on his 'death cloth'. Seated, he would write a final death poem and then open the top of his kimono, pick up his blade and stab himself in the abdomen.



©Reynerio Tamayo

## Friendship and enmity

The bond of friendship is another significant theme in *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*. The play depicts constantly shifting alliances right from the start. The people who are rioting violently because of the corn shortages in the beginning of the play, for instance, end up fighting alongside the generals they were protesting against when the city of Corioles is taken. Similarly, having just given Coriolanus their votes, the common people turn against him, claiming that he mocked them: 'He mocked us when he begged our voices' (Act 2, Scene 3, line 175).

Caius Martius Coriolanus is shunned by his homeland and goes from being a 'friend of Rome' to 'an enemy of the people'. Likewise, Aufidius, his sworn enemy, embraces the exiled general with open arms. Yet this new-found 'friendship' is not entirely out of altruism. It is a tactical alliance as well since both men need the other's help to conquer Rome.

In this way, Shakespeare examines the nature of friendship throughout the play. By having characters and crowds appear to shift allegiances swiftly and frequently, he appears to be implying, rather cynically, that friendship exists as a matter of convenience and expedience in most cases. In other words, that ties of friendship are formed only when these are mutually beneficial. The behaviour of the characters in the play suggests that those ties are easily broken as well. The suggestion is that friends can become enemies as easily as ice becomes water — a change in the environment is all that it takes. Do you agree with this assessment?

Consider the exiled Coriolanus's pessimistic musings on the nature of friendship in Act 4, Scene 4:

'O world, thy slippery turns! Friends now fast sworn,  
Whose double bosoms seems to wear one heart,  
Whose hours, whose bed, whose meal and exercise  
Are still together, who twin, as 'twere, in love  
Unseparable, shall within this hour,  
On a dissension of a doit, break out  
To bitterest enmity; so fellest foes,  
Whose passions and whose plots have broke their  
sleep  
To take the one the other, by some chance,  
Some trick not worth an egg, shall grow dear friends  
And interjoin their issues.'



©WJSolha (DeviantArt.com)



'Only that name/remains./The cruelty and envy of the people,/Permitted by our dastard nobles, who/ Have all forsook me, hath devoured the rest' (Act 4, Scene 5, lines 81-85). *Coriolanus* explains his status as an exile to Aufidius.

©Seattle Shakespeare Company

Another of the famous lines from *The Tragedy of Coriolanus* is 'Nature teaches beasts to know their friends' (Act 2, Scene 1, line 6), which suggests that friendship is more about survival than kinship.

The cynical exploitation of friendship is certainly evident in the realm of politics. One pertinent South African example is the relationship between Jacob Zuma and Julius Malema. Zuma used Malema to remove Thabo Mbeki as leader of the ANC in 2007, but swiftly distanced himself from the younger man when the relationship was deemed superfluous and even potentially damaging politically. This rejection triggered a bitter rivalry between them and Malema recently called his former friend and benefactor 'a champion of corruption', suggesting how deep their enmity now runs.



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*President Jacob Zuma and Julius Malema in happier times.*

## Gender roles

In Ancient Rome (as well as Elizabethan England) there were very strict social and legal rules that governed acceptable male and female behaviour. In Ancient Rome, the law often reflected the double standards of the time. A *paterfamilias* (male head of a family) was legally allowed to murder his daughter if she was guilty of committing adultery, for example, but would incur no punishment if he himself was unfaithful. In Elizabethan England there were many professions that women were prohibited from entering. It was unheard of for a woman to be an actress, for example, and all theatrical roles, male and female, were played by men.

These strict codes of conduct and societal expectations regarding the demeanour and behaviour of women are epitomised by Virgilia. She is chaste, obedient, silent and nurturing, qualities that both Ancient Romans and Elizabethan audiences would have considered the 'ideals' of womanhood. Yet, through the character of Volumnia, Shakespeare appears to subvert these feminine ideals. She is strong, domineering and vocal and, even though societal expectations constrict her role to some extent, she still manages to be heard and to exert her influence.

In a blurring of gender roles, Volumnia is depicted as a kind of warrior herself: not only praising her son for being scarred by battle, but in courageously squaring off against him and convincing him not to attack Rome. She also exhibits the typically 'masculine' traits of being brash and painfully honest. She doesn't mince her words with the Tribunes, for instance, and they know exactly how she feels about them after Coriolanus is banished and she pointedly exclaims, 'Twas you incensed the rabble' (Act 4, Scene 2, line 45). She is also extremely ambitious and convinces Coriolanus to run for Consul. She even tells her heroic son that she gave him all his bravery and courage: 'Thy valiantness was mine; thou suck'st it from me' (Act 3, Scene 2, line 157).

Even Coriolanus, the paragon of masculinity, appears restricted by the gender role he has to play. He seems to have to act the part of the tough, unsentimental man and is extremely uncomfortable and surprised when his emotions break through, making him feel weak and vulnerable. When he is confronted by his Roman family outside the gates of Rome, for example, he breaks down and weeps, saying, 'I melt, and am not/Of stronger earth than others' (Act 5, Scene 3, lines 31-32).

By blurring masculine and female qualities and roles in this manner, is Shakespeare questioning the idea that gender is something predetermined or fixed and suggesting that it might be socially constructed instead?





Volumnia valiantly pleads with Coriolanus to spare the city of Rome. Engraving by James Caldwell (1803) (Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C.)

## Symbols

*Symbols are objects, characters, shapes or colours used to represent something else, usually an abstract idea or quality. Symbols usually represent something else by association, resemblance or convention. Shakespeare employs symbolism throughout his plays, using physical things to represent intangible or invisible ideas or qualities in particular.*

## Animal imagery

Shakespeare makes use of animal imagery throughout the play. Coriolanus compares Aufidius to a lion and is himself compared by Menenius to a bear who ‘lives like a lamb’ (Act 2, Scene 1, line 12). In other words, Menenius is implying that Caius Martius Coriolanus is both brave and humble. The Tribunes, on the other hand, assert that Coriolanus is a ‘lamb...that baas like a bear’ (Act 2, Scene 1, line 11), implying that ‘his bark is worse than his bite’, an expression that suggests he would not be able to carry out the unpleasant threats he makes. In this exchange, the Tribunes reveal an astute awareness of Coriolanus’s weakness. The conversation takes place before his political manipulation and downfall and the Tribunes are hinting that they can exploit the soldier’s willingness to ‘baa’ — in other words, to speak his mind bluntly — against him.

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Shakespeare makes repeated use of images of butterflies in particular. He uses butterfly imagery to emphasise the similarities between Coriolanus and his son, Young Martius. When we first hear of Young Martius, in Act 1, Scene 3, we learn that he was torturing and killing butterflies for fun (lines 63-68) and Volumnia remarks that he is just like his father. Then, in Act 4, Scene 6, Cominius describes how Coriolanus is leading the Volscians into battle against Rome by saying, 'they follow him/Against us brats with no less confidence/Than boys pursuing summer butterflies/Or butchers killing flies' (Act 4, Scene 6, lines 117-120).

We are reminded of the butterfly yet again when Volumnia, Virgilia, and Young Martius are pleading with Coriolanus to spare Rome. Young Martius says to his father 'He shall not tread on me./I'll run away till I am bigger, but then I'll fight' (Act 5, Scene 3, lines 147-148). Young Martius insists that his father will not 'tread' on him as one may tread on a butterfly. Rather he will run away and train so that, when he is older and not as small and fragile as a butterfly, he will be able to return to fight his own father.

Another image of butterflies is used when Menenius and Sicinius are discussing Rome's fate at the hands of Coriolanus. Menenius tells the Tribune that 'There is difference between a grub and a butterfly, yet your butterfly was a grub. This Martius/ is grown from man to dragon' (Act 5, Scene 4, lines 11-13). He is suggesting that, just as a butterfly grows from a grub, so, too, has Coriolanus grown from a man that defended Rome into a dragon that can destroy it. His anger and desire for revenge are such that he has become as powerful as a fire-breathing dragon.

## Caius Martius's praise name

In Act I, Scene 9, after capturing the city of Corioles, the soldiers rename Caius Martius, adding 'Coriolanus' to the end of his name. The new name is meant as a recognition of his military prowess and determination, but it also becomes a symbol of the violence and bloodshed he has caused in the city of Corioles. This is important because this scene represents a turning point for the general: it is after he returns to Rome with his new name that things start to go awry. It is almost as though war and bloodshed are, literally, following him around in the form of his name.

In many African cultures, praise songs are used to celebrate a person in the form of a spoken poem. Each praise song consists of several praise names for the person, which form descriptions of his or her personality, standing and skills. A praise song is intended to capture the 'essence' of a person, object or ego. Thus, by adding the word 'Coriolanus' to Caius Martius's name, Cominius and the other soldiers add to the general's essence. This captured city and the violence associated with its taking, comes to represent the essence of the great warrior, foreshadowing his own violent demise.

## The oak garland

The oak garland is mentioned twice in the play: by Volumnia and by Menenius. In both instances, the characters are referring to Caius Martius Coriolanus. The oak garland was a symbolic adornment worn by a warrior who had either saved the life of another Roman soldier or shown great valour in battle. It was made of three different types of oak and was known as the Corona Civica. This was the highest honour you could achieve as a soldier and shows that Coriolanus was loyal to Rome and an honourable warrior; however, the explicit mentioning of his utmost loyalty to Rome ironically foreshadows his betrayal of the city.



*Bust of the Emperor Augustus wearing the Corona Civica (Glyptothek, Munich) (Wikimedia Commons)*

## The voices of the people

Once Coriolanus is elected Consul by the Senate, he is required to have his appointment ratified by asking the common people for their 'voices'. The Tribune, Sicinius Velutus, reminds Coriolanus, 'Sir, the people/Must have their voices' (Act 2, Scene 2, lines 164-165). This means that the people have the right to validate the decision of the Senate to elect him through a vote.

It is ironic that the people, and their voices, end up playing such a significant role in Coriolanus's fate since, at the start of the play, when they are protesting about grain shortages, he dismisses their opinions, saying that, if it were up to him, he would kill them. In a further twist, the 'voices' of the people highlight Coriolanus's lack of a say or 'voice' because it is as a result of their vocal opinions that he is banished.

## The toga

When Coriolanus is required to wear a plain, unembellished toga in Act 2, Scene 3, he is putting on a garment that represents humility. Yet he knows that he is not a humble man and, truthfully, he does not believe that the people's votes should count at all. He feels that wearing the toga will betray his personal code of honour because he will appear to be something that he is not, but he is persuaded to do it against his better judgement.

In a sense, the donning of the toga symbolises a turning point for Coriolanus because he is allowing himself to be manipulated by the patricians and Tribunes, foreshadowing how he will eventually be manipulated into exile. He is also putting his battle wounds on display, an act of apparent humility that foreshadows the fact that he will soon be brought to the ultimate humility: death.

There is irony in this event. By putting on the toga, the great warrior's battle wounds are on display, which should be a source of great honour, but Coriolanus is punished for the haughty and curt manner in which he interacts with the Tribunes and commoners and so, ultimately, the displaying of his wounds becomes a source of shame.



*John Philip Kemble as a proud Coriolanus. Painting by Thomas Lawrence (circa 1798) (Victoria and Albert Museum, London)*

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## Key facts

- **Full Title:** The Tragedy of Coriolanus
- **Author:** William Shakespeare
- **Type of work:** Play
- **Genre:** Tragedy
- **Language:** English
- **Composed (time and place):** England, between 1607 and 1608
- **Published:** 1623: The first (and only) *Folio* was published in 1623 (there is no *Quarto*)
- **Tone:** Violent, bold, brash, and fast-paced
- **Setting:** The Roman Republic (Ancient Rome), sometime after 509 B.C.
- **Protagonist:** Caius Martius, later known as Caius Martius Coriolanus
- **Antagonist:** Tullus Aufidius
- **Conflict:** Caius Martius returns from war a victor and is elected Consul, but his pride and perceived arrogance cause him to be shunned by his own people.



©Lionsgate

- **Rising action:** Caius Martius wages war against the Volsces and returns a hero. His bravery in capturing the Volscian city of Corioles earns him the praise name 'Caius Martius Coriolanus'. Reluctantly, he agrees to be elected Consul of Rome.
- **Climax:** The scheming Tribunes bait Coriolanus into an argument with the people, after which he is banished from Rome. He travels to Antium to align himself with the Volscian general, Aufidius, his sworn enemy, intending to burn Rome to the ground in revenge.
- **Falling action:** Coriolanus leads the Volsces to victory against the Romans. Outside the gates of the city of Rome, he is convinced by his mother and wife not to attack. Envious of the popularity and power of his arch rival, Aufidius seizes his chance to turn the Volsces against Coriolanus and the Roman general is slain when he returns to Corioles.
- **Foreshadowing:** The turmoil of the opening scene, with the starving plebeians crying 'let us kill him'; the Tribunes arguing that Coriolanus's excessive pride will be his downfall; Coriolanus's own observation that showing mercy to his mother and Rome would be most dangerous, 'if not most mortal' to him; the penultimate scene: the triumphant, celebratory return of the ladies to Rome.
- **Themes and Motifs:** War, Honour, Hubris, Gender, Friendship and Class.
- **Symbols:** The toga, Caius Martius's praise name and the oak garland.

# Summaries and analyses

## Using this section

*Working through the play act by act ensures that solid foundations of knowledge are laid and then gradually and effectively built on. Learners are not required to deal with the whole play until they have worked through it step-by-step. In this section, each act is broken down into its constituent scenes, each of which is summarised and analysed separately. Learners are then required to engage with each scene directly through scene-specific questions that require them to refer to the text closely.*

At the end of each act, learners will find essay questions pertaining to that act, accompanied by a selection of enrichment tasks. In the Mini Essay section that follows these summaries, there is also a wide selection of rigorous, intertextual essay topics, ensuring that students also tackle the play in its entirety. (The marking rubrics for the enrichment tasks and essays can be found on the companion CD.)

## Act One

### Summary of Act One

The play opens in Rome, where an angry mob is planning a rebellion against the State. The citizens claim that the State is keeping a storehouse of corn for itself, and that Caius Martius, a talented Roman general, is to blame. Menenius Agrippa, a patrician, tries to calm them, but Caius Martius appears and rebukes their accusations, saying that, if it were up to him, he would kill them all. The Romans learn that the Volsces are going to attack, led by their indomitable general, Tullus Aufidius.

The next scene introduces Aufidius, sworn enemy of Caius Martius, who learns that the Romans are prepared to fight back. He laments the fact that his plans have been scuttled, swearing that he will kill Caius Martius.

Caius Martius heads off to fight the Volsces. After he has left, Volumnia, his mother, and Virgilia, his wife, have a conversation about honour. Volumnia insists that she is proud of her son for defending Rome, while Virgilia laments the fact that she might lose her husband.



*Auf.* "I would I were a Roman; for I cannot.  
Being a Volsee, be that I am."

Act 1, Scene 10: A bloody Aufidius is helped away by his fellow soldiers after his defeat at the hands of Coriolanus.

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The history of Rome is traditionally divided into three periods: the 'Monarchy' (800–510 BC); the 'Republic' (509–27 BC); and the 'Empire' (27 BC–565 AD). *The Tragedy of Coriolanus* is set during the Republican period.

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Initially, the Romans are defeated by the Volsces and they return to their trenches. Caius Martius is brave and persistent, however, and he manages to lead his troops to victory. After capturing the Volscian city of Corioles, Caius Martius decides to fight Aufidius, despite being badly injured. He fights the Volscian general, and is victorious, but does not kill the other man.

Caius Martius is renamed 'Caius Martius Coriolanus' because of the instrumental role he played in seizing the city of Corioles. He is held in worthy esteem by all the soldiers, who throw their caps up and chant his new name.

In the final scene of Act I, Aufidius vows to avenge the city of Corioles by fighting Coriolanus to the death.

i

The Volsces or Volsci were an Indo-European group of people, who settled on the lands to the south of Rome during the Iron Age, initially living on the banks of the River Liris. Neighbours and rivals for several hundred years, the Volsces were frequently at war with the ancient Romans, before eventually being assimilated into the Roman Republic as it expanded.

Alex Organ, playing the title character in *Coriolanus*, draws his sword to defend himself from the plebians during an early scene in the Shakespearean tragedy at Samuel Grand Park's amphitheatre.



©Jeffrey McWhorter/Linda Blasé

## Act One

### Scene One

#### Summary

In Scene One, angry Roman citizens are preparing to protest violently over the issue of corn. They believe that the noblemen are taking all the food for themselves, leaving nothing for the poor. In particular, they blame Caius Martius, whom they are intent on killing. They talk amongst themselves for a while, and then proceed to the Capitol. Two citizens stay behind.

Menenius, a patrician and friend to Caius Martius, tries to convince the citizens not to go ahead with their plan. He tells them that they are starving because there is no corn in the storehouses at all, not because of the greediness of the State. He adds that they should be praying instead of fighting, as only the gods can guarantee a good crop. The protest rages on and the citizens argue with him, insisting that there is plenty of food to go around and that the government only benefits the wealthy, creating laws that penalise the poor and reward the rich.

Caius Martius enters. He insults the citizens, remarking that they are never content. He suggests that they quarrel with the State in times of peace, yet are afraid for their lives in times of war. Menenius tells Caius Martius what the citizens believe: that there is a storehouse full of corn that is not being shared. Caius Martius replies that they have no idea what goes on in government and that, if the Senate did not pity them, he would kill them all. Menenius tries to soothe the annoyed

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general, assuring Caius Martius that he is close to convincing the citizens of how unreasonable they are being. He adds that he thinks they are too scared to do anything about it in any case.

Menenius asks about how the noblemen of Rome are responding to the protest. Caius Martius answers that two Tribunes have been assigned to deal with the citizens' grievances. He thinks this is an unwise reaction on the part of the State, because it will only encourage further protests.

i

The Capitol was another name for the Temple of Jupiter, which sat on the Capitoline Hill in ancient Rome. Pictured is an artist's impression of the temple during the Roman Republic.

Illustration by  
Friedrich Polack  
(1896) (Wikimedia  
Commons)



i

## THE ROMAN ADMINISTRATION

During the Republican period, Rome was governed by a hierarchy of magistrates and administrators. The city state was controlled by two supreme magistrates called *Consuls*. The *Praetors* were the chief administrators of the legal system. The *Quaestors* dealt with all financial matters in respect of the Republic and the *Tribunes* were magistrates elected to represent the wishes of the plebeians or common people. From 449 BC, it was made illegal to hinder the Tribunes in the execution of their official duties. The *Aediles* were officials who cared for the city and its inhabitants. Their duties included ensuring there was an adequate supply of water and corn, maintaining public roads and buildings, controlling trade, and arranging public games.

A messenger enters and tells them that the Volsces have taken up arms against Rome. Caius Martius jokes that going to war will be beneficial because many of the protesting citizens will die fighting. A group of Senators enters to discuss the impending battle against the Volsces. Caius Martius observes that the leader of the Volsces, Tullus Aufidius, is a worthy opponent. Caius Martius and Menenius leave, along with Cominius, Titus Lartius and the other Senators.

The Tribunes, Sicinius and Brutus stay behind, gossiping about Caius Martius behind his back. They say that he is proud and egotistical.

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## Analysis

The first scene of the play introduces us to the political instability in Rome, and to the hero of the play, Caius Martius. The common people are crying out for Caius Martius's blood, wielding weapons and pronouncing that death is better than remaining silent in the face of injustice. The mood of the scene, therefore, is one of unrest and instability. It is clear that the poor are angry and, further, that their protest is the result not only of a lack of corn, but of a long history of feeling overlooked and unheard. Rome is also under siege. The Volsces are threatening to attack the city.

Ancient Rome is presented as a cruel and violent place. The scene implies that betrayals and secret alliances are rife at all levels of Roman society. The most notable example of this occurs at the end of the scene, when Sicinius and Brutus speak unkindly of Caius Martius after the other noblemen leave. While the common people shout out their disdain for the famed general, the Tribunes whisper their insults in private, suggesting that they intend to plot against him.

This seems an appropriate mood in which to open the play because one of its major themes is the inherent instability of the powerful. The turbulent mood of the scene suggests that nothing should be considered permanent, and that someone who is powerful one day might not be so powerful the next.

This play conforms to the generic tropes<sup>1</sup> of a tragedy. We are introduced in the first scene to our victorious hero, whose life we know is going to unravel. The turmoil of the opening scene is, therefore, suggestive of the hero's inevitable death in the final scene, and, in a clever feat of mirroring, foreshadows<sup>2</sup> the main character's downfall.

Right from the very first line of the play, we get the sense that everything is going to change, especially for Caius Martius. Similarly, the first scene of *Guardians of the Galaxy* shows Peter Quill being chased by Kree soldiers after discovering a sacred orb. He flees and manages to escape, but the initial turbulence of the scene suggests that his entire universe is about to be upturned, both literally and figuratively.

Foreshadowing is also used in our introduction to the hero, Caius Martius. The first scene constitutes our first impression of him. What is your initial perception of him? As what kind of man does he present himself? These are important questions to answer, as our first glimpse of Caius Martius foreshadows our final judgement of him, hinting at the ultimate reason for his demise. Shakespeare, like all gifted storytellers, uses the first scene of the play to put into place all the variables that the story requires to reach its fulfilment. What do you think these variables might be?



### Questions:

1. Why does Menenius liken the State to a belly and the citizens to the arms and legs? (3)
2. What is the mood of the first scene and what does it suggest about how the rest of the play will unfold? (4)
3. What do the citizens mean when they say, 'Let us revenge this with our pikes, before we become rakes...'? (2)
4. What is your first impression of Caius Martius? Substantiate your answer with evidence from the text. (3)
5. The citizens say that they would rather die than famish. Why do they think that dying while protesting is preferable to starving to death? (3)

[15]

<sup>1</sup> A trope is a significant or recurrent theme or motif.

<sup>2</sup> In a play or novel, foreshadowing is used to hint at a future event in the text without revealing how, when, or, indeed, whether, it is going to occur.



## Scene Two

### Summary

Scene Two opens with a conversation between Aufidius, general of the Volscian army, and two of the Senators of the city of Corioles. They discuss the fact that Rome knows of their imminent attack. The first Senator tells Aufidius that they are prepared to fight because they know the Romans will defend themselves. Aufidius, however, is disappointed. He answers that they will not be able to take as many towns as they had intended because of Rome's intervention.

The second Senator suggests that Aufidius continues on with his troops while the Senators stay behind to guard the city. He adds that if the Romans attack Corioles, Aufidius can come to their aid. The Romans, he is sure, will not expect this tactic. Aufidius agrees. We learn that he has great respect for Caius Martius as a warrior because he says that the two of them have an agreement — that, if they ever meet again, they will fight to the death.

### Analysis

In Scene Two, the long-held feud between Caius Martius and Tullus Aufidius is introduced, suggesting that, although Caius Martius has many enemies, his greatest foe is Aufidius. This scene is a very powerful one because it elicits a strong emotional response in the audience or reader. What effect did reading this scene have on you? What dramatic techniques does Shakespeare use to heighten tension? How do you think the imminent war between Aufidius and Caius Martius is going to end?



### Questions:

1. What, in your opinion, is the purpose of this scene? (2)
2. What does this exchange tell us about Aufidius? (3)
3. What role does Aufidius play in the Volscian army? (1)
4. What does the Senator mean when he says, 'We never yet made doubt but Rome was ready/To answer us'? (1)
5. What is Aufidius's reply to the assertion made in Question 4, and in what tone do you think his reply is made? (3)

[10]

## Scene Three

### Summary

In Scene Three, Caius Martius's mother, Volumnia, and his wife, Virgilia, discuss the merits of war. Volumnia tells Virgilia that she should be happy that her husband has gone to war because, in doing so, he is proving his manhood. Virgilia replies that if he dies, he will not be anything anymore, let alone a man. Volumnia insists that if he dies in war, he will die with honour, adding that, as his mother, she will have his memory to comfort her.

Lady Valeria, a noblewoman and friend to Volumnia and Virgilia, enters. Virgilia asks if she can be excused, but Volumnia insists that she stay. She describes how Caius Martius might be wiping his bloody brow at this very moment. Virgilia pleads with her not to talk about blood, but Volumnia

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replies that blood is better than gold. When Virgilia laments that Caius Martius is meeting Tullus Aufidius in battle, Volumnia assures her that he will be victorious. Lady Valeria asks after Virgilia's son. Volumnia says that he would rather watch the soldiers march out to war than go to school. Lady Valeria observes that she once saw him tear a butterfly to shreds. Lady Valeria asks Volumnia and Virgilia to accompany her in visiting someone. Virgilia refuses. She says that she will not go outside until her husband returns home safely. Lady Valeria promises that if Virgilia acquiesces, she will tell her news of her husband. She tells her that the troops have approached Corioles, the city of the Volsces, reassuring her that they will win the war. Virgilia still refuses to go with them and, eventually, Volumnia and Lady Valeria exit, leaving Virgilia to grieve alone.

## Analysis

The themes of manhood and honour are explored in this scene. Volumnia views war as an honourable act. She believes that a man who goes to war proves his bravery and strength to his family. She states that blood '...more becomes a man/Than gilt his trophy,' implying that shedding blood in times of war buys a man honour, a virtue that cannot be purchased with coins. Virgilia disagrees. She thinks that war is futile. The theme of manhood becomes even more apparent when the women discuss Caius Martius's son. The young boy is described as killing butterflies. This type of behaviour is taken as the norm. Volumnia even admires the child for behaving like this, and likens the boy to his heroic father.

The scene draws our attention to the fact that manhood is a construct, an idea that society creates and perpetuates for its own purpose, and that violence is part of the Roman definition of what it means to be an honourable man. The survival of ancient Rome depended on the willingness of able-bodied men to go to war. The Roman male ideal, therefore, was founded on the premise of being able to enact violence. From the first scene of the play, Caius Martius is presented as the ideal warrior. Brave, heroic and straightforward, he makes enemies easily, but is admired and feared all the same, by men and women alike. In this scene, however, the traditional idea of manhood is challenged by Virgilia, who offers a dissenting voice.

A common feature of Shakespeare's plays is the use of rhetoric, which means arguing and defending your point of view elegantly. By engaging in rhetoric, ideas are challenged and interrogated. This scene challenges you, as the reader or member of the audience, to question your perception of manhood. Is manhood simply a matter of donning armour and fighting to the death? On the other hand, is it more complex than that? Further, can war really be an honourable exercise? Are there other, more effective or reasonable ways of resolving conflicts?



'It more becomes a man/Than gilt his trophy.'  
Volumnia professing her love of seeing Caius Martius covered in blood as it shows he is a brave and honourable warrior.



## Questions:

1. Think of some examples of behaviour that would be defined as 'manly' in your culture. Do you think it is helpful to define masculinity in this way? State whether or not you think that masculinity is a construct, and whether you consider this to be a positive or a negative feature. (5)
2. Describe the relationship between Volumnia and Virgilia. What does their exchange say about their relationship? (4)
3. Do you think that the names of the characters in this scene are suggestive of their personalities? (3)
4. When Volumnia describes Caius Martius's hand as 'mail'd,' what does she mean? (1)
5. Why would Virgilia 'disease' Volumnia and Lady Valeria's 'better mirth' if she accompanied them? (2)

**[15]**

## Scene Four

### Summary

Caius Martius and Titus Lartius, a general of the Roman army, learn that the Volsces are aware of their attack and are prepared to fight. Caius Martius orders the soldiers to press on, but the Volsces attack, and the Roman troops eventually lose the battle, returning to their trenches in droves. Caius Martius lambastes his troops for being feeble, convincing them to follow him through the gates of the city. They hang back and let him enter. The gates close behind him and he is trapped inside, alone. Lartius asks the whereabouts of Caius Martius. When the soldiers tell him what has happened, he laments, calling Caius Martius a noble soldier. One of the soldiers spots Caius Martius in the distance and Lartius orders the troops to assist in rescuing him. They all proceed through the gates and enter the city.

### Analysis

Within this short battle scene, the theme of honour is interrogated again. Questions regarding what it means to be honourable and whether honouring one man by killing another is a worthy pursuit, are addressed. These questions tie into the theme of war, which is ever-present in the play. Questions about the futility or usefulness of war, whether or not warriors are brave or feeble, and whether or not the actions that war demands of soldiers are honourable or dishonourable, feature prominently.



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'Come on, my/fellows!/He that retires, I'll take him for a Volscie, And/he shall feel mine edge.'

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In contrast to the description of him provided by Sicinius and Brutus at the end of Scene One, Caius Martius is depicted as a brave warrior. The fact that he enters the city of Corioles ahead of his troops suggests that he is brave. It also hints that the soldiers in his army are fickle, loyal to Rome only when it is in their interest. This is particularly evident when they fail to act after realising that Caius Martius is trapped inside the city.

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Thus, a mirror image of Scene One is presented, with Caius Martius as the hero, and the citizens as prizing their individual interests over that of the Roman people as a whole. Do you think that this inversion suggests that the question of whether a man is honourable or not is more complex than the definitions offered by the citizens and Volumnia, respectively? Further, consider whether the task of a piece of literature is to ask or to answer questions. Is it possible that Shakespeare, in *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, poses a central question, and, at the same time, refuses to answer that question in a neat and finite way? What would be the purpose of doing so?

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## Questions:

1. Find a phrase in Caius Martius's speech that suggests he thinks the soldiers are cowardly. (1)
2. What does Caius Martius mean when he says, '...we'll beat them to their wives...'? (2)
3. Shakespeare is a master of wordplay. Explain the use of wordplay in Lartius's lament about Caius Martius being captured in the city, when he describes Caius Martius as a man '[w]ho sensibly outdares his senseless sword...' (4)
4. What does Lartius mean when he says, 'Let's fetch him off...'? (1)
5. What is the mood of this scene? (2)

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## Scene Five

### Summary

The Roman soldiers, having defeated the Volsces, are bragging about the spoils<sup>3</sup> they have won. Caius Martius and Lartius enter. Caius Martius is disgusted by the soldiers' bragging. His complaints are interrupted when he sees Aufidius advancing towards Cominius's camp with his troops in tow. He tells Lartius that he is going to help Cominius and orders the other man to hold Corioles against attack. Lartius pleads with Caius Martius not to fight because he is injured, but Caius Martius does not listen to him. Lartius wishes him good fortune and Caius Martius exits. Lartius calls the troops to help him guard the city of Corioles.

### Analysis

Caius Martius is depicted in an ambiguous light in this scene. Once again, the question of what constitutes an honourable man is raised. Take Caius Martius's decision to pursue Aufidius in spite of his injuries. On the one hand, we could view this behaviour as honourable because Caius Martius is willing to risk his life in order to assist Cominius. On the other hand, we could take his actions to be pig-headed, interpreting his decision as an effort to avoid failure at all costs, even at the cost of his own life.

<sup>3</sup> Spoils are goods stolen or taken forcibly from a person or place.

How do you think this ambiguity relates to the themes of manhood and honour in the play? Do you think that this scene says anything about the futility or usefulness of war? How do you view Caius Martius? Is he behaving in an honourable and heroic manner, or is he making an ill-advised decision out of stubbornness? There is no wrong answer to these questions. As readers and as an audience, we are presented with many views of who Caius Martius is, and it is up to us to decide what we think, just as it is up to us to decide what we think constitutes an honourable man.

In what ways do you think that the ambivalence of Caius Martius's character in this scene echoes the unrest and instability of the opening of the play? Further, consider how you view *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, and, indeed, how you view life. Do you see the world in black and white? Do you think that there are shades of grey between one extreme and the other?



## Questions:

1. Explain Caius Martius's attitude towards the Romans who are fussing over the objects they have stolen from Corioles. Why does he find this so objectionable, calling them 'base slaves'? (3)
2. Do you think Caius Martius's decision to go after Aufidius is brave or ill advised? Quote from the text in order to substantiate your response. (3)
3. If you were to translate the word 'hark' into modern English, how would you do so? (1)
4. What does Caius Martius mean when he says, 'My work hath not yet warm'd me...'? (2)
5. Caius Martius describes his bleeding as 'physical,' but Shakespeare's usage of this word differs from our modern usage. What does the word mean in this context? (1)

[10]

## Scene Six

### Summary

Cominius tells his troops that they can rest because they have fought well, but they will have to go into battle again soon. A messenger arrives, announcing that Lartius and Caius Martius attacked Corioles and were beaten back to their trenches. He explains that he is late because spies were following him.

Caius Martius enters, saying, 'Am I too late?' Cominius does not know what he is talking about, and jokes that he is only too late if he is covered in his own blood instead of the blood of his enemies. Caius Martius hugs Cominius. Cominius asks after Lartius. Caius Martius tells him that they have captured the city and so Lartius is holding Corioles against attack. Cominius is confused. He asks how they managed to win after their initial defeat. Caius Martius asks him why he stood back and did nothing. Cominius replies that he retreated because he knew they were at a serious disadvantage.

Caius Martius asks if he knows what the strategy of the Volsces is, and Cominius tells him where the vanguard troops are stationed, saying that Aufidius is with them. Caius Martius insists on fighting Aufidius and Cominius says that he will not stand in his way. He suggests that he choose the best soldiers to accompany him and Caius Martius agrees.

## Analysis

This scene draws attention to the ambiguous merits of war. Caius Martius's decision to attack Tullus Aufidius can be seen as brave or brash. The sense of an ever-shifting power dynamic is also evident, as Cominius, who is a general of the Roman army and, therefore, in a powerful position, is made to feel weak by Caius Martius because he retreated. The question begs to be asked again: were Cominius's actions sensible or cowardly? Does this make him more or less of a man and leader?



### Questions:

1. How would you describe the tone of the conversation between Caius Martius and Cominius? Quote from the text to substantiate your response. (4)
2. What is Caius Martius referring to when he says, '...this painting/Wherein you see me smear'd...'? (1)
3. When Caius Martius says that he insists that he be allowed to '...prove this very hour...', what does he mean? (2)
4. When the soldiers agree to follow Caius Martius back into battle, he exclaims 'O, me alone! Make you a sword of me?' What do you believe he means when he says this? (3)

[10]

## Scene Seven

### Summary

Speaking to a lieutenant, Lartius orders that the gates around the city of Corioles be secured. He tells him that the soldiers must keep their posts until they are called away to battle, adding that, if they lose the battle, they will also lose the city. The lieutenant agrees. Lartius leaves, riding to Cominius's camp.

### Analysis

This scene demonstrates the battle strategy of the Romans. Lartius realises that they need to continue fighting in the field as well as keeping the city of Corioles, which they have seized and sacked. In this way, Lartius shows that he agrees with Caius Martius's decision to attack Aufidius, despite the fact that the city has already been taken. It was customary in ancient Rome and, indeed, in other ancient civilisations, to claim captured cities as one's own. This not only expanded the territory and wealth of the victorious people, but confirmed their victory in concrete terms.



### Questions:

1. This is a very short scene. What purpose do you think it serves? (2)
2. What does Lartius mean by 'centuries'? (1)
3. Translate the phrase, 'Fear not our care, sir,' into modern English. (2)

[5]

## Scene Eight

### Summary

Caius Martius faces Aufidius in battle. They agree that the first one to flinch will be the other's slave. Aufidius teases Caius Martius, saying that if he is going too hard on him, Caius Martius should let him know and he will let up a little. Caius Martius responds by saying that the blood on his skin is not his own, but the blood of Aufidius's people. He tells him to come at him with everything he has. They fight. Caius Martius is the victor, but he does not kill Aufidius.

### Analysis

This is a powerful scene because the two enemies finally meet face to face. The recurring theme of manhood is evident when Aufidius tries to dissuade Caius Martius from fighting by insulting his stamina. Caius Martius fights him and, in his victory, proves his status as a warrior. His inability to kill Aufidius, however, leaves a bitter taste in his mouth. There is, therefore, a sense of foreboding in the conclusion of this scene, the implication being that Aufidius will meet Caius Martius again in battle. This is similar to the opening scene of *Guardians of the Galaxy*. The Kree soldiers are frustrated at their inability to apprehend Peter Quill and, because of this, the audience foresees that Quill will encounter this hostile alien group again as the film progresses.



### Questions:

1. Translate the phrase, 'Fix thy foot', into modern English. (1)
2. What is Aufidius implying when he says, 'If I fly, Martius,/Hollo me like a hare'? (2)
3. Define the word 'progeny'. To whom is Aufidius referring? (2)

[5]

## Scene Nine

### Summary

Cominius opens the scene by singing Caius Martius's praises for having vanquished Aufidius. Lartius enters and does the same. Caius Martius asks them to stop. Cominius insists that Rome should know his value as a soldier. Caius Martius responds that talking about battle is only making him more aware of his wounds, but Cominius counters his remark by pointing out that he needs to be aware of them, lest they fester. Cominius asks Caius Martius to take a tenth of the spoils, but Caius Martius refuses. Cominius gives Caius Martius his horse, which he accepts. He also names him 'Caius Martius Coriolanus', after the city of Corioles.

Coriolanus resolves to have a bath and wash his wounds. Cominius decides to write to Rome with news of the victory. He instructs Lartius to return to Corioles. Lartius is leaving when Coriolanus says he has something to ask of him. He tells Lartius there was a man who helped him in Corioles and that he would like him to be freed. Lartius asks for the man's name, but Coriolanus cannot remember it. After Lartius leaves, the honoured warrior asks for wine.

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## Analysis

The renaming of Caius Martius is significant because it suggests that he has earned the respect of his peers. This ties into the theme of manhood and honour. Specifically, it dovetails with the Roman ideal of an honourable man. Taking Volumnia's comments into account, the honourable Roman man defends his family and state in battle at a moment's notice. He wears blood as a garland, crushing his enemies in his wake.

Caius Martius has proved that he embodies all of these qualities thus far. Yet, there is still some ambiguity surrounding him. He tells the soldiers not to praise him, but, in doing so, only encourages more flattery. He does not accept the spoils of war, but he accepts Cominius's horse. He does the honourable thing in asking Lartius to free the man who helped him in Corioles, but then, when he cannot remember the man's name, he quickly dismisses the notion and asks for wine. How does this influence your perception of Caius Martius's character? How might these behaviours be seen to foreshadow his inevitable and tragic downfall?



'Welcome to Rome, renowned Coriolanus!' Caius Martius returning successfully from war, adorned with the oaken garland, and the new praise name 'Coriolanus' for his victory in Corioles.



## Questions:

1. What does the word 'visage' mean? (1)
2. 'I have some wounds upon me, and they smart/To hear themselves remember'd'. Identify the Figure of Speech in this sentence. (1)
3. What is the significance of Cominius's renaming of Caius Martius? (3)

[5]

## Scene Ten

### Summary

Aufidius, bloodied and defeated, talks to one of his soldiers. He is angry that Corioles has been taken, but the soldier assures him that they will win it back. Aufidius says that if he ever meets Caius Martius again, he will fight him to the death. The soldier calls Caius Martius the devil. Aufidius orders four soldiers to go to Corioles and see how it is held, so that they can plan to take it back.

### Analysis

Aufidius's sense of pride is hurt after being defeated by the Romans and having the city of Corioles taken. He determines to avenge this, taking action immediately. We are left with a sense of foreboding, aware of the inevitability of a confrontation between the protagonist and the antagonist.





## Questions:

1. What does Aufidius mean when he says, 'He is mine, or I am his'? (2)
2. What does the phrase, '...meet him beard to beard' mean? What kind of expression is this? Do you think it is effective? (3)
3. What is the significance of ending Act I with this scene? (2)
4. What does it mean to 'potch' at someone? (1)
5. What does Aufidius mean when he says he would 'Wash [his] fierce hand in's heart'? (2)

**[10]**

## Essay questions on Act One

1. In Act One, Scene One, Menenius compares Rome with the human body. Explain why he does so and whether this allegorical imagery is effective or not. Refer to the play closely to substantiate your response.
2. Discuss what has been revealed about the character of Coriolanus thus far in the play. Pay particular attention to what other characters have said about him in your response.
3. 'I had rather had eleven die nobly /for their country, than one voluptuously surfeit out/of action'. Discuss the theme of war as it is introduced in Act One.

## Enrichment task for Act One

*This task is an oral and visual presentation. Your presentation should be a speech of 4-5 minutes in length, to be delivered in front of the class. You should make liberal use of visual materials, such as DVD footage (movie clips), Power Point Presentations, posters and diagrams, to make points clear to your audience. You may work singly or in pairs. Refer to the rubric on the companion CD to ensure that you are familiar with the marking criteria. Choose from one of the tasks below:*

### Option 1: 'He is a lion that I am proud to hunt'

Act One of *The Tragedy of Coriolanus* pits the divided Romans against their neighbours and rivals, the Volsces. Each nation state is represented by a brave military champion, Caius Martius Coriolanus in the case of the Romans and Tullus Aufidius for the Volsces. Two fearsome warriors squaring off for a fight to the death is a fairly common narrative in action and superhero movies; yet the directors of such films choose to introduce this story in different ways.

In your speech, compare and contrast how the conflict between the protagonist and antagonist is introduced in the 'Official UK trailer' for *Coriolanus*, the 2011 British film adaptation of *The Tragedy of Coriolanus* directed by Ralph Fiennes, and the trailer for one of the following two superhero movies:

- **Man of Steel – 'Fate of Your Planet' Official Trailer** — for the 2013 Superman movie directed by Zack Snyder, in which Clark Kent must battle General Zod; or
- **The Dark Knight Rises – Official Trailer #3** — for the 2012 Batman movie directed by Christopher Nolan, in which Bruce Wayne must battle Bane.

Your focus should be on how the tone of the film is set in each trailer and how the protagonists and antagonists are introduced. Consider how effective these different introductions are and also how closely the atmospheres created in the trailers relate to each other.

Consider the following aspects: camera angles and shots, editing, lighting, setting, mise-en-scène<sup>4</sup> and any other features you might like to include.

Your presentation needs to be illustrated so use clips and visuals from the trailers whenever possible to demonstrate the points you wish to make.

## Option 2: 'Nature teaches beasts to know their friends'

In 2012, director Ang Lee turned Yann Martel's amazing novel, *The Life of Pi*, into a movie. The main character, Pi Patel, is a teenage boy who survives a shipwreck only to find himself in a lifeboat with an assortment of animals: a zebra with a broken leg, an orangutan, a spotted hyena and a Bengal tiger. Pi later explains the symbolic significance of these animals, the hyena, for instance, represents the violently aggressive cook from the ship.

Your task is to find animal equivalents for the main characters whom we meet in Act One, Scene One. The visual element of this exercise will entail finding appropriate images of these central characters and then pairing these up with visuals of the animals that you believe represent them best. In your speech, you need to present and justify your selection of images. To do this, you should draw on the words and deeds of the characters.

## Option 3: 'What could the belly answer?'

In Act One, Scene One, Menenius compares Rome with the human body, likening the Senate to the belly and the common people to the limbs. Using diagrams or other visuals to aid you in your presentation, compare the workings of a modern state like South Africa to the fable of 'The Belly and the Members'. Show where the analogy works well and illustrate its weaknesses.

<sup>4</sup> When applied to the cinema, mise-en-scène refers to everything that appears before the camera and its arrangement, for example, composition, sets, props, actors, costumes and lighting. The term also refers to the positioning and movement of actors on the set, which is called 'blocking'.

# The mini essay

## Guidelines

*The purpose of writing a mini essay is two-fold. The first reason is to demonstrate an understanding of the text in question. The second is to show that you can write about a topic in a focused and sustained way. In other words, a mini essay is not a rambling, disjointed collection of your thoughts regarding a topic, but an integrated and interconnected discussion that develops a clear argument. This section offers some basic guidelines on writing a mini essay, two annotated examples from which to learn and a selection of essay topics.*

Some of the things to consider when writing a mini essay:

- Your essay should be reasoned, well-planned and concise.
- You are required to include a one page plan with your essay (no longer than one page), which outlines the structure of your argument and the links between your ideas.
- Your thesis statement should clarify the issue or question that will be discussed in your essay. It should also indicate what points you will make and in what order.
- Each paragraph of the body of your essay should support or refute your thesis statement.
- Any statements you make must be supported with concrete, plausible examples and evidence from the text.
- Your essay should be between 400 and 450 words in length (essays longer than 500 words will be penalised in the examination) and you are required to provide an accurate word count.
- Your essay should be written in the present tense using the active voice. This ensures a more convincing stance.
- Examiners prefer that you write in the third person.

## Planning and structuring your essay

*It is important to plan your essay before you start writing your response. Doing so will improve your marks by helping you to clarify your ideas and logically structure your argument.*

### Step 1: Analyse the question

The most important thing to do when writing an essay is to read and analyse the question carefully. You need to make sure you clearly understand what is being asked. The first step is to identify the **task word** or words (i.e. the instruction) in the question. Let's look at the following example:

*In The Tragedy of Coriolanus, the Tribunes fight their own kind of war. Write a well-substantiated essay of approximately 400-450 words in which you clearly state whether you agree or disagree with this statement.*

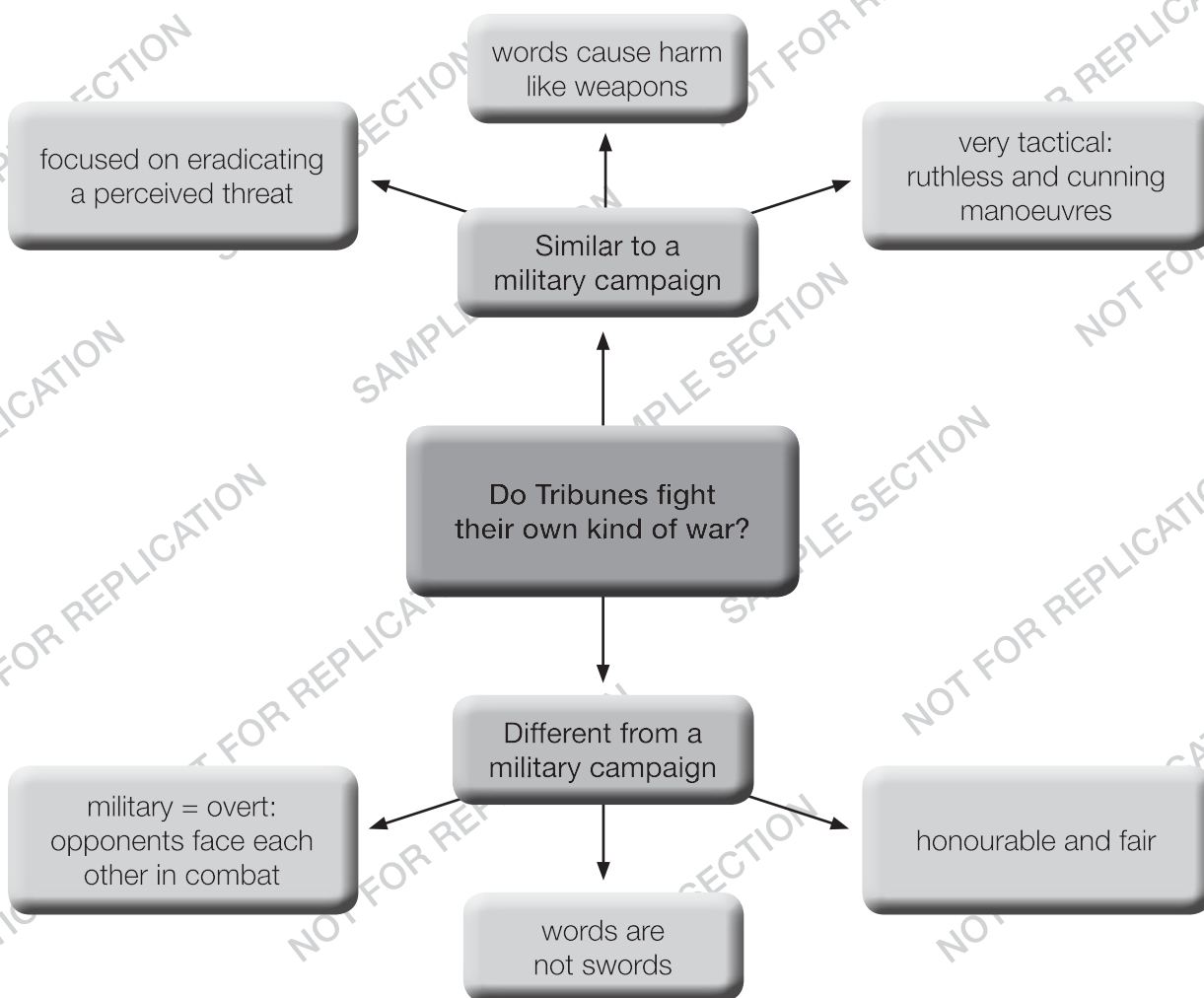
In the preceding example, the task word is 'discuss', which means that you are being asked to recognise and explore the argument being made in the statement, sifting through and debating the relevant key points, before drawing a conclusion based upon the available evidence. Other common task words include 'identify', 'examine', 'compare' and 'contrast'.

Once you have identified the task word, look closely at the **topic** of the essay. The topic tells you the theme or subject matter on which to focus. Common topics include the characters in the text, their psychological motivations and relationships, the themes and motifs that impel and illuminate the text, and the author’s use of language and dramatic techniques.

In the example, the topic is warfare and whether or not the meaning of the term can be expanded to describe conflicts other than overt military combat. In order to answer the question, you need to demonstrate that you understand the statement by pointing out the similarities and differences between the wars Coriolanus fights and the campaign the Tribunes conduct against him. You also need to decide whether you consider the Tribunes’ campaign qualifies as warfare. Whatever conclusion you reach, make sure that you provide evidence to support your opinion in your essay.

## Step 2: Map your answer

Although you can plan your essay using any method you prefer, ‘mapping out’ your response has been shown to be an effective way of generating, clarifying and linking ideas. An effective technique to use is a **concept map**. The following is a model concept map for the example question.



## Step 3: Formulate your thesis statement

Once you have mapped your response and weighed up the evidence, it is time to formulate your **thesis statement**, which is the main point you want to prove. A thesis statement will show the reader/marker that you have a clearly formulated argument and are not just rambling. It can be more than one sentence if necessary and should clearly express the opinion/argument that you are going to present.

Let's say that you have mapped your response to the previous example question about the nature of warfare and whether the Tribunes' campaign against Coriolanus qualifies as such and decided that *the Tribunes are not warriors like Coriolanus, but they do fight their own version of a war against him: a war of words*. Then this is your thesis statement.

i

Your **thesis statement** should be included at the end of your introduction and it ought to accomplish the following three things:

1. Refer to the main topic (*the meaning of the word 'war'*)
2. State the main point/thesis (*the Tribunes are not warriors in the military sense, but they fight political wars using words*)
3. Outline the body of the essay (*the main difference and similarity between the way Coriolanus and the Tribunes fight*)

## Step 4: Link your ideas together

The final task is to link your ideas together. Your essay will need an introduction, two to four body paragraphs (depending on the number of ideas you have and your word count) and a conclusion.

### The introduction

Remember that an introduction should achieve three things:

1. Establish context/background
2. Outline the problem you are trying to resolve
3. State the main point you are arguing (your thesis statement)

### The body paragraphs

Use a paragraph for each of your main ideas. Remember that a body paragraph should begin with a **topic sentence** (stating the point of the paragraph), followed by the evidence for, and explanation of, your point: **Point Evidence Explanation (PEE!)**.

### The conclusion

Your concluding paragraph needs to summarise your argument and show that you have successfully proved the point you made in your thesis statement.

# Annotated essay examples

## Essay topic:

*In The Tragedy of Coriolanus, the Tribunes fight their own kind of war. Write a well-substantiated essay of approximately 400-450 words in which you clearly state whether you agree or disagree with this statement.*

(Question 14 of the General essay questions on p.128)

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<p><b>Sicinius Velutus and Junius Brutus are not warriors like Coriolanus, but they do fight their own version of a war against him: a war of words.</b><sup>1</sup> They do this by making snide remarks about him when he is out of earshot, purposefully angering him so that he will lose his temper. They also turn the common people against him. While Coriolanus fights wars with a sword, the Tribunes use words as a weapon. In spite of his skills on the battlefield, the general is not well-acquainted with the Tribunes' type of warfare and it is because of this naivety that they triumph over him.<sup>2</sup></p>	
<b>BODY</b>	<p><b>From the first scene of the play the Tribunes are plotting against Coriolanus.</b><sup>3</sup> They call him proud and suggest that he will take all the glory from Cominius if the Romans defeat the Volsces. When he returns victorious, they lament the fact that he will be elected Consul, arguing that, if they do not stop him from entering the political arena, he will ensure that their office as Tribunes is eradicated. This demonstrates that they view Coriolanus as a threat and one that they will stop at nothing to eradicate.</p>	<p>Point</p> <p>Evidence</p> <p>Explanation</p>
	<p><b>After Coriolanus asks for the people's votes, the Tribunes use words to poison the minds of the people against him, suggesting that he mocked them.</b><sup>4</sup> They cause the fight in the marketplace by calling Coriolanus a traitor and, with a single word, they win their 'war' against Coriolanus. The general is not accustomed to fighting in such a dishonourable way. In physical wars, opponents face one another. The fight may be gruesome, but it is fair. In political wars, which are fought with manipulative words, this is not the case. The Tribunes' words are like arrows that shoot Caius Martius Coriolanus from behind and, because he does not see them coming, he is defenceless against them.<sup>5</sup></p>	<p>Summary of main point</p>
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<p><b>The Tribunes do, indeed, fight their own kind of war.</b> It is ruthless and cunning and fought with sharp, tactical words, not swords. The different nature of this war — foreign to Coriolanus — ensures that, in the end, the tribunes defeat the celebrated Roman general.<sup>6</sup></p>	<p>Restatement of thesis</p> <p>Closing remarks</p>

Word count: 354

- This is the thesis statement for our essay. It sums up the entirety of our argument.
- This is the introduction of our essay. Its purpose is to introduce the ideas that we are going to expand upon in the rest of the essay.
- This is the topic sentence for this paragraph. It summarises what we are going to argue in the paragraph.
- This is the topic sentence for this paragraph. It summarises what we are going to argue in the paragraph.
- Paragraphs two and three make up the body of our essay. These serve to expand on the ideas introduced in the introduction. Textual evidence is also given for claims that are made in the introduction.
- This is the conclusion of the essay. The purpose of a conclusion is to summarise the argument we have made, highlighting the most important elements of our argument.

FOREWORD

INTRODUCTION  
TO SHAKESPEARE

SHAKESPEAREAN  
LANGUAGE

BACKGROUND  
TO THE PLAY

SUMMARIES  
AND ANALYSES

THE MINI ESSAY

THE PLAY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# Act 1

## Scene 1

Enter a company of mutinous Citizens with staves, clubs, and other weapons.

	FIRST CITIZEN	Before we proceed any further, hear me speak.	
	ALL	Speak, speak!	
	FIRST CITIZEN	You are all resolved rather to die than to famish?	
5	ALL	Resolved, resolved!	
	FIRST CITIZEN	First, you know Caius Martius is chief enemy to the people.	
	ALL	We know 't, we know 't!	
10	FIRST CITIZEN	Let us kill him, and we'll have corn at our own price. <i>Is 't a verdict?</i>	<i>Do you all agree? about it</i>
	ALL	No more talking on 't; let it be done. Away, away!	
	SECOND CITIZEN	One word, good citizens.	
15	FIRST CITIZEN	We are accounted poor citizens, the patricians good. What <i>authority</i> surfeits on would relieve us. If they would yield us but the <i>superfluity</i> while it were wholesome, we might guess they relieved us humanely. But they think we are too <i>dear</i> . The leanness that afflicts us, the object of our misery, <i>is as an inventory to particularize their abundance</i> ; <sup>1</sup> our sufferance is a gain to them. Let us revenge this with our <i>pikes</i> ere we become <i>rakes</i> ; for the gods know I speak this in hunger for bread, not in thirst for revenge.	<i>those in authority the extra food</i>
20			<i>expensive</i>
			<i>pitchforks</i>
			<i>i.e. lean as a rake</i>
25	SECOND CITIZEN	Would you proceed especially against Caius Martius?	
	ALL	Against him first. <i>He's a very dog to the commonalty</i> .	<i>a real enemy ordinary people</i>
	SECOND CITIZEN	Consider you what services he has done for his country?	
30	FIRST CITIZEN	Very well, and could be content to give him good report for 't, but that he pays himself with being proud.	
	SECOND CITIZEN	Nay, but speak not maliciously.	
35	FIRST CITIZEN	I say unto you, what he hath done famously he did it <i>to that end</i> . Though soft-conscienced men can be content to say it was for	<i>to win fame</i>

<sup>1</sup> like a calculator to itemise their own richness (lines 20-21)

# CORIOLANUS

FOREWORD	40	SECOND CITIZEN	his country, he did it to please his mother and to be partly proud, which he is, even to the <i>altitude</i> of his <i>virtue</i> .	same high degree as valiantness
		FIRST CITIZEN	What he cannot help in his nature you account a vice in him. You must in no way say he is covetous.	
INTRODUCTION TO SHAKESPEARE	45	FIRST CITIZEN	If I must not, I need not be barren of accusations. He hath faults, with surplus, <i>to tire in repetition</i> . <sup>2</sup> ( <i>Shouts within</i> ) What shouts are these? The other side o' th' city is risen. Why stay we <i>prating</i> here? To th' Capito!	jabbering
		ALL	Come, come!	
SHAKESPEAREAN LANGUAGE		ALL	<i>Enter Menenius Agrippa.</i>	
	50	FIRST CITIZEN	Soft, who comes here?	
BACKGROUND TO THE PLAY		SECOND CITIZEN	Worthy Menenius Agrippa, one that hath always loved the people.	
		FIRST CITIZEN	He's one honest enough. Would all the rest were so!	
SUMMARIES AND ANALYSES	55	MENENIUS	What work's, my countrymen, in hand? Where go you With bats and clubs? The matter? Speak, I pray you.	
		SECOND CITIZEN	Our business is not unknown to th' Senate. They have had inkling this fortnight what we intend to do, which now we'll show 'em in deeds. They say poor suitors have <i>strong breaths</i> ; they shall know we have strong arms too.	bad breath
THE MINI ESSAY	60	MENENIUS	Why, masters, my good friends, mine honest neighbours, Will you <i>undo yourselves</i> ?	make things worse ruined
		SECOND CITIZEN	We cannot, sir; we are <i>undone</i> already.	
THE PLAY ACT 1 Sc 1		MENENIUS	I tell you, friends, most charitable care Have the patricians of you. <i>For your wants</i> , Your suffering in this <i>dearth</i> , you may as well	As for famine
	70		Strike at the heaven with your staves as lift them Against the Roman state, whose course will on The way it takes, cracking ten thousand <i>curbs</i> Of more strong link asunder than can ever Appear <i>in your impediment</i> . <sup>3</sup> For the dearth, The gods, not the patricians, make it, and Your knees to them, not arms, must help. Alack, You are <i>transported</i> by calamity	restraints
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS			Thither where more attends you, and you slander The <i>helms o' th' state</i> , <sup>4</sup> who care for you like fathers,	carried away

2 tire one out with repeating them (lines 45-46)

3 the obstruction you are making (line 74)

4 the helmsmen who steer the state, the men who are in charge (line 79)





# CORIOLANUS

FOREWORD

INTRODUCTION TO SHAKESPEARE

SHAKESPEAREAN LANGUAGE

BACKGROUND TO THE PLAY

SUMMARIES AND ANALYSES

THE MINI ESSAY

THE PLAY ACT 1 Sc 1

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In this *our fabric*, if that they—

body

MENENIUS

What then?

'Fore me, this fellow speaks. What then? What then?

125 SECOND CITIZEN

Should by the *cormorant* belly be restrained,  
Who is the sink o' th' body—

gluttonous

MENENIUS

Well, what then?

SECOND CITIZEN

The former agents, if they did complain,  
What could the belly answer?

130 MENENIUS

I will tell you,

If you'll bestow a small—of what you have little—  
Patience awhile, you'llst hear the belly's answer.

SECOND CITIZEN

You're long about it.

MENENIUS

Note me this, good friend;

135

Your most grave belly was *deliberate*,  
Not rash like his accusers, and thus answered:

careful

"True is it, my *incorporate*<sup>7</sup> friends," *quoth* he,

said

"That I receive the general food at first

Which you do live upon; and fit it is,

140

Because I am the storehouse and the shop  
Of the whole body. But, if you do remember,  
I send it through the rivers of your blood

Even to the court, the heart, to th' seat o' th' brain;

And, through the *cranks and offices*<sup>8</sup> of man,

145

The strongest *nerves* and small inferior veins

sinews

From me receive that natural *competency*<sup>9</sup>

Whereby they live. And though that all at once,

You, my good friends"—this says the belly, mark

me—

150 SECOND CITIZEN

Ay, sir, well, well.

MENENIUS

"Though all at once cannot

See what I do deliver out to each,

Yet I can make my *audit up*, that all

balance sheet

From me do back receive the *flour* of all,

the best part

155

And leave me but the *bran*." What say you to 't?

the husks

SECOND CITIZEN

It was an answer. How apply you this?

MENENIUS

The senators of Rome are this good belly,

And you the mutinous members. For examine

Their counsels and their cares, digest things rightly

160

Touching the *weal* o' th' common, you shall find

general well-being

No public benefit which you receive

But it proceeds or comes from them to you

And no way from yourselves. What do you think,

7 forming part of the body (line 137)

8 winding passages; organs (line 144)

9 their means of survival, sufficiency, an adequate/sufficient amount (line 146)

165	SECOND CITIZEN MENENIUS	You, the <i>great toe</i> of this assembly? I the great toe? Why the great toe? For that, being one o' th' lowest, basest, poorest, Of this <i>most wise rebellion</i> , thou goest foremost. Thou rascal, that art <i>worst in blood to run</i> , <sup>10</sup> Lead'st first to win some vantage.	<i>i.e. the leader</i>  <i>irony</i>
170		But make you ready your <i>stiff bats</i> and clubs. Rome and her rats are at the point of battle; The one side must have <i>bale</i> .	<i>stout</i>  <i>injury</i>
	<i>Enter Caius Martius</i>		
		Hail, noble Martius.	
175	MARTIUS	Thanks.—What's the matter, you <i>dissentious rogues</i> , That, rubbing the poor itch of your opinion, <i>Make yourselves scabs</i> ? <sup>11</sup>	<i>rebellious</i>
	SECOND CITIZEN	We have ever your good word.	
	MARTIUS	He that will give good words to thee will flatter <i>Beneath abhorring</i> . <sup>12</sup> What would you have, you curs, That like <i>nor peace nor war</i> ? The one affrights you; The other makes you proud. He that trusts to you, Where he should find you lions, finds you hares; Where foxes, geese. You are no surer, no, Than is the coal of fire upon the ice	<i>neither... nor</i>
185		Or hailstone in the sun. <i>Your virtue is</i> <i>To make him worthy whose offence subdues him,</i> <i>And curse that justice did it</i> . <sup>13</sup> <i>Who</i> deserves greatness Deserves your hate; and your <i>affections</i> are A sick man's appetite, who desires most that Which would increase his <i>evil</i> . He that depends Upon your favours swims with fins of lead, And hews down oaks with rushes. Hang you! Trust you? With every minute you do change a mind And call him noble that was now your hate, Him vile that was your <i>garland</i> . What's the matter, That in these <i>several</i> places of the city You cry against the noble senate, who, Under the gods, keep you in awe, which else Would feed on one another?—What's their seeking? For corn at their own rates, whereof they say The city is well stored.	<i>neither... nor</i>  <i>Anyone who</i> <i>inclinations</i>  <i>sickness</i>
190			
195		Hang 'em! They say?	<i>hero</i> <i>different</i>
200	MENENIUS  MARTIUS		

10 a young or inferior hound or deer that will run ahead of the pack or herd (line 168)

11 give yourself scabs/low scurvy people (line 176)

12 those who are beneath abhorring (regarded with disgust/hatred) (line 179)

13 It's just like you to respect someone who deserves punishment and swear at the justice who punishes him (lines 185-187)



MENENIUS This is strange.

**245** MARTIUS Go get you home, you fragments.  
*Enter a Messenger hastily.*

MESENTER Where's Caius Martius?

MARTIUS Here. What's the matter?

MESENTER The news is, sir, the Volsces are in arms.

MARTIUS I am glad on 't. Then we shall ha' means to *vent*  
*Our musty superfluity.*<sup>19</sup>

**250** *Enter Sicinius Velutus, Junius Brutus, (two Tribunes);  
 Cominius, Titus Lartius, with other Senators*

FIRST SENATOR See our best elders.

MARTIUS Martius, 'tis true *that* you have lately told us:  
 The Volsces are in arms.

**255** MARTIUS They have a leader,  
 Tullus Aufidius, that will *put you to 't.*  
 I sin in envying his nobility,  
 And, were I anything but what I am,  
 I would wish me only he.

COMINIUS You have fought together?

**260** MARTIUS Were half to half the world *by th' ears* and he  
*Upon my party*, I'd revolt, to make  
 Only my wars with him. He is a lion  
 That I am proud to hunt.

FIRST SENATOR Then, worthy Martius,  
**265** *Attend upon Cominius* to these wars.

COMINIUS It is your former promise.

MARTIUS Sir, it is,  
 And I am constant. — Titus Lartius, thou  
 Shalt see me once more strike at Tullus's face.

**270** LARTIUS What, art thou *stiff? Stand'st out?*<sup>20</sup>

MENENIUS No, Caius Martius,  
**275** I'll lean upon one crutch and fight with t' other  
 Ere stay behind this business.

FIRST SENATOR O, true bred!

LARTIUS Your company to th' Capitol, where I know  
 Our greatest friends attend us.

LARTIUS *(to Cominius)* Lead you on. —  
 LARTIUS *(to Martius)* Follow Cominius. We must follow you;  
*Right worthy you priority.*<sup>21</sup>

**280** COMINIUS Noble Martius.  
 FIRST SENATOR *(to the Citizens)* Hence to your homes, begone.  
 MARTIUS Nay, let them follow.

what

test you to the utmost

fighting  
 on my side

accompany Cominius

19 get rid of the stale surplus of our energies (lines 249-250)  
 20 stiff with age or wounds? Are you staying out of this war? (line 270)  
 21 you well deserve to precede me (line 279)

# CORIOLANUS

FOREWORD		The Volsces have much corn; take these rats thither To gnaw their <i>granaries</i> .	<i>granaries</i>
		<i>Citizens steal away.</i>	
INTRODUCTION TO SHAKESPEARE	285	Worshipful mutineers, Your valour <i>puts well forth</i> . <sup>22</sup> — Pray follow.	
		<i>They exit. Sicinius and Brutus remain.</i>	
SHAKESPEAREAN LANGUAGE	SICINIUS	Was ever man so proud as is this Martius?	
	BRUTUS	He has no equal.	
BACKGROUND TO THE PLAY	SICINIUS	When we were chosen tribunes for the people—	
	290 BRUTUS	Marked you his lip and eyes?	
SUMMARIES AND ANALYSES	SICINIUS	Nay, but his taunts.	
	BRUTUS	Being moved, he will not spare <i>to gird</i> the gods—	<i>sneer at</i>
THE MINI ESSAY	SICINIUS	Bemock the <i>modest</i> moon.	<i>chaste (virtuous)</i>
	BRUTUS	The present wars devour him! He is grown Too proud <i>to be</i> so valiant.	<i>of being</i>
THE PLAY ACT 1 Sc 1	295 SICINIUS	Such a nature, Tickled with good success, <i>disdains</i> the shadow Which he treads on at noon. But I do wonder His insolence can <i>brook</i> to be commanded Under Cominius.	<i>scorns</i> <i>endure</i>
	300 BRUTUS	<i>Fame</i> , at the which he aims, In whom already he's well graced, cannot Better be held nor more attained than by A place below the first; for what miscarries Shall be the General's fault, <i>though he perform</i> <i>To th' utmost</i> <sup>23</sup> of a man, and <i>giddy censure</i> <sup>24</sup> Will then cry out of Martius "O, if he Had borne the business!"	<i>Fame is personified here</i>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	SICINIUS	Besides, if things go well, Opinion that so sticks on Martius shall Of his <i>demerits</i> rob Cominius.	<i>merits</i>
	310 BRUTUS	Come. Half all Cominius's honours are to Martius, Though Martius earned them not, and all his faults To Martius shall be honours, though indeed In <i>ought</i> he merit not.	<i>anything</i>
	SICINIUS	Let's hence and hear How the <i>dispatch</i> is made, and in what fashion, More than <i>his singularity</i> , he goes Upon this present action.	<i>order for war</i> <i>besides his own self-</i> <i>importance</i>
	320 BRUTUS	Let's along.	
		<i>They exit.</i>	

22 (mockery) is very promising (line 286)

23 though he does all of which he is capable (lines 305-306)

24 the fickleness of popular opinion (line 306)

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