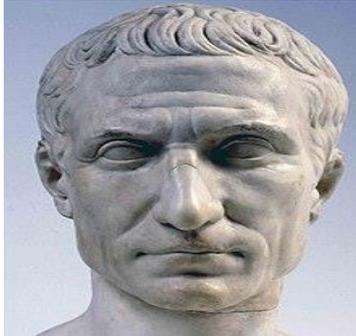


Beware the Ides of March!



The A Level Classical Civilisation class has been celebrating the most infamous day in Roman history: the Ides of March (test your Roman numerals by identifying the date above). They started our lesson knowing that Julius Caesar was assassinated at a meeting of the Senate – and even that he was stabbed 23 times – but finding out who actually carried it out turned into a murder mystery lesson full of surprises.

Presented with a series of strange events giving a picture of Caesar's relationships with each of the individuals who were in the Senate that day, the pupils had to build up a list of chief suspects based on their possible motives for killing him. These ranged from the political (Cicero's ideological opposition to Caesar's power) to the personal (Mark Antony's increasingly fractious relationship with his supposed military and political ally) to the downright bizarre (Caesar stealing Cassius' prize collection of lions for the amphitheatre).

But the class was surprised to find that neither Cicero nor Antony was present in the Senate that fateful day – according to the account by Roman historian Suetonius. Cassius, vehemently opposed to any idea of tyranny (and upset about his lions) was one of the leaders of the plot. More surprising as his co-conspirator was Brutus, whom Caesar considered a close friend and had promoted: hence Caesar's famous words, as Shakespeare would have it, "et tu, Brute?"

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