





Home | [Ancient History Sourcebook](#) | [Medieval Sourcebook](#) | [Modern History Sourcebook](#) | [Byzantine Studies Page](#)  
 Other History Sourcebooks: [African](#) | [East Asian](#) | [Global](#) | [Indian](#) | [Islamic](#) | [Jewish](#) | [Lesbian and Gay](#) | [Science](#) | [Women's](#)

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Full Texts  
 Legal Texts  
 Additions  
 Search  
 Help

Studying History  
 Human Origins  
 Mesopotamia  
 Egypt  
 Persia  
 Israel  
 Greece  
 Hellenistic World  
 Rome  
 Late Antiquity  
 Christian Origins

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# Ancient History Sourcebook:

## Sallust (prob.86-35 BCE):

### Life in Rome in the Late Republic, c. 63 BCE

*[Davis Introduction]:*

*Catiline's anarchistic conspiracy of 63 B.C. was, of course, only possible in a society in which there were a great number of depraved and desperate men, ready for any enterprise, however villainous. For such spirits Catiline was an ideal leader. In this quotation from Sallust we see how it became possible for him to find a large following, and what manner of man he was personally.*

#### **Conspiracy of Catiline, chs. 11-16:**

*After Sulla had recovered the government by force of arms, everybody became robbers and plunderers. Some set their hearts on houses, some on lands. His victorious troops knew no restraint, no moderation, but inflicted on the citizens disgraceful and inhumane outrages. The whole period was one of debauched tastes and lawlessness. When wealth was once counted an honor, and glory, authority, and power attended it, virtue lost her influence, poverty was thought a disgrace, and a life of innocence was regarded as a life of mere ill nature. From the influence of riches, accordingly, luxury, avarice, pride came to prevail among the youth. They grew at once rapacious and prodigal. They undervalued what was their own; they set at nought modesty and continence; they lost all distinction between sacred and profane, and threw off all consideration and self-restraint.*

*It is a serious matter for reflection, after viewing our modern mansions and villas, extended to the veritable size of cities, to contemplate the temples which our ancestors a most devout race of men, erected to the gods. But our forefathers adorned the fanes of the deities with devotion, and their homes with their own glory, and took nothing from what they conquered but the power of doing harm; their descendants on the contrary have even wrested from their allies, with rank injustice, whatever their brave and victorious ancestors had left to their vanquished enemies---as if the only use of power was to inflict injury. Why should I mention these displays of extraordinary luxury which now set in, which can be believed only by those who have seen them; as, for example, how mountains have been leveled, and seas actually built over with edifices by many a private citizen---men whom I deem to have made a sport of their wealth, since they were impatient to squander disreputably what they might have enjoyed with honor.*

*But the love of irregular gratification, open debauchery, and all kinds of luxury had spread abroad with no less force. Men and women alike threw off all restraints of modesty. To gratify appetite they sought for every kind of production by land or sea. They slept before there was any natural inclination to sleep. They no longer waited to feel hunger, thirst, or fatigue, but anticipated them all by luxurious indulgence. Such propensities drove young men, when their patrimonies were run through, to criminal practices; for their minds, impregnated with evil habits, could not easily abstain from gratifying their passions, and were thus the more inordinately devoted in every way to rapacity and extravagance.*

*In so populous and corrupt a city Catiline easily kept about him, as a bodyguard, crowds of the lawless and desperate. All the shameless libertines and profligate rascals were his associates and intimate friends---the men who had squandered their paternal estates by gaming, luxury, sensuality, and all too who had plunged heavily into debt to buy immunity for crimes; all assassins or sacrilegious persons from every quarter, convicted, or dreading conviction for their misdeeds; all, likewise, for whom their tongue or hand won a livelihood by perjury or bloodshed; all, in short, whom wickedness, poverty, or a guilty conscience goaded were friends to Catiline.*

*If any man of character as yet unblemished fell into his society, he presently rendered him by daily intercourse and temptation like to and equal to the rest. But it was the young whose acquaintance he chiefly courted and easily ensnared. For as the passions of each, according to his years, were aroused, he furnished mistresses to some, bought horses and dogs for others, and spared, in a word, neither his purse nor his character, if he could make them his devoted and trustworthy supporters.*

*Catiline was alleged to have corrupted a Vestal Virgin, and wrought many vile crimes; at last, smitten with a passion for a certain Aurelia, he murdered his own grown-up son, because she objected to marrying him and having in the house a grown-up stepson. And this crime seems to me to have been the chief cause of hurrying forward his conspiracy. For his guilty mind, at peace neither with gods nor men, found no comfort either waking or sleeping, so utterly did conscience desolate his tortured spirit. His complexion, in consequence, was pale, his eyes haggard, his walk sometimes quick and sometimes slow, and distraction was plainly evident in every feature and look.*

*The young men he enticed by various methods into evil practices. From among them he furnished false witnesses and forgers of signatures; and he taught them all to regard with equal unconcern property and danger. At length when he had stripped them of all character and shame he led them to other and greater iniquities. When there was no ready motive for crime, he nevertheless stirred them up to murder quite inoffensive persons, just as if they had injured him, lest their hand or heart should grow torpid for want of employment. Trusting to such confederates and comrades, and knowing that the load of debt was everywhere great, and that the veterans of Sulla, having spent their money too freely, now were longing for a civil war, remembering their spoils and former victory, Catiline accordingly formed the design of overthrowing the government.*

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Source:

*From: William Stearns Davis, ed., Readings in Ancient History: Illustrative Extracts from the Sources, 2 Vols. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1912-13), Vol. II: Rome and the West, pp. 135-138.*

*Scanned by: J. S. Arkenberg, Dept. of History, Cal. State Fullerton. Prof. Arkenberg has modernized the text.*

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 Legal Texts  
 Additions  
 Search  
 Help

Studying History  
 Human Origins  
 Mesopotamia  
 Egypt  
 Persia  
 Israel  
 Greece  
 Hellenistic World  
 Rome  
 Late Antiquity  
 Christian Origins

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# Ancient History Sourcebook:

## Polybius (c.200-after 118 BCE): The Roman Maniple vs. The Macedonian Phalanx

*The Histories, Book XVIII, Chapters 28-32:*

*In my sixth book I made a promise, still unfulfilled, of taking a fitting opportunity of drawing a comparison between the arms of the Romans and Macedonians, and their respective system of tactics, and pointing out how they differ for better or worse from each other. I will now endeavor by a reference to actual facts to fulfil that promise. For since in former times the Macedonian tactics proved themselves by experience capable of conquering those of Asia and Greece; while the Roman tactics sufficed to conquer the nations of Africa and all those of Western Europe; and since in our own day there have been numerous opportunities of comparing the men as well as their tactics, it will be, I think, a useful and worthy task to investigate their differences, and discover why it is that the Romans conquer and carry off the palm from their enemies in the operations of war: that we may not put it all down to Fortune, and congratulate them on their good luck, as the thoughtless of mankind do; but, from a knowledge of the true causes, may give their leaders the tribute of praise and admiration which they deserve.*

*Now as to the battles which the Romans fought with Hannibal and the defeats which they sustained in them, I need say no more. It was not owing to their arms or their tactics, but to the skill and genius of Hannibal that they met with those defeats: and that I made quite clear in my account of the battles themselves. And my contention is supported by two facts. First, by the conclusion of the war: for as soon as the Romans got a general of ability comparable with that of Hannibal, victory was not long in following their banners. Secondly, Hannibal himself, being dissatisfied with the original arms of his men, and having immediately after his first victory furnished his troops with the arms of the Romans, continued to employ them thenceforth to the end. Pyrrhus, again, availed himself not only of the arms, but also of the troops of Italy, placing a maniple of Italians and a company of his own phalanx alternately, in his battles against the Romans. Yet even this did not enable him to win; the battles were somehow or another always indecisive.*

*It was necessary to speak first on these points, to anticipate any instances which might seem to make against my theory. I will now return to my comparison.*

*Many considerations may easily convince us that, if only the phalanx has its proper formation and strength, nothing can resist it face to face or withstand its charge. For as a man in close order of battle occupies a space of three feet; and as the length of the sarissae are sixteen cubits according to the original design, which has been reduced in practice to fourteen; and as of these fourteen four must be deducted, to allow for the weight in front; it follows clearly that each hoplite will have ten cubits of his sarissa projecting beyond his body, when he lowers it with both hands, as he advances against the enemy: hence, too, though the men of the second, third, and fourth rank will have their sarissae projecting farther beyond the front rank than the men of the fifth, yet even these last will have two cubits of their sarissae beyond the front rank; if only the phalanx is properly formed and the men close up properly both flank and rear, like the description in Homer:*

*So buckler pressed on buckler; helm on helm; And man on man; and waving horse-hair plumes In polished head-piece mingled, as they swayed In order: in such serried rank they stood. [Iliad, 13.131]*

*And if my description is true and exact, it is clear that in front of each man of the front rank there will be five sarissae projecting to distances varying by a descending scale of two cubits.*

*With this point in our minds, it will not be difficult to imagine what the appearance and strength of the whole phalanx is likely to be, when, with lowered sarissae, it advances to the charge sixteen deep. Of these sixteen ranks, all above the fifth are unable to reach with their sarissae far enough to take actual part in the fighting. They, therefore, do not lower them, but hold them with the points inclined upwards over the shoulders of the ranks in front of them, to shield the heads of the whole phalanx; for the sarissae are so closely serried, that they repel missiles which have carried over the front ranks and might fall upon the heads of those in the rear. These rear ranks, however, during an advance, press forward those in front by the weight of their bodies; and thus make the charge very forcible, and at the same time render it impossible for the front ranks to face about.*

*Such is the arrangement, general and detailed of the phalanx. It remains now to compare with it the peculiarities and distinctive features of the Roman arms and tactics. Now, a Roman soldier in full armor also requires a space of three square feet. But as their method of fighting admits of individual motion for each man---because he defends his body with a shield, which he moves about to any point from which a blow is coming, and because he uses his sword both for cutting and stabbing---it is evident that each man must have a clear space, and an interval of at least three feet both on flank and rear if he is to do his duty with any effect. The result of this will be that each Roman soldier will face two of the front rank of a phalanx, so that he has to encounter and fight against ten spears, which one man cannot find time even to cut away, when once the two lines are engaged, nor force his way through easily---seeing that the Roman front ranks are not supported by the rear ranks, either by way of adding weight to their charge, or vigor to the use of their swords. Therefore, it may readily be understood that, as I said before, it is impossible to confront a charge of the phalanx, so long as it retains its proper formation and strength.*

*Why is it then that the Romans conquer? And what is it that brings disaster on those who employ the phalanx? Why, just because war is full of uncertainties both as to time and place; whereas there is but one time and one kind of ground in which a phalanx can fully work. If, then, there were anything to compel the enemy to accommodate himself to the time and place of the phalanx, when about to fight a general engagement, it would be but natural to expect that those who employed the phalanx would always carry off the victory. But if the enemy finds it possible, and even easy, to avoid its attack, what becomes of its formidable character? Again, no one denies that for its employment it is indispensable to have a country flat, bare, and without such impediments as ditches, cavities, depressions, steep banks, or beds of rivers: for all such obstacles are sufficient to hinder and dislocate this particular formation. And that it is, I may say, impossible, or at any rate exceedingly rare to find a piece of country of twenty stades, or sometimes of even greater extent, without any such obstacles, every one will also admit. However, let us suppose that such a district has been found. If the enemy decline to come down into it, but traverse the country sacking the towns and territories of the allies, what use will the phalanx be? For if it remains on the ground suited to itself, it will not only fail to benefit its friends, but will be incapable even of preserving itself; for the carriage of provisions will be easily stopped by the enemy, seeing that they are in undisputed possession of the country: while if it quits its proper ground, from the wish to strike a blow, it will be an easy prey to the enemy. Nay, if a general does descend into the plain, and yet does not risk his whole army upon one charge of the phalanx or upon one chance, but maneuvers for a time to avoid coming to close quarters in the engagement, it is easy to learn what will be the result from what the Romans are now actually doing.*

*For no speculation is any longer required to test the accuracy of what I am now saying: that can be done by referring to accomplished facts. The Romans do not, then, attempt to extend their front to equal that of a phalanx, and then charge directly upon it with their whole force: but some of their divisions are kept in reserve, while others join battle with the enemy at close quarters. Now, whether the phalanx in its charge drives its opponents from their ground, or is itself driven back, in either case its peculiar order is dislocated; for whether in following the retiring, or flying from the advancing enemy, they quit the rest of their forces: and when this takes place, the enemy's reserves can occupy the space thus left, and the ground which the phalanx had just before been holding, and so no longer charge them face to face, but fall upon them on their flank and rear. If, then, it is easy to take precautions against the opportunities and peculiar advantages of the phalanx, but impossible to do so in the case of its disadvantages, must it not follow that in practice the difference between these two systems is enormous? Of course, those generals who employ the phalanx must march over ground of every description, must pitch camps, occupy points of advantage, besiege, and be besieged, and meet with unexpected appearances of the enemy: for all these are part and parcel of war, and have an important and sometimes decisive*

*influence on the ultimate victory. And in all these cases the Macedonian phalanx is difficult, and sometimes impossible, to handle, because the men cannot act either in squads or separately.*

*The Roman order on the other hand is flexible: for every Roman, once armed and on the field, is equally well-equipped for every place, time, or appearance of the enemy. He is, moreover, quite ready and needs to make no change, whether he is required to fight in the main body, or in a detachment, or in a single maniple, or even by himself. Therefore, as the individual members of the Roman force are so much more serviceable, their plans are also much more often attended by success than those of others.*

*I thought it necessary to discuss this subject at some length, because at the actual time of the occurrence many Greeks supposed when the Macedonians were beaten that it was incredible; and many will afterwards be at a loss to account for the inferiority of the phalanx to the Roman system of arming.*

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Source:

*From: Polybius, The Histories of Polybius, 2 Vols., trans. Evelyn S. Shuckburgh (London: Macmillan, 1889), pp. 226-230.*

*Scanned by: J. S. Arkenberg, Dept. of History, Cal. State Fullerton. Prof. Arkenberg has modernized the text.*

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Home | Ancient History Sourcebook | Medieval Sourcebook | Modern History Sourcebook | Byzantine Studies Page  
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Full Texts  
 Legal Texts  
 Additions  
 Search  
 Help

Studying History  
 Human Origins  
 Mesopotamia  
 Egypt  
 Persia  
 Israel  
 Greece  
 Hellenistic World  
 Rome  
 Late Antiquity  
 Christian Origins

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# Ancient History Sourcebook: Tacitus: The End of the Republic

*Tacitus begins the Annals by describing how the civil war and proscriptions (mass executions of political opponents) had destroyed the Republic.*

*Rome at the beginning was ruled by kings. Freedom and the consulship were established by Lucius Brutus. Dictatorships were held for a temporary crisis. The power of the decemvirs did not last beyond two years, nor was the consular jurisdiction of the military tribunes of long duration. The despotisms of Cinna and Sulla were brief; the rule of Pompey and of Crassus soon yielded before Caesar; the arms of Lepidus and (Mark) Antony before Augustus; who, when the world was wearied by civil strife, subjected it to empire under the title of "Prince." But the successes and reverses of the old Roman people have been recorded by famous historians; and fine intellects were not wanting to describe the times of Augustus, till growing sycophancy scared them away. The histories of Tiberius, Caius (Caligula), Claudius, and Nero, while they were in power, were falsified through terror, and after their death were written under the irritation of a recent hatred. Hence my purpose is to relate a few facts about Augustus- more particularly his last acts, then the reign of Tiberius, and all which follows, without either bitterness or partiality, from any motives to which I am far removed.*

*When after the destruction of Brutus and Cassius there was no longer any army of the Republic, when Pompey was crushed in Sicily, and when, with Lepidus pushed aside and (Mark) Antony slain, even the Julian faction had only Caesar left to lead it, then, dropping the title of triumvir, and giving out that he was a Consul, and was satisfied with a tribune's authority for the protection of the people, Augustus won over the soldiers with gifts, the populace with cheap corn, and all men with the sweets of repose, and so grew greater by degrees, while he concentrated in himself the functions of the Senate, the magistrates, and the laws. He was wholly unopposed, for the boldest spirits had fallen in battle, or in the proscription, while the remaining nobles, the readier they were to be slaves, were raised the higher by wealth and promotion, so that, aggrandised by revolution, they preferred the safety of the present to the dangerous past. Nor did the provinces dislike that condition of affairs, for they distrusted the government of the Senate and the people, because of the rivalries between the leading men and the rapacity of the officials, while the protection of the laws was unavailing, as they were continually deranged by violence, intrigue, and finally by corruption.*

Source:

Tacitus: **Annals**, Book 1., Translated by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb. Slightly adapted. Full text online at <http://classics.mit.edu/Tacitus/annals.html>

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## Ancient History

Full Texts  
 Legal Texts  
 Additions  
 Search  
 Help

Studying History  
 Human Origins  
 Mesopotamia  
 Egypt  
 Persia  
 Israel  
 Greece  
 Hellenistic World  
 Rome  
 Late Antiquity  
 Christian Origins

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# Ancient History Sourcebook:

## Plutarch: The Assassination of Julius Caesar, from Marcus Brutus (excerpts)

Translated by John Dryden

From this time they tried the inclinations of all their acquaintances that they durst trust, and communicated the secret to them, and took into the design not only their familiar friends, but as many as they believed bold and brave and despisers of death. For which reason they concealed the plot from Cicero, though he was very much trusted and as well beloved by them all, lest, to his own disposition, which was naturally timorous, adding now the weariness and caution of old age, by his weighing, as he would do, every particular, that he might not make one step without the greatest security, he should blunt the edge of their forwardness and resolution in a business which required all the despatch imaginable. As indeed there were also two others that were companions of Brutus, Statilius the Epicurean, and Favonius the admirer of Cato, whom he left out for this reason: as he was conversing one day with them, trying them at a distance, and proposing some such question to be disputed of as among philosophers, to see what opinion they were of, Favonius declared his judgment to be that a civil war was worse than the most illegal monarchy; and Statilius held, that to bring himself into troubles and danger upon the account of evil or foolish men did not become a man that had any wisdom or discretion. But Labeo, who was present, contradicted them both and Brutus, as if it had been an intricate dispute, and difficult to be decided, held his peace for that time, but afterwards discovered the whole design to Labeo, who readily undertook it. The next thing that was thought convenient was to gain the other Brutus surnamed Albinus, a man of himself of no great bravery or courage, but considerable for the number of gladiators that he was maintaining for a public show, and the great confidence that Caesar put in him. When Cassius and Labeo spoke with him concerning the matter, he gave them no answer; but, seeking an interview with Brutus himself alone, and finding that he was their captain, he readily consented to partake in the action. And among the others, also, the most and best were gained by the name of Brutus. And, though they neither gave nor took any oath of secrecy, nor used any other sacred rite to assure their fidelity to each other, yet all kept their design so close, were so wary, and held it so silently among themselves that, though by prophecies and apparitions and signs in the sacrifices the gods gave warning of it, yet could it not be believed.

But a meeting of the senate being appointed, at which it was believed that Caesar would be present, they agreed to make use of that opportunity; for then they might appear all together without suspicion; and, besides, they hoped that all the noblest and leading men of the commonwealth, being then assembled as soon as the great deed was done, would immediately stand forward and assert the common liberty. The very place too where the senate was to meet seemed to be by divine appointment favourable to their purpose. It was a portico, one of those joining the theatre, with a large recess, in which there stood a statue of Pompey, erected to him by the commonwealth, when he adorned that part of the city with the porticos and the theatre. To this place it was that the senate was summoned for the middle of March (the Ides of March is the Roman name for the day); as if some more than human power were leading the man thither, there to meet his punishment for the death of Pompey.

As soon as it was day, Brutus, taking with him a dagger, which none but his wife knew of, went out. The rest met together at Cassius's house, and brought forth his son that was that day to put on the manly gown, as it is called, into the forum; and from thence, going all to Pompey's porch, stayed there, expecting Caesar to come without delay to the senate. Here it was chiefly that any

one who had known what they had purposed, would have admired the unconcerned temper and the steady resolution of these men in their most dangerous undertaking; for many of them, being praetors, and called upon by their office to judge and determine causes, did not only hear calmly all that made application to them and pleaded against each other before them, as if they were free from all other thoughts, but decided causes with as much accuracy and judgment as they had heard them with attention and patience. And when one person refused to stand to the award of Brutus, and with great clamour and many attestations appealed to Caesar, Brutus, looking round about him upon those that were present, said, "Caesar does not hinder me, nor will he hinder me, from doing according to the laws."...

For now news was brought that Caesar was coming, carried in a litter. For, being discouraged by the ill-omens that attended his sacrifice, he had determined to undertake no affairs of any great importance that day, but to defer them till another time, excusing himself that he was sick. As soon as he came out of his litter, Popilius Laenas, he who but a little before had wished Brutus good success in his undertaking, coming up to him, conversed a great while with him, Caesar standing still all the while, and seeming to be very attentive. The conspirators (to give them this name), not being able to hear what he said, but guessing by what themselves were conscious of that this conference was the discovery of their treason, were again disheartened, and, looking upon one another, agreed from each others countenances that they should not stay to be taken, but should all kill themselves. And now when Cassius and some others were laying hands upon their daggers under their robes, and were drawing them out, Brutus, viewing narrowly the looks and gesture of Laenas, and finding that he was earnestly petitioning and not accusing, said nothing, because there were many strangers to the conspiracy mingled amongst them: but by a cheerful countenance encouraged Cassius. And after a little while, Laenas, having kissed Caesars hand, went away, showing plainly that all his discourse was about some particular business relating to himself.

Now when the senate was gone in before to the chamber where they were to sit, the rest of the company placed themselves close about Caesars chair, as if they had some suit to make to him, and Cassius, turning his face to Pompeys statue, is said to have invoked it, as if it had been sensible of his prayers. Trebonius, in the meanwhile, engaged Antonys attention at the door, and kept him in talk outside. When Caesar entered, the whole senate rose up to him. As soon as he was sat down, the men all crowded round about him, and set Tillius Cimber, one of their own number, to intercede in behalf of his brother that was banished; they all joined their prayers with his, and took Caesar by the hand, and kissed his head and his breast. But he putting aside at first their supplications, and afterwards, when he saw they would not desist, violently rising up, Tillius with both hands caught hold of his robe and pulled it off from his shoulders, and Casca, that stood behind him, drawing his dagger, gave him the first, but a slight wound, about the shoulder. Caesar snatching hold of the handle of the dagger, and crying out aloud in Latin, "Villain Casca, what do you?" he, calling in Greek to his brother, bade him come and help. And by this time, finding himself struck by a great many hands, and looking around about him to see if he could force his way out, when he saw Brutus with his dagger drawn against him, he let go Cascas hand, that he had hold of and covering his head with his robe, gave up his body to their blows. And they so eagerly pressed towards the body, and so many daggers were hacking together, that they cut one another; Brutus, particularly, received a wound in his hand, and all of them were besmeared with the blood.

Caesar being thus slain, Brutus, stepping forth into the midst, intended to have made a speech, and called back and encouraged the senators to stay; but they all affrighted ran away in great disorder, and there was a great confusion and press at the door, though none pursued or followed. For they had come to an express resolution to kill nobody beside Caesar, but to call and invite all the rest to liberty. It was indeed the opinion of all the others, when they consulted about the execution of their design, that it was necessary to cut off Antony with Caesar, looking upon him as an insolent man, an affecter of monarchy, and one that, by his familiar intercourse, had gained a powerful interest with the soldiers. And this they urged the rather, because at that time to the natural loftiness and ambition of his temper there was added the dignity of being counsel and colleague to Caesar. But Brutus opposed this consul, insisting first upon the injustice of it, and afterwards giving them hopes that a change might be worked in Antony. For he did not despair but that so highly gifted and honourable a man, and such a lover of glory as Antony, stirred up with emulation of their great attempt, might, if Caesar were once removed, lay hold of the occasion to be joint restorer with them of the liberty of his country. Thus did Brutus save Antony's life.

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Source:



Plutarch. Lives. translated by John Dryden

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