

# Julius Caesar

## Self-Harm

- Portia gives herself 'a voluntary wound [...] in the thigh' as a demonstration of her constancy to Brutus

## Suicide

- In 4.3, we are told that Portia 'swallowed fire' – Portia was commonly thought to have eaten hot coals after hearing about the success of Octavius and Antony
- In 5.3, Cassius asks his servant, Pindarus, to kill him with his own sword
- In 5.5, Brutus runs on his own sword, which is held by Strato

## Violence and Weapons

- Knives, swords and violence feature regularly in the play – particularly in 3.1 when Caesar is killed by stabbing
- Following Brutus' instructions, the conspirators cover themselves in Caesar's blood, adding to violence/gore of scene
- 3.1: descriptions of children being cut into pieces or 'quartered'
- 3.3: Plebians attack Cinna the Poet and plot to burn down the conspirators' houses

## War and Conflict

- From Antony's speech in 3.1 onwards, the play features war and conflict
- Violence and deaths result from the conflict
- Themes of political unrest throughout the play

## Age/Ageism:

- In 1.2, a lot of Cassius' criticisms of Caesar centre on his physical weakness, which could possibly be linked to his age (he is older than the other characters) but which is also linked to disability
- Cassius criticises Caesar for being 'of such a feeble temper' and suggests that he easily succumbs to illness: Caesar is 'a sick girl' who was severely affected by 'a fever when he was in Spain'
- There is also a disparaging reference to 'old men, fools, and children' in 1.3, which implies that older men are naturally more foolish/juvenile

## Ableism

- The word 'monstrous' is mentioned several times. Going back to the ancients, anomalous births were deemed monstrous and were given supernatural origins: evil spirits, demonic possession, God's curse or disfavour
- There is a reference to Caesar having a 'deaf' ear in 1.2, which plays into the overlap of age and disability

- Brutus describes Caesar as having 'the falling sickness', an early modern term for epilepsy
- Again, Caesar's disability is weaponised as a way of questioning his competence as a leader. Caska describes how Caesar 'fell down in the market-place, and foamed at mouth, and was speechless'

### **Misogyny**

- Many of the characters use language and stereotypes relating to women as insults, and particularly when describing cowardice
- In 1.3, Cassius uses the words 'womanish' and 'women' as insults relating to cowardice
- In 2.4, Portia voices misogynistic stereotypes about women: that they can't keep secrets (linking to the idea that women are gossips) and that women are 'weak'