Julius Caesar: The Use Of Suspense Essay, Research Paper

Julius Caesar: The Use of Suspense

Suspense can be defined as the uncertainties the reader feels about what

will happen next in a story, or in this case, a play. William Shakespeare

incorporated in Julius Caesar three very suspenseful events on which the whole

play depends.

The first suspenseful event of this play occurs when the conspirators

join and discuss their reasons for assassination. Cassius feels that he is

equal to Caesar, if not even better that him. Shakespeare builds suspense by

using this statement made by Cassius: “I was born free as Caesar?/we both have

fed as well, and we can both / endure the winter’s cold as well as he.” Then

cassius tries to persuade Brutes to join in on the conspiracy by telling him

that it would be honorable to assassinate Caesar. Cassius tells Brutes that the

fate of Rome is in trouble with Caesar in power, which helps build suspense

early in the play. To convince Brutes conclusively, cassius forged letters and

threw them into Brutus’s window where he was sure to find them. Shakespeare

wrote this statement: “we will awake him and be sure of him. This is a very

powerful statement that builds suspense because the reader most likely feels

that Brutes will join in and want to assassinate Caesar, yet the reader is

uncertain as to whether or not the plan will work. These events are very

suspenseful as they lead up to the assassination of Caesar.

The next series of suspenseful events that foreshadow Caesar’s

assassination happen on a very unusual night. One night before Caesar’s death

there were many strange occurrences the foreshadows darkness in the future. A

lioness gave birth in the streets, the dead rose from their graves, fiery

worriers fought in the clouds so fiercely that blood drizzled upon the capitol,

horses neighed, dying men groaned, and ghosts shrieked and squealed along the

streets; all events of this strange night that Shakespeare makes so suspenseful.

Also on this unusual nigh, Calpurnia had a very frightening dream that was very

suspenseful. The dream was of Caesar’s statue emitting blood and many Romans

were bathing in it. When the reader reads this he is “on the edge of his seat”

finding that he cannot wait to find out what this dream foreshadows. Calpurnia

was so frightened by these strange occurrences that she begged Caesar not to

leave the house. Shakespeare created suspense by having Caesar speak these

words: “and these does she apply for warnings and portents / and evils imminent,

and on her knee / hath begged that I will stay at home today.” These events add

suspense while foreshadowing the climax of the play, Caesar’s death, which

occurs in act iii.

The next suspenseful part of the play occurs after Caesar is

assassinated and the reader is left to find out what will happen as the play

progresses. After killing Caesar, the conspirators feel that they have created

a better place to live. Shakespeare writes, “liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead!

/ Run hence, proclaim, cry it about in the streets.” As the conspirators soon

found out, the people of Rome are panic-stricken because of the assassination,

not grateful. Trebonius speads these words that are very suspenseful because

the reader wanders what will result of the reaction of the people: “men, wives,

and children stare, cry out, and run / as it were doomsday.” After the

assassination of Caesar, Antony begins to show his feelings and becomes very

dangerous, as cassius feared. Antony’s soliloquy reveals that he seeks revenge

and will wage war on the conspirators. He will cry havoc and have dead and

rotting men lying unburied. These events are suspenseful as they foreshadow the

extreme political conflicts to come.

The three events were very effective methods of adding suspense to the

play. Shakespeare has the reader constantly wandering what will happen further

along in the play. The play ends after order is restored. Will it remain that

way, or will history repeat itself and more political conflicts erupt.