

Mark Antony's Oration from Julius Caesar

In William Shakespeare's play, Julius Caesar, Caesar has been assassinated in front of the Senate by a group of Roman officials, including his friend, Brutus. After the murder, Brutus speaks to the gathered crowd. He convinces them that the conspirators killed Caesar to save Rome. Mark Antony is another Roman official and friend to Caesar who did not participate in the murder. Antony promises Brutus that he will not blame the conspirators if he is allowed to make a speech also.

Act III Scene II

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
 I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
 The evil that men do lives after them;
 The good is oft interred with their bones:
 So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
 Hath told you Caesar was ambitious:
 If it were so, it was a grievous fault;
 And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.
 Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest,—
 For Brutus is an honourable man;
 So are they all, all honorable men,—
 Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
 He was my friend, faithful and just to me:
 But Brutus says he was ambitious;
 And Brutus is an honourable man.
 He hath brought many captives home to Rome,
 Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
 Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?

When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:
 Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
 Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
 And Brutus is an honourable man.
 You all did see that on the Lupercal
 I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
 Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
 Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
 And, sure, he is an honourable man.
 I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
 But here I am to speak what I do know.
 You all did love him once, not without cause:
 What cause withholds you, then, to mourn for him?
 O judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts,
 And men have lost their reason! Bear with me;
 My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
 And I must pause till it come back to me.

Anthony's oration is a good example of a rhetorical speech. What is the point is Antony trying to convey to the audience? How does he develop his point?

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Antony's oration is a good example of a rhetorical speech. What is the point is Antony trying to convey to the audience? How does he develop his point?

Actual answers will vary. Some points that may be included:

1) Anthony is trying to blame the conspirators without saying so outright.

2) He repeatedly uses the word "honorable" regarding Brutus in a ironic fashion, meaning just the opposite.

3) He is trying to convince the crowd that they loved Caesar once and should be angry he was killed.

4) He disproves Brutus' statements one by one.