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Summative Unit 3 Book Report

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Idus Martiae

The Ides of March is a staple in almost every Latin classroom and a very well known event in history. The *Idus Martiae* written by Andrew Olimpi is a Latin Novella that follows the story of three kids and their perspective of Caesar's assassination. This Latin novella is a fiction twist on the ancient event of the assassination of Julius Caesar, which is now known as the Ides of March, March 15th.

The Latin novella provides an accurate description and perspective of Julius' death. Taken place in 44 BC the piece starts with a little boy Roscus and his father, Spurrina the priest who reads the innards of animals, sacrificing a bull, "Roscus, corpus bovi inspections, non poterat videre cor" (Olimpi 7). After cutting the bull open, Roscus's father went to inspect it but found no heart. They declared this a bad omen and Spruinna went to find Caesar immediately and tell him of the danger that threatens Rome. The readers are then introduced to Pomepia and her Father Cinna, a Roman senator at the festival. Here Pompeia describes those around her, including Casca, Brutus and Cassius who she describes as, "Cassius et Casca et Brutus omnia spectabant, sed non gavisii sunt" (Olimpi 17). They were watching everything but unlike the rest of the citizens, they were not cheering. This piece of information is accurate to the ancient source as Caesars senators resented him because of his popularity and arrogance. Caesar was beloved

among the citizens and attained status and a dictator for life. As the story continues, the readers are given insights about the life of a senator from the inside perspective of Pompeia. We are taken into Cinna's home and late one night he is conspiring with other senators as his kids listen in from another room. Pompeia listens with her brother Cornelius, "Hi tres senatores non sunt amici Caesaris. Ego audivi multos senatores non amare Caesarem. Ego audivi multos senatores nolle caesarem esse dictatorem!" (Olimpi 21). The child describes a box with a dagger on the table and the three men conspiring with their father. The story shifts back to the perspective of Roscius and his father's encounter of trying to alert Caesar of the danger, but Caesar laughs him off as if a bull could predict the future, "est impossibile!" (Olimpi 31). Caesar says it's impossible and doesn't care for Spurrina's reasoning. Suddenly, the children found themselves in the theater where Caesar and his senators were gathered. One of the senators stabs him with a pen, "in brachio erat stylus senatoris! Sanguis erat in toga Caesaris" (Olimpi 47). Among the conspirators are Cassius and Casca but as Pompeia looks around her father is nowhere to be found. Suddenly, a senator stabs Caesar again, but this time with a dagger. "Prope Caesarem erat magna status. Erat status Pompeii! Caesar, confossus multis pugioibus, collapsus est ante pedes Pompeii." (Olimpi 50). Caesar was betrayed and stabbed 23 times, as his lifeless body was brought out, senators rejoiced singing, "Roma libera est!" meaning, "Rome is free!".

This Latin Novella plays out an extremely accurate and concise history of Caesar's assassination. The events in the novel are based on Suetonius and Plutarch's biographies of Julius Caesar. Following an ancient source very well, author Andrew Olimpi only had to twist a few details. For example, in ancient Rome, Cinna didn't have two children Cornelius and Pompeia as they were likely born after 44 BC. Additionally, in this concise writing Olimpi wasn't able to emphasize the grand amount of dictators involved in this conspiracy and only

focused on three, Cassius, Casca and Brutus, Brutus who took the final stab at Caesar. It is estimated that at least 60 senators were involved in the conspiracy, led by Marcus Junius Brutus and Cassius Gaius Longinus.

On the other hand, Olimpi presented the emotions of the senators well and was able to communicate how the senators claimed to have acted over fears that Caesar's unprecedented concentration of power during his dictatorship would undermine the Roman Republic and presented it as an act of Tyrannicide. He gave a very good history of the event with an interesting storyline to follow. The storyline is also multi-layers bouncing between point of views and personal growth and achievement. Towards the end the readers are given the full circle of understanding of both families and how they will go on with their lives, without Julius Caesar in power. Reading this modern piece added to my understanding of the original source and gave a different perspective, while although fictional, made the event in history personal.

I would highly recommend this book to anyone looking to learn more about the events leading up to Julius Caesar's death or interested in Roman history and major events. The Ides of March shaped the Roman republic and changed the course forever. My favorite part of the novel was understanding a new perspective on why Julius Caesar accepted his fate. There's always the question of if he knew about his senators plotting against him why didn't he do anything to stop them? Well this source offers the idea that Julius Caesar wanted to die, not just die, but in public light where the citizens will avenge him and see him as a god. Julius Caesar, just as he wanted to rule forever, he wanted to live forever too and this event made him immortal, being taught in the classroom centuries after his assassination.

Book Reviews:

[Rick A. Schroeder, ★★★★★](#)

“I love this book. Latin was relatively easy (it repeated the words frequently and in different forms). The story (death of Caesar) was quite exciting.”

My Response: I would completely agree, this book was easy to follow with intermediate level vocabulary and the story was captivating.

[Alina Hoxha ★★★★★☆](#)

“This book, *Idus Martiae* by Andrew Olimpi, was an interesting read because it dealt with real Roman history so I was able to learn more about Caesar and his death. Although I already knew most of the history contained in the book, I was still able to learn a little more about how the senators were involved in Caesar's death and how he was killed. Since the book was short it was pretty fast-paced so nothing dragged on too long and I enjoyed reading it.”

My Response: I also enjoyed reading this book and agree that it gave me a better look into the senator's involvement. I thought it was interesting how Olimpi focused on three senators and gave a nice history of how the events played out.