Who Was
Julius Caesar?

By
Nico Medina

Illustrated by
Tim Foley

Who Was
Julius Caesar?

By Nico Medina
Illustrated by Tim Foley

To my parents, for introducing the Medina kids to the Eternal City—
NM

Contents

Who Was Julius Caesar?

More than two thousand years ago, a twenty-five-year-old man from Rome was traveling by boat to the Greek island of Rhodes. He was going to study public speaking there.

Suddenly, another ship appeared—a ship full of pirates! They were from Cilicia—what is now southern Turkey. Cilician pirates were feared throughout the ancient world. They were known to hijack large trading ships, steal the cargo, and sell the passengers into slavery.

But these pirates were not interested in making a slave of the young man from Rome. He was too important for that. He came from a famous family and was known for his bravery in battle. The Romans would pay a high ransom for his return.

　　The young man knew this. So when the pirates were set to demand twenty talents for his freedom, he laughed in their faces. A man of his fame was surely worth *fifty* talents. (That would be more than $30 million in today's money!)

　　Messengers were sent ashore with the pirates' ransom demand, while back aboard the pirate ship, the young man did not act worried at all. He joined in the pirates' exercises and games. If the pirates were too loud when he wanted to sleep, he sent his servant to tell them to quiet down. Sometimes, he made his captors listen to him recite poems and speeches he had written. If they acted bored, he called them stupid and threatened to have them killed the first chance he

got. The pirates thought, *What a joke!* What could one prisoner do to a whole gang of pirates?

   After more than a month, the ransom finally arrived. The young man was set free. As soon as he got back on dry land, he raised a fleet of warships and returned to punish the pirates.

   The pirate ship was right where it had been. With little trouble, he captured the entire group and imprisoned them in a nearby Roman town. But was this enough to satisfy the young man's desire for revenge? No. He took each and every one of the pirates and had them killed.

No one messed with this man known as Julius Caesar. Those who did, lived to regret it . . . if they were lucky enough escape with their lives.

Over his lifetime, Julius Caesar doubled the size of the Roman Republic. He ruled over it single-handedly as "dictator for life," the first man to do so in nearly five hundred years.

Julius Caesar changed Rome, and the world, forever.