

Questions for the English Reading of Julius Caesar's Gallic Wars

Answer questions in complete sentences.

Book I

1. Outline each of the following territories in the colors indicated: Belgae (blue); Celts/ Gauls (yellow), Aquitani (red):



Figure 1: The Roman Provinces in Gaul around 58 BC; note that the coastline shown here is the modern one, different from the ancient coastline in some parts of the English Channel

2. Who was Orgetorix and what were his ambitions?

3. Why did Orgetorix commit suicide?

4. What actions or preparations did the Helvetii make before leaving their homeland?

5. Caesar is first introduced in Chapter 7, in the third person. What effect does the third person narrative have on the reader? What is your first impression of Julius Caesar? Why?

6. How does Caesar use speed and engineering to accomplish his goals?

7. Who induced Caesar to get involved with the Helvetii. Do you think this invitation was anticipated by Caesar? Why?



Figure 2: Helvetii chieftain Divico negotiates with Caesar after the battle of Bibracte

8. What problem did Caesar have with his food supply, and how did he deal with it?



Figure 3: A reproduction of an aide-de-camp of Helvetii cavalry commander Dumnorix at the Musée de la civilisation celtique, Bibracte, France

9. How did Caesar get information about Dumnorix's motivations?

10. How does Caesar show sensitivity to Gallic sensibilities in his dealings with Diviciacus and Dumnorix?

11. What physical actions does Diviciacus take to show his inferiority to the Romans?

12. Which of the Helvetii surrendered to Caesar after the battle described in Chapter 26; which did not? What was Caesar's reaction to both groups?

13. What kinds of documents were left behind in the Helvetii's camp, and what kind of insight does it give to Helvetian society?



Figure 4: Drawing of Ariovistus by Fritz Krischen, engraving Ludwig Frank, edition Hahneman (Ochel).

14. What threat does Ariovistus pose and how does Caesar learn about it?

15. How does Caesar express his motivations for taking up arms against Ariovistus?

16. Summarize the main points of Ariovistus' argument in Chapter 36.



Figure 5: The Sequani build their capital, named Vesontio in the loop of the Doubs, which serves as natural protection.

17. How does Caesar describe a well-fortified Gallic town, like the town of Vesontio?



Figure 6: This is a oppidum surrounded by high walls. The houses are made of wood and mud.

18. What fear did the Romans have of the Germans and what impact did it have on the army?

19. Why does Caesar's 10th Legion become known as the "mounted legion"?

20. How did the Germans demonstrate bad faith during the discussions between Caesar and Ariovistus?

21. What was Ariovistus' reaction upon seeing Gaius Valerius Procillus and Marcus Mettius? was this reaction justified?

22. How did Caesar acquire special knowledge of German religious customs relating to battle? What were these customs, and how did Caesar capitalize on this knowledge?

23. How important was it that Caesar's soldiers be watched by their superior's in battle?

Book VI

24. In what ways does Caesar replenish his troop numbers and why does Caesar believe that a quick replenishment is vital to his war effort?

25. What group/ tribe does Caesar attack first? Why does he attack them?

26. Where does Caesar go next? What does he do there?

27. What was important for Caesar to do before he attacked Ambiorix directly?

28. How did Labienus trick the Gauls? What did Labienus say to encourage his soldiers?

29. Why did Caesar cross the Rhine? Was this the first time that he has done this?

30. What two tribes held the most power in Gaul before Caesar's arrival? Who had been the most powerful of these two groups and how had they become so? How did Caesar's arrival change the status quo?

31. What two groups of men are held in worth and distinction amongst the Gauls? Why are the ordinary people not considered amongst these two groups?

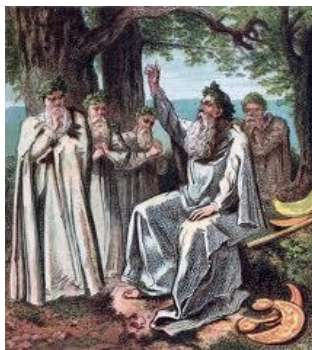


Figure 7: The Druids according to Caesar

32. Why would a young man want to become a Druid? What do they have to do to become a Druid?

33. According to Caesar, what language do the Druids use for their daily written records? What things are unlawful to commit to writing? What reasons does Caesar give for this prohibition on writing? How does this prohibition on writing reflect “oral traditions” which are common in many “primitive societies”?

34. Was warfare more or less frequent before Caesar’s arrival in Gaul? Explain.

35. Describe at least three different religious beliefs held amongst the Gauls.

36. Describe the arrangement or relationship that Gallic men have with their wives? With their sons? With the government?

37. How is German religion different than Gallic religion?

38. According to Caesar, how do Germans view young men? women? their land?

39. How did the Gauls become weaker than the Germans?

40. Why did Caesar break off his campaign in Germany?

41. Describe what happened when Caesar finally did move directly against Ambiorix.

42. How did Cativolcus commit suicide and what does Caesar give as his reasons?

43. What did Caesar do at the site of Cotta and Sabinus's old winter camp?

44. How did Caesar plan to take revenge on the Eburones?

45. What led a German tribe to attack Cicero's camp?

46. How did the "fog of war" play a role in the Romans' reaction to the German attack on Cicero's camp?

47. What individual acts of bravery are described by Caesar during the attack on Cicero's camp?

48. What was Caesar's one criticism of Cicero?

49. What is the last thing we hear about Ambiorix?

50. Who is Acco? What happens to him? Why?

Book VII

51. Research and describe your findings to the following question: Who was Clodius? Why would his death be important to Caesar? What is going on in Rome that would divert Caesar's attention from Gaul?

52. What reasons are given for the Gauls to have begun again a rebellion against the Romans?

53. What concern do the Carnutes have when they volunteer to initiate the rebellion against the Romans? How do they alleviate these concerns?

54. How do the Carnutes initiate the rebellion, and how is news of the rebellion spread?

55. Who is Vercingetorix and how does he acquire an army?

56. What circumstances allowed Caesar to depart from Rome to confront the rebellious Gauls? What dilemma faced him upon leaving Italy?

57. Describe Vercingetorix's plan for winning the war and depriving Caesar after Vercingetorix's series of losses at Vellaunodunum, Genabum, and Noviodunum. What name is commonly given to this type of war plan?

58. What kind of relationship does Caesar have with his soldiers? How is this relationship portrayed in the Commentaries?

59. Why was Vercingetorix accused of treason, and how did he dispel these accusations?

60. Why was it so difficult for the Romans to overtake the Gallic walls at Avaricum? How did they eventually overtake the walls?



Figure 8: Model of the siege of Avaricum

61. How did Gallic matrons prevent their husbands from fleeing Avaricum on the eve of its collapse?

62. How did the Romans behave after they had overtaken Avaricum? What are some of the reasons given to explain their behavior?

63. How did Vercingetorix explain the Gallic defeat at Avaricum? Also, what favorable outcome did Vercingetorix mention would result from the events at Avaricum?



64. What was it about Vercingetorix that inspired confidence in the Gauls?

65. How did Vercingetorix make up for the troops that he lost at Avaricum?

66. Why did Caesar leave his army and travel to the Aedui?

Figure 9: Vercingétorix
Memorial in Alesia

67. How did Caesar resolve the dispute between the Aedui?

68. How did Litavicus incite the Aedui in revolt? What actions does his army take in revolt?

69. What was Caesar's reaction when he heard of the Aeduan insurrection?

70. In Chapter 50, what mistake was made between the Roman soldiers and the Aeduan troops Caesar sent?

71. What self-sacrifice was made by the centurion M. Petreius? What was the result?

72. What would the reaction have been of Caesar's soldiers after hearing the speech described in Chapters 52 and 53?

73. Why is it that the Aedui continue to rebel against the Romans?

74. What were the Aeduans able to acquire at Noviodunum, and what did Caesar lose?

75. How did Caesar make up for some of his losses at Noviodunum?

76. After Vercingetorix's cavalry attack on the Romans failed in Chapter 67, what loss impacted the Gauls most, and how did it impact them?

77. What natural barriers helped fortify Alesia?

78. How did the Gauls fortify Vercingetorix's camp?



Figure 10: A reconstructed section of the Alesia investment fortifications

79. Provide some specific details about Caesar's constructions at Alesia.

80. Was Caesar's method of attack to be a siege or a blockade? Cite text to support your answer.



Figure 11: 1899 painting of Caesar's Seige of Alesia by Lionel-Noël Royer

81. Why does Vercingetorix send away his cavalry before the completion of Caesar's fortifications?

82. What additional fortifications did Caesar build to defend against external attacks?

83. Who departed from Alesia with the Mandubii? Why did they depart? How did Caesar react to this group?

84. In the battle of Alesia, what final efforts were made by the Gauls after having been repulsed twice by the Romans?

85. How did Caesar respond to these efforts?

86. Why did a Roman general wear a red cloak in battle?

87. What effect did the defeat of the Gallic relief army have on the inhabitants of the besieged Alesia?

88. Why weren't all of the Gallic troops wiped out?

89. What motive does Vercingetorix say had led him to enter the war against the Romans?

Give a brief recap for each of the following characters, tribes, or places:

10 th Legion	
Aedui	
Alesia	
Ambiorix	
Ariovistus	
Avaricum	
Cicero	
Commius	
Cotta	
Diviciacus	
Dumnorix	
Eburones	
Gergovia	
Helvetii	
Labienus	
Nervii	
Orgetorix	
Sabinus	
Sequani	
Vercingetorix	