

**scripta 13.3: Caesar requests a meeting with Pompey**

*This text is an adapted extract from Julius Caesar's account of the civil war.*

*Caesar gained permission in 52 BC to stand in absentia for election as consul. This was an important concession because it protected him from the risk of prosecution if he returned to Rome as a private citizen. By 50 BC this decision had been revoked and prominent senators were calling for Caesar to disband the army he had command over in Gaul.*

*On 1st January 49 BC, Caesar sent an ultimatum to the senate: he would disband his army only if Pompey did the same. The senate decreed that Julius Caesar had to stand down from his military command or be declared a public enemy.*

*Caesar advanced to gather his troops at Ariminum, a town in northeast Italy. From there, Caesar sent the following message to Pompey. Caesar's account claims that his first priority is to avoid war and re-establish peaceful political rule within Republican power structures; the reality of events, however, suggests otherwise.*

For my part, I have always believed that the importance of the Republic comes first and that this is more important than life. I am really pained because my enemies have insulted me by taking away the Roman people's kindness to me. What's more - now that my military command has been removed - I am being dragged back to Rome, even though the people had ordered that I could stand *in absentia* at the next elections.

But even so, for the sake of the Republic I have been level-headed and I have put up with this loss of respect. When I sent letters to the senate to say that everyone should stand down from their armies, I did not even get this agreed. All through Italy soldiers have been recruited; Pompey has two legions which were commandeered by him under the pretence of the **Parthian war**; Roman citizens are armed. How will this end? Everything is on course to destroy itself.

Nevertheless, I am prepared to endure any sort of degradation and I am ready to put up with it all for the sake of the Republic. But I do want Pompey to go to his own provinces, I want him to dismiss his troops, and I want everyone in Italy to stand down from their weapons. I want to release the citizens from fear, I want the elections to be unrestricted and I want to let the whole Republic be in the hands of the senate and the Roman people.

As for Pompey: he should come closer in person or allow me to go to him: in face-to face discussions, all disagreements can be settled.



- 1) What does Caesar say about his relationship with the Republic?
- 2) What does Caesar say which suggests he is keen to avoid civil war?
- 3) How does Caesar create the impression that Pompey is aiming for war rather than peace?
- 4) Based on your knowledge of Caesar's life-story, are you surprised by how Caesar presents himself in this text? Explain your answer with reference to details from this letter and from what you know about Caesar's career.