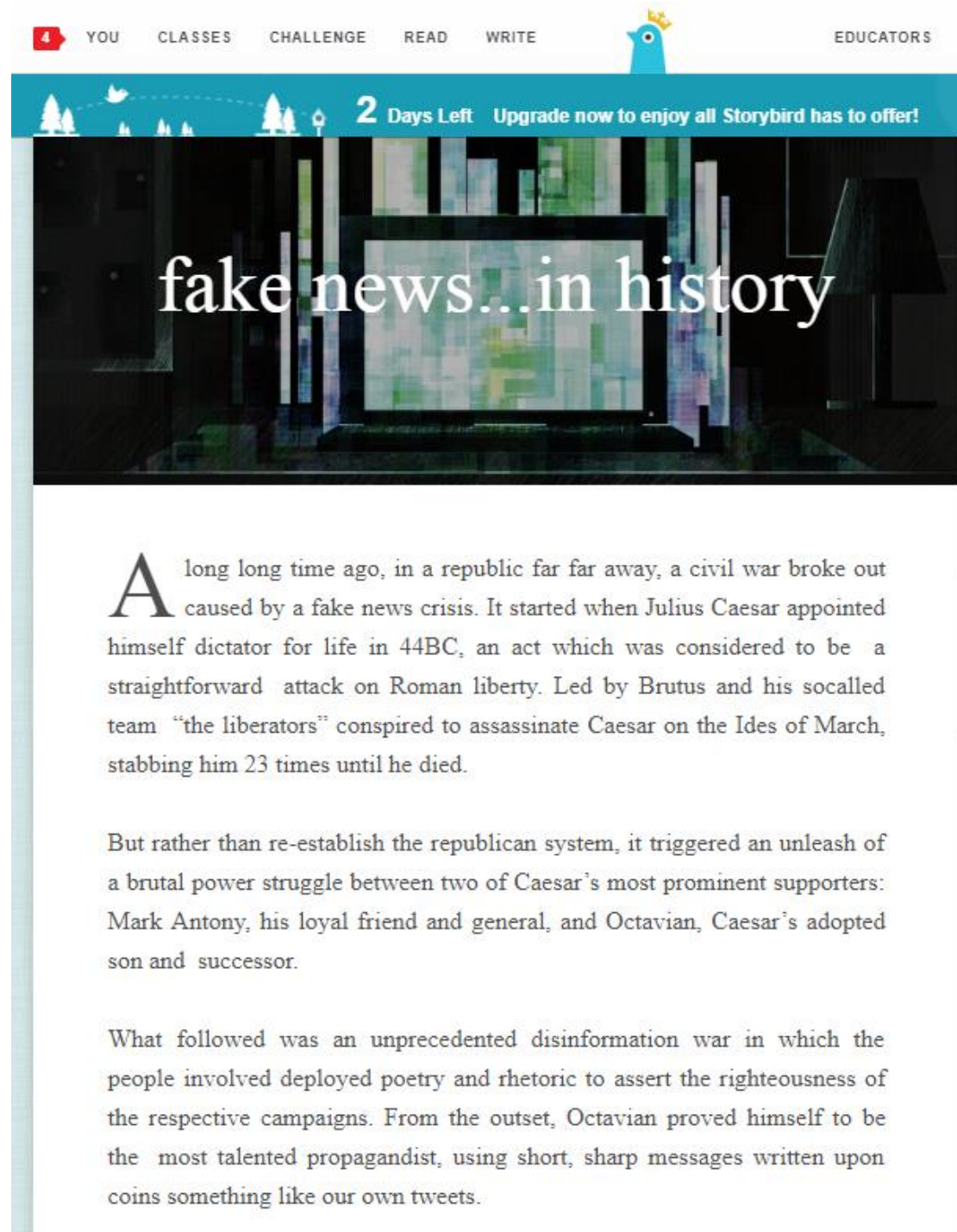


<https://storybird.com/class/2ecac6e3019091c4d5ca20b1b607045e>

disco2018



The image shows a screenshot of a Storybird class page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a red arrow icon, the text 'YOU', 'CLASSES', 'CHALLENGE', 'READ', 'WRITE', a blue bird icon with a crown, and 'EDUCATORS'. Below this is a teal banner with a white border, featuring a small tree icon, the text '2 Days Left Upgrade now to enjoy all Storybird has to offer!', and another tree icon. The main content area has a dark background with a glowing screen in the center displaying the title 'fake news...in history' in white. Below the image, there are three paragraphs of text.

A long long time ago, in a republic far far away, a civil war broke out caused by a fake news crisis. It started when Julius Caesar appointed himself dictator for life in 44BC, an act which was considered to be a straightforward attack on Roman liberty. Led by Brutus and his so-called team "the liberators" conspired to assassinate Caesar on the Ides of March, stabbing him 23 times until he died.

But rather than re-establish the republican system, it triggered an unleash of a brutal power struggle between two of Caesar's most prominent supporters: Mark Antony, his loyal friend and general, and Octavian, Caesar's adopted son and successor.

What followed was an unprecedented disinformation war in which the people involved deployed poetry and rhetoric to assert the righteousness of the respective campaigns. From the outset, Octavian proved himself to be the most talented propagandist, using short, sharp messages written upon coins something like our own tweets.

His goal was to show publicly that Antony was a Roman soldier gone mad for the love of a woman- in the case Cleopatra- and a drunk not fit to rule. Most importantly, he asserted Antony had been influenced and manipulated in order to take some political decisions bad for Rome and in favor to his lover Cleopatra, the leader of Egypt.

As Cleopatra's medium to reign, no one could be sure if Antony was truly loyal to Rome or if his alliance was to Egypt, a nation that had long resisted Romanisation. Antony had spent too much time in the eastern empire and he seemed to like the idea of a Hellenistic monarchy — a foreign notion to the Roman republican mind or so — and the propaganda kept going on and on.

Mark Antony was loved by most Roman people for his humble roots and his virtuous military skills, so Octavianus had to point exactly there. He had to prove that Mark Antony was affected by his long stay to the colonies and his passion to the foreign queen that he distanced himself from his Roman traditional values and finally was corrupted.

Romans never fell for the rhetoric because they perceived it for what it was: fake news. In the end, they took the side of Octavian not because they considered him to be as the lesser of two evils. As he was also in Italy, unlike Antony who was in Egypt, he was able to exercise far more influence over Romans and the senate. Octavian managed to present a document that he claimed was Antony's official will and testament.

Whether it was real or not – and scholars debate this point still – the will contained such inflammatory claims that it set the Roman people against Antony. Octavian read this document aloud in the Senate house (according to Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, 58) and he made it widely available by getting the Senate to issue a decree that was posted in the forum and sent out widely through the empire by messengers. This way, Octavian convinced the people of Rome – and Antony's many allies in the Senate – that Antony had gone mad and given himself over to the allure of Cleopatra.

The document played on many of the anti-eastern (and anti-Cleopatra) prejudices of the ancient Romans, traditional views that were suspicious of the wealth and luxuries of the east and of powerful women. It appeared to confirm that Antony intended to leave legacies to his children with Cleopatra that included large pieces of Roman-held territory in the eastern Mediterranean. Also the document said that Anthony was to be buried at the Mausoleum of the Ptolemaic kings in Alexandria. That piece of information convinced the last supporters of Mark Anthony in the senate that he was driven away from his Roman moral values and was to be treated as traitor from that point. As a result they declared war and they gained the victory at Actium 31 BC. Octavianus then became the powerful Augustus. Information war has been victorious in favor of Octavianus.