

All Greek to me

Shakespeare this time: *Julius Caesar*, Act I scene ii. The conspirators are worried that Caesar will be offered the crown of Rome – the Romans got rid of their tyrannical kings centuries ago and don't want them back, thank you very much. One of them, Casca, is reporting to his comrades what has been said in town earlier in the day.

'Did Cicero say anything?' asks Cassius.

'Ay, he spoke Greek.'

'To what effect?'

No idea, says Casca: 'Those that understood him smiled at one another and shook their heads; but, for mine own part, it was Greek to me.'

By speaking in Greek rather than Latin Cicero was showing off how educated he was, but today someone can be speaking to us in our native tongue and it can still go way over our heads. In Casca's case the words were literally in Greek; in our modern sense, they might as well be.

