

# CORIOLANUS



## HOME FRONT: EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Read through the following extract from Act I Scene III of the play. If you were directing this scene, how might you use the actors and the camera to convey meaning to an audience in this scene? What elements of the text would you want to emphasise to show how you interpret these two characters and the relationship between them?

### VOLUMNIA

I pray you, daughter, sing; or express yourself in a more comfortable sort: if my son were my husband, I should freelier rejoice in that absence wherein he won honour than in the embracements of his bed where he would show most love. When yet he was but tender-bodied and the only son of my womb, when youth with comeliness plucked all gaze his way, when for a day of kings' entreaties a mother should not sell him an hour from her beholding, I, considering how honour would become such a person that it was no better than picture-like to hang by the wall, if renown made it not stir, was pleased to let him seek danger where he was like to find fame. To a cruel war I sent him; from whence he returned, his brows bound with oak. I tell thee, daughter, I sprang not more in joy at first hearing he was a man-child than now in first seeing he had proved himself a man.

### **VIRGILIA**

But had he died in the business, madam; how then?

### **VOLUMNIA**

Then his good report should have been my son; I  
therein would have found issue. Hear me profess  
sincerely: had I a dozen sons, each in my love  
alike and none less dear than thine and my good  
Marcius, I had rather had eleven die nobly for their  
country than one voluptuously surfeit out of action.

Now read this extract from Act V Scene III, near the end of the play. Explore Volumnia's character here and Coriolanus' response to her. What does Volumnia want her son to do and how does he respond? How is this scene shown in the film version, and what does the setting and camerawork add to your interpretation?

### **VOLUMNIA**

Think with thyself  
How more unfortunate than all living women  
Are we come hither; since that thy sight,  
which should  
Make our eyes flow with joy, hearts dance  
with comforts,  
Constrains them weep and shake with fear and sorrow;  
Making the mother, wife, and child to see  
The son, the husband, and the father tearing  
His country's bowels out...