

## ***King Lear* William Shakespeare**

### **Review Questions:**

Answer these questions in complete sentences in your notebook. These will be considered part of your notes and therefore quizzable material.

1. In what respects are both the main and secondary plots concerned with the relations of fathers to children?
2. At what point would you say Lear's troubles begin. Justify your answer with quotations from the text (cite Act, Scene, Line).
3. From your reading of the first two acts, compare the characters of Goneril and Regan.
4. Give examples from Act 2 of such symptoms as the following which lead up to King Lear's madness:
  - a) fierce outburst of anger
  - b) sudden calm and attempt at control
  - c) fury which makes speech impossible.
5. List the elements of imagery that have appeared to the end of Act 2. (ie: blindness).

If you have not already done so, begin a list of themes that have been encountered. Be prepared to continue this list as we read through the play.

### ***King Lear, 3.1***

1. Why are Lear's wanderings on the heath revealed to the audience before he is actually seen?
2. What reasons does Kent give for the dissention between the Dukes?
3. What implication does he leave in the mind of the gentleman?
4. Describe the weather in this scene.
5. What is the news about France?
6. According to the Gentleman, what is Lear doing?
7. What causes the storm?

### ***King Lear, 3.2***

1. Why does Lear challenge the storm to do its worst?
2. How do Lear's speeches contrast with the Fool's?
3. How does Lear show that he is beginning to learn about himself?
4. What does Lear's decision to enter the hovel show about his changing character?
5. Explain the symbolism of the storm that forms the background of this scene.

6. Discuss Shakespeare's use of the Fool in this role. What is the purpose of his biting comments on Lear's present state?

### ***King Lear, 3.3***

1. According to Gloucester, what have "they" done to him and why?
2. What does Gloucester intend to do? What does Edmund say he will do with this knowledge?
3. Explain the part that the letters have played in the course of events to this point in the play.
4. Explain the quotation "Gloucester is fatally betrayed by his own trustfulness."

### ***King Lear, 3.4***

1. In lines 24-25, how does Lear confirm the change in character presaged in 3.2?
2. Describe Edgar's pretended madness.
3. Give three illustrations of Lear's madness revealed in this scene.
4. Compare and contrast the speech of Edgar (pretending to be mad) with those of Lear (who is slightly mad) and those of Kent, who has behaved foolishly.
5. What understanding does Lear come to before he tries to tear his clothes off?
6. What is the dramatic significance of Lear's cry "Off, off, you lendings! Come, unbutton here"?

### ***King Lear, 3.5***

1. How does this scene advance Edmund's fortunes?
2. What new depth of character does he reveal in this scene?
3. Cornwall assumes that Gloucester is in league with the French against him. What is Gloucester's purpose in this conspiracy? What is Edmund's purpose in informing Cornwall of Gloucester's implication?
4. Why is the betrayal of Gloucester by Edmund more sinister and heartless than that of Lear by Goneril and Regan.

### ***King Lear, 3.6***

1. How does Shakespeare illustrate the fact that Lear is utterly mad in this scene?
2. How does Shakespeare balance humour and pathos in this scene?
3. What is the dramatic purpose of Lear's acting out his delusion that he is trying his daughters in court?
4. For what dramatic reason does the Fool disappear after this scene?

***King Lear, 3.7***

1. Why does Edmund go off with Goneril?
2. What is Oswald's contribution to Lear's plight?
3. How does Shakespeare communicate that the action in this scene is unnatural and disgusting to any normal person?
4. What is Gloucester's defence against the charge that he is a traitor? Is the punishment appropriate?
5. What is Regan's attitude towards Gloucester's agony?
6. Sketch the careers of Gloucester and Cornwall and show why they are victims of fate.
7. Why is the death of the servant not regarded as an instance of retributive justice?

***King Lear, 4.1***

1. Where does Gloucester go and why?
2. Why is the "this is the worst" motif NOT the theme of the play?
3. What dramatic purpose is served by the meeting of Gloucester and Edgar?
4. Since Edgar no longer needs his disguise as protection from his father's pursuit, why does he retain it?
5. Compare the comment Gloucester makes in lines 72-77 with that of Lear in lines 28-36 of Act 3 Scene 4.

***King Lear, 4.2***

1. What does Oswald find strange about Albany's behaviour?
2. In his judgement of human motives and character, Albany has been as blind as Gloucester and Lear. Explain.
3. What does Albany determine to do after he received the news of Gloucester's betrayal by Edmund?
4. Contrast the responses of Albany and Goneril to the news of Gloucester's blinding.
5. How does Goneril react to Oswald's news?
6. Describe Goneril's farewell to Edmund.
7. What is Gloucester's reaction to the news of Cornwall's death?
8. How does Goneril's evil colour her ability to judge events in the world around her?

***King Lear, 4.3***

1. What is Kent's explanation for the difference between Cordelia and her sisters?
2. Why does Lear refuse to meet Cordelia?

3. Although the account of Lear's madness (3.1.4-15) is dramatically necessary, the narration of Cordelia's sorrow is unnecessary here. Explain why.

### ***King Lear, 4.4& 5***

1. Describe how and why Edgar deceives his father in this scene.
2. Show that there is some new understanding of reality mixed in with the madness of Lear's speeches.
3. Why does Lear run from the Gentleman?
4. How does Oswald show his "true metal" in this scene?
5. What indication has Shakespeare written into this scene that Lear has recovered his sanity?
6. How is the civil war going, according to Kent and the Gentleman?
7. Regan and Goneril are deadly rivals at this point in the play. Explain why.

### ***King Lear, 4.6 & 7***

1. The two wronged fathers are brought together here. Show how Lear's comments, which contain "matter and impertinency mixed" apply both to himself and to Gloucester.
2. What memories prompt Lear to comment bitterly upon:
  - a) flattery b) adultery c) authority?
3. Explain the importance of the letter taken from Oswald by Edgar.
4. What is the reason for the fact that some of Lear's speeches are in prose, while others are in verse?
5. How does Shakespeare heighten the pathos in Scene 7 (recall the reconciliation between Lear and Cordelia and Cordelia's subsequent death)?

### ***King Lear, 5.1&2***

1. As the scene begins, what is Regan worried about?
2. What is Albany's stated role in the military conflict?
3. What does Edgar want Albany to do with his letter?
4. How does Edmund intend to secure complete power for himself?
5. What is Edmund's comment on Goneril and Regan's rivalry for his affection?
6. What does Edgar tell his father to cheer him up in this scene?
7. What does Edmund's soliloquy reveal about his motivation?

***King Lear, 5.3***

1. How do Cordelia and Lear react to their capture by Edmund?
2. How does Shakespeare use Cordelia to show that Lear is now recovered from his madness?
3. What does Edmund order the Captain to do, and why does he give this order?
4. Explain the discussion between Albany and Edmund about Lear and Cordelia?
5. Why did Goneril poison Regan?
6. How does Albany gain some stature as a leader around line 80?
7. How does Edmund react to being challenged to a trial by combat for his treachery?
8. At what point does Edmund tell Albany what he has done to Lear and Cordelia?
9. Discuss the significance of Edmund's statement, line 238, "Yet Edmund was belov'd".