

King Lear Content Questions

Act 1

Define the following words: *knave* (1.1.20); *abode* (1.1.134); *folly* (1.1.147); *dower* (1.1.191); *infirmities* (1.1.202); *base* (1.2.6); *wherefore* (1.2.2); *tyranny* (1.2.43); *nuncle* (1.4.99); *fop* (1.2.14).

Scene 1

- 1) What do we find out about the makeup of Gloucester's family in this scene?
- 2) What is Lear's plan? Why does he propose this action? What do we know about how he feels about his three daughters?
- 3) What do we find out about Cordelia and Kent's characters in this scene?
- 4) How do Cordelia's suitors contrast one another? Where does she go at the end of this scene? Where does Lear go?

Scene 2

- 5) What does Edmond's soliloquy inform us about his plans? What does he feel about legitimacy? How might his plans disturb the natural order of things?
- 6) How does Edmond trick his father Gloucester and brother Edgar into falling into his plan?
- 7) What do Edmond, Gloucester and Edgar each think of the strange astronomical events that are taking place?

Scene 3

- 8) What does Goneril mean by the following: "*Idle old man, that still would manage those authorities that he hath given away! Now, by my life, old fools are babes again, and must be us'd with checks as flatteries*" (1.3.17-21)

Scene 4

- 9) What is Kent's plan? How does he gain the trust of Lear?
- 10) What does Goneril do to provoke Lear? What is his reaction and is this reasonable?

Act 2

Define the following words: *hither* (2.1.85); *murther* (2.2.40); *sirrah* (2.2.64); *countenance* (2.2.87); *stocks* (2.2.121); *garters* (2.4.7); *coxcomb* (2.4.120); *vouchsafe* (2.4.152); *abjure* (2.4.205)

Scene 1

- 1) How does Edmund convince his father of Edgar's betrayal? (2 points)

Scene 2

- 2) Why does Kent take such offense to Oswald?
- 3) What does Cornwall do to Kent? Why is this significant?
- 4) Paraphrase the following quotation and explain its significance:

Kent

“All weary and o’erwatch’d, Take vantage, heavy eyes, not to behold this shameful lodging. Fortune, good night; smile once more; turn thy wheel!” (2.2.165-168)

Scene 3

- 5) What is Edgar’s decision? How does he go about this?

Scene 4

- 6) What is Lear’s complaint regarding Goneril? (lines 155-160)
- 7) How does Goneril react when seeing Lear for the first time? What does this tell us of her character?
- 8) What does Regan ask of Lear? What are her reasons and do you think these are reasonable? (lines 234-239)
- 9) What does Cornwall command at the end of this act?

Act 3

Define the following words: *impetuous* (3.1.8); *pernicious* (3.2.22); *hovel* (3.2.77); *Albion* (3.2.91); *malady* (3.4.8); *tempest* (3.4.24); *wretch* (3.4.28); *beseech* (3.4.163); (3.6.100); *ignoble* (3.7.34)

Scene 1

- 1) What does Kent predict will happen in the future?

Scene 3

- 2) What is Edmund conspiring when he states: “This seems a fair deserving, and must draw me that which my father loses; no less than all: The younger rises when the old doth fall.” (3.3.21-24).

Scene 4

- 3) What does the following passage reveal about Lear’s change of perspective:

“Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,

That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
And show the heavens more just” – (3.4.28-36)

4) What does Lear think is wrong with “Poor Tom” (Edgar)?

Scene 7

5) What does Goneril wish to happen to Gloucester? How does this differ from her sister?

6) What spurs the servant into action? What does he do?

Act 4

Define the following words: superfluous (4.1.64); disposition (4.2.31); reverence (4.2.42); clamour (4.3.31); benediction (4.3.43); vex (4.4.2); ado (4.5.3); fathom (4.6.50); beguile (4.6.63); temperance (4.7.23)

Scene 1

1) What is ironic about Edgar’s conversation with his father? What does his father intend to do at the cliffs of Dover?

Scene 2

2) What do we find out about Albany’s character through Oswald’s description? How does this differ from Cornwall?

3) What does Goneril mean by

“Oh, the difference of man and man! To thee a woman’s services are due: A fool usurps my bed” (4.2.26-28).

4) What does Goneril worry about after finding out Cornwall has died?

Scene 5

5) What does Regan try to make Oswald do? Why does she act in this manner?

Scene 6

6) What is the dramatic irony here with Edgar and Gloucester? What does Edgar do to his father and why?

7) What does Goneril’s letter to Edmund reveal?

Scene 7

8) How has Lear’s character shifted from the early scenes until now?

Act 5

Define the following words: *domestic* (5.1.30); *diligent* (5.2.53); *gilded* (5.3.13); *abhor* (5.3.209); *usurp* (5.3.316)

Scene 1

1) What does this scene reveal about the ambitions and emotions of Edmund, Goneril and Regan?

Scene 3

2) What are the final fates of Goneril, Regan and Edmund?

Final Question: (to be collected and marked)

Shakespeare uses balance in many of his plays to reinforce and contrast different themes and conflicts. How do the stories of Lear and Gloucester balance each other?

Use specific references from the text for a 250 word response