

English IV Honors
Summer Reading Study Guide—*King Lear*

This study guide is OPTIONAL, but using it will help guide your reading and understanding of themes, plot development, and character motivations.

Act I, Scene i

1. Why does Lear want his daughters to profess their love for him?
2. What is Cordelia's concern as revealed in her asides?
3. How does Cordelia respond to Lear's challenge "what can you say to draw a third more opulent than your sisters?"?
4. How does Lear punish Cordelia's response?
5. Who speaks up on Cordelia's behalf and what is the result of his interference?
6. Why are France and Burgundy at Lear's court?
7. How do Goneril and Regan feel about their father?

Act I, Scene ii

8. Why is Edmund upset? How does he intend to "top th' legitimate"?
9. What does he lead his father to believe with his letter?
10. What does he lead Edgar to believe? Why does he do this?

Act I, Scene iii

11. Why does Goneril tell Oswald "put on what negligence you please" in serving Lear and his Knights?

Act I, Scenes iv-v

12. Why has Kent returned in disguise?
13. Why has Lear's fool not been to court lately?
14. What causes Lear to ask, "Does any here know me?...Who is it that can tell me who I am?"
15. What is the Fool's answer to Lear's question and what does it mean?
16. What is the Fool's relationship with Lear? What role does he fulfill?
17. What "request" does Goneril make that causes Lear to storm off to Regan's?
18. What (awful) curse does Lear place on Goneril?
19. On what errand have both Goneril and Kent (Caius) been sent? (by different people, of course)
20. Who do you think Lear is talking about when he says "I did her wrong" in scene v?

Act II, Scene i

21. According to Curan, there are rumors of "likely wars" between what two forces?
22. How does Edmund get wounded?
23. Why have Regan and Cornwall left their house?
24. Who is Lear's godson?

Act II, Scene ii

25. What happens when both Kent and Oswald arrive at Gloucester's home?
26. According to Kent, why has Cornwall no right to put him in stocks?
27. Who extends Kent's sentence in the stocks from dawn until dawn of the next day?
28. Who speaks up and says Kent should NOT be put in stocks?
29. Who is the only person who knows of Kent's disguise and his purpose for it? (other than Kent himself)

Act II, Scene iii

30. As he is hiding in the hollow of a tree, Edgar decides to disguise himself as what?

Act II, iv

31. Lear says, "'tis worse than murder / To do upon respect such violent outrage." To what is he referring?
32. After Lear's demand to see Cornwall is denied, what does he rationalize must be the reason for Cornwall's refusal to heed his command?
33. Explain Regan's comment: "And in good time you gave it."
34. How do Goneril and Regan whittle Lear's entourage down to nothing?
35. What orders does Gloucester receive from Regan, Goneril, and Cornwall at the end of scene iv?

Act III, Scene i

36. Kent sends the gentleman to meet whom?
37. What does Kent give the gentleman to deliver to Dover?

Act III, Scene ii

38. To 'whom' is Lear speaking in most of this scene?
39. What is Lear's state of mind and how is it reflected in the weather?
40. What does the Fool advise Lear to do in order to get out of the storm?
41. Who does the Fool claim will speak his prophecy?

Act III, Scene iv

42. Why does Lear tear off his clothes?

Act III, Scene v

43. Who declares Edmund the new Earl of Gloucester? Why has he been given this title?

Act III, Scene vi

44. During the "trial," the Fool says, "I took you for a joint stool." Who is the "you"?
45. What does Edgar mean when he says "My tears begin to take his part so much / They mar my counterfeiting"?

Act III, Scene vii

46. How many knights does Lear have with him as he heads to Dover?
47. Who kills the servant who defends Gloucester?
48. "Out, vile jelly." Explain situation, etc.

Act IV, Scene i

49. To where does Gloucester ask Tom/Edgar to lead him?
50. What does Gloucester plan to do there?

Act IV, Scene ii

51. What does Goneril's conversation with Edmund reveal about their relationship?
52. Why is Goneril "concerned" about Regan's recent widowhood?
53. How does Albany feel about Lear's treatment?

Act IV, Scene iii

54. "As pearls from diamonds dropped" is a simile describing what?

Act IV, Scene vi

55. Edgar says in an aside, "Why I do trifle with his despair / Is done to cure it." Explain.
56. Explain: "They told me I was everything. 'Tis a lie; / I am not ague-proof."
57. What does Edgar plan on showing Albany?
58. In what way does Gloucester wish he were like Lear?

Act IV, Scene vii

59. How does Cordelia wake/restore Lear?
60. Which character has disappeared from the play? (Who haven't we heard from/of since Act III?)

Act V, Scene iii

61. Where does Lear want to go with Cordelia, where they will "sing like birds i' the cage"?
62. To what is Goneril referring when she says, "If not, I'll ne'er trust medicine"?
63. What is Edgar talking about when he says, "But his flawed heart / Alack, too weak the conflict to support / Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief, / Burst smilingly"?
64. "'Tis hot, it smokes." What is "it"?
65. Explain Edmund's statement (both sentences of it): "I was contracted to them both. All three / Now marry in an instant."
66. Who kills the guard who killed Cordelia?
67. Explain: "And my poor fool is hanged."