

## IOC Notes: King Lear

Components

- 20 minutes preparation time with 2 guiding questions (Not compulsory to answer)
- 10 minutes commentary
- 5 mins Q&A
- Extract given is 40 lines (but its also good to be familiar with the shorter extracts to be able to link back)

Structure

- **Approach:** *Thematic* (If there are several major themes) VS *Chronological* (If the order matters)
- **Introduction (1.5 minutes)**
  1. Where was the extract taken from? -> Describe which part of play it was taken from by referring to what happened before and during the extract (significance of extract)
  2. Essential overview of the extract
    - A. Brief overview
    - B. Summary of what happens
    - C. Who are the characters involved
  3. Brief summary of what you are going to discuss-> 2 to 3 key points from the passage
- **Body (7.5-9.5 minutes) \*Optional Structure\***
  1. Address guiding questions
  2. Structure using STOP BAD FIT
    - **S**ymbols
    - **T**hemes
    - **O**rganisation (physical structure of passage)
    - **P**rogression (e.g. Development of character, changing tone)
  - **Big Three:** Identify the Speaker, Audience, and Situation
  - **Atmosphere** (consider how diction, imagery, tone contribute to mood)
  - **Diction**
  - **Figurative Language**
  - **Imagery**
  - **Tone**
- **Conclusion (1 minute)**
  3. Sum up points and answer guiding questions
  4. What happens after the extract

Major Characters

- **King Lear:** The retired king of Britain
- **Cordelia** (married to King of **France**): Lear's youngest daughter
- **Regan** (married to Duke of **Cornwall**): Lear's second daughter
- **Goneril** (married to Duke of **Albany**): Lear's eldest daughter
- Earl of **Kent**/Caius: Lear's most loyal subject
- Earl of **Gloucester**: Lear's *courtier/adviser*
- **Edmund** the bastard child of Gloucester
- **Edgar**/Poor Tom: Edmund's brother, Gloucester's legitimate son and Lear's godson

Minor Characters

- Duke of **Burgundy** (who had come to England to marry Cordelia)
- **Oswald**: Goneril's loyal steward
- **Fool**: Lear's jester
- The **Old Man**: Gloucester's tenant
- **Doctor**: Minister's to Lear when he is brought to Cordelia's tent
- **Curan**: Acquaintance of Edmund's

- **Herald:** Reads out the proclamation that causes Edgar to fight Edmund
- **First Messenger:** Comes from Gloucester's house to inform Goneril and Edmund about Albany's death and Gloucester's blindness
- **Second Messenger:** Announces Edmund's death
- **French Messenger:** Announces to Cordelia that the British army is advancing on her forces
- **First Servant:** Cornwall's servant who cannot bear to see Gloucester's other eye be gorged out and kills Cornwall
- **Second Servant:** Horrified at Cornwall, proposes that Edgar/Poor Tom take Gloucester away
- **Third Servant:** Attempts to soothe Gloucester's pain
- **100 Knights:** Lear's only remaining symbol of power
- **First gentleman:** Collects information for the major characters
- **Second Gentleman:** follows Goneril to keep an eye on her upon Albany's orders
- **First Captain:** Given orders by Edmund to kill Cordelia but is then interrupted and killed by Lear
- **Second Captain:** Commands the Herald to sound his trumpet

### Scene Summaries

1. **A1S1\***
  - Love test
  - Cordelia's banishment
  - Kent's banishment
  - Cordelia bids farewell to G+R
2. **A1S2\***
  - Edmund's soliloquy
  - Gloucester reads letter with "Edgar's plot"
  - Edmund tricks Edgar into thinking he's on his side
3. **A1S3**
  - Oswald informs G about Lear hitting her servant
  - G is fed up of Lear's authoritative attitude and rowdy knights
  - G asks Oswald to be rude to Lear
4. **A1S4\***
  - Kent and Lear visit G at her castle
  - Oswald angers Kent and Lear and they physically abuse him
  - Fool mocks Lear because of the way he is being treated
  - G rages at Lear
  - Lear rages and then leaves
5. **A1S5**
  - Lear tells Kent to deliver a letter to Regan saying that he's coming to visit her
  - Fool tells Lear how unwise he is being about everything
  - Lear hopes he is not going mad when really, he is
6. **A2S1\***
  - Edgar arrives at Gloucester's castle where Edmund has a fake sword fight with him, then makes him flee before Gloucester and his guards find him
  - Regan and Cornwall visit Gloucester's castle all of a sudden so that they're not home when Lear arrives, she avoids choosing between Goneril's and Lear's side
7. **A2S2\***
  - Kent/Caius attacks Oswald because he's still mad at him
  - Edmund, Cornwall, Regan, Gloucester enter
  - Cornwall demands that Kent be kept in the stocks overnight as punishment, Regan supports but Gloucester protests
  - Kent decides to spent the night in the stocks while reading a letter from Cordelia who is keeping up to date regarding her sisters' treatment of Lear
8. **A2S3**
  - Edgar, desperate to escape, disguises himself as poor Tom (An almost fully naked beggar covered in mud)
9. **A2S4\***

- Lear arrives at Gloucester's castle, but finds Caius (Kent, but Lear doesn't know) in the stocks who tells him how he was mistreated by Regan and Cornwall
- Lear tells Regan about how Goneril mistreated him, R supports G instead
- Lear asks Regan to shelter him, but she refuses
- Goneril arrives at Gloucester's castle and both sisters ally against their father, asking him to get rid of 50 of his knights if he wants to stay with them
- Regan brings it down to 25, Lear is confused, Lear turns to Goneril, she refuses, and now neither of them allow him to have any knights
- Lear is outraged, curses his daughters and leaves
- There is a storm brewing outside and Gloucester pleads R+G to let him back in, but they refuse

**10. A3S1**

- As the storm rages in the heath, Kent bumps into one of the knights and learns that Lear is out in the storm, only accompanied by his fool
- He sends the knight to Cordelia in Dover with a ring, then leaves in search for Lear

**11. A3S2\***

- Lear wanders around in the storm, cursing the weather
- His thoughts are all over the place but they always return to R+G
- The fool urges Lear to go back in but he refuses, after which Kent finds the both of them and takes Lear to a nearby hovel for shelter

**12. A3S3**

- Gloucester wanted to go outside his castle and help Lear, upon which R+G and Cornwall got angry, took possession of his castle and ordered him never to plead for Lear
- Gloucester tells Edmund about the secret letter in his room (with news of the invading french army) and the fact that he is going out to look for Lear in the heath. He asks Edmund to distract Cornwall while he's gone or he might die for his treachery
- Edmund jumps at the opportunity and informs Cornwall of Gloucester's plan, in the hopes of his death, after which he will gain all the inheritance

**13. A3S4\***

- Kent resists going inside the hovel so he sends the fool in, who comes running out after claiming he saw a spirit, who turns out to be Edgar disguised as Tom O'Bedlam
- Lear sympathises with Edgar and asks him what brought him to his current state
- Seeing Edgar's nakedness, Lear tears his own clothes off as well
- Gloucester arrives in search of Lear and convinces him to go back, upon which Lear insists that Tom come along too

**14. A3S5**

- Back in Gloucester's castle, Cornwall vows revenge against him after seeing the letter of the French invasion that Edmund gave him
- Cornwall confers upon Edmund the title of Earl of Gloucester
- Edmund is sent to find Gloucester. In his aside, he points out that if he can catch his father helping Lear, he can confirm Cornwall's suspicion

**15. A3S6**

- Gloucester, Kent, Fool and Lear take shelter in a shed in Gloucester's palace
- Gloucester leaves to find provisions for the King
- He later hurries back to tell Kent that he has overheard a plot to kill Lear
- Gloucester begs Kent to bring Lear to Dover where allies await
- Undisguised Edgar speaks about much greater Lear's suffering was compared to his own

**16. A3S7\***

- Back in Gloucester's castle, Cornwall shows Goneril the invasion letter to give to Albany, then orders Edmund to go with Goneril to Albany's palace so he won't have to witness Gloucester's punishment
- Oswald brings word that Gloucester has helped Lear escape, he is found, brought to Cornwall and Regan, then mistreated (tied up and his bear plucked)
- Cornwall then gorges Gloucester's eyeball out, throws it on the floor and steps on it. Regan demands that he pull out the other one too
- One of Gloucester's servants steps in, battles with Cornwall and wounds him
- Regan grabs a sword from another servant and kills the first servant

- In anger, the wounded Cornwall gorges Gloucester's other eye

**17. A4S1**

- While Edgar talks to himself on the heath, he is horrified by the sight of his blinded father
- Gloucester is led by an old man who's been his tenant for 80 years
- Gloucester wants to be able to touch Edgar once again, but Edgar chooses to remain disguised
- Gloucester asks the old man to bring clothes for Edgar/Tom, and asks him to lead him to the highest cliff in Dover

**18. A4S2\***

- Goneril and Edmund arrive at her palace and are then informed by Oswald that Albany is displeased with how Goneril has been treating her father
- Goneril realises that Albany is no longer an ally and takes control of Albany's military forces
- She sends Edmund back to Cornwall's palace to prepare them for a fight against the french invaders, with a kiss
- Albany enters and criticises Goneril harshly, she calls him a coward and he calls her monstrous and evil
- A messenger arrives with the news that Cornwall had died from the wound he took while blinding Gloucester. Albany is horrified at the blinding.
- Goneril is confused about Cornwall's death. It meant that Regan is now less powerful, but also meant that she can freely pursue Edmund
- When Albany learns that Edmund left his father to be punished, he seeks revenge against Edmund

**19. A4S3**

- Kent arrives at a camp near Dover where he speaks with a gentleman who tells him that the King of France has gone back home due to urgent matters and Cordelia is now Queen of France, in charge of the army. She is deeply sorrowed to hear about Lear's mistreatment
- Kent tells the gentleman that Lear has also arrived in Dover but refuses to see Cordelia because he is too ashamed of the way he treated her

**20. A4S4**

- Cordelia enters, leading her soldiers
- Lear is hiding from her in the cornfields and she sends 100 soldiers to go look for him
- Cordelia consults a doctor whether Lear's insanity can be cured. His diagnosis is that Lear needs more sleep
- A messenger brings Cordelia the news that the armies of Cornwall and Albany are approaching

**21. A4S5**

- Back in Gloucester's castle, Oswald informs Regan that Albany's army has set out
- Upon seeing a letter from Goneril to Edmund in Oswald's hands, she asks to see it but he refuses. She says she wants Edmund for herself as it makes more sense for him to get involved with a widow instead of with Goneril and committing adultery
- Regan promises Oswald a reward if he can find Gloucester and kill him

**22. A4S6**

- Poor Tom brings Gloucester to the highest cliff in Dover, Gloucester prays to the Gods, intending to commit suicide as he can no longer bear his suffering. He then faints
- Edgar wakes Gloucester up and acts like an ordinary gentleman, but still doesn't reveal himself. He explains to Gloucester that he saw him fall from the cliff and that it is a miracle that he didn't die, because the Gods wanted to preserve him
- Lear bumps into Edgar and Gloucester, is clearly mad and speaks with them incoherently
- Cordelia's soldiers find Lear, but he runs away
- Oswald bumps into Edgar and Gloucester, tries to kill Gloucester but then is killed by Edgar (disguised as peasant). He then hands all his letters to Edgar.
- Edgar opens the letter from Goneril to Edmund which urges him to kill Albany so that they can be together. Edgar is infuriated and keeps the letter to give to Albany.

**23. A4S7\***

- Cordelia is aware of Kent's identity, but he wants it to remain a secret
- Lear, who has been sleeping, is brought in to see Cordelia and assumes that she hates him and wants to kill him just like her sisters. She denies and says she forgives him

- The news of Cornwall's death is repeated in the camp and they learn that Edmund is now leading Cornwall's troops

**24. A5S1**

- Regan is jealous of Goneril and asks Edmund not to be familiar with her
- Despite Albany's sympathy for Lear, he declares that he will fight with Regan, Goneril and Edmund against the invading troops
- Goneril, Regan and Edmund all leave together
- Just as Albany is leaving, Edgar (disguised as peasant) catches up to him and gives him the letter he found on Oswald (Goneril and Edmund's affair+Edmund's plans to kill Albany)
- Edgar leaves, Edmund returns and informs Albany of the approaching battle, Albany leaves
- Edmund addresses the audience, professing his love for both R+G, unable to decide between the two

**25. A5S2**

- The battle begins, Edgar/Peasant leads Gloucester to the shelter and fights on Lear's side
- He soon returns, announcing that Lear's side has lost and that Lear and Cordelia have been captured
- Gloucester wants to stay there and die, but Edgar convinces him otherwise and they leave

**26. A5S3\***

- Edmund leads in Lear and Cordelia as prisoners and then sends them away, giving the prison guard a note of what to do with them (The audience isn't aware of its contents)
- Albany enters accompanied by R+G and praised Edmund for his braveness. When Albany asks for Lear and Cordelia, Edmund says he sent them away which angers Albany. Regan however interrupts by saying that Edmund will be her husband, which Goneril forbids
- Albany arrests Edmund with a charge of treason. Regan, growing ill, is helped to Albany's tent. Edgar appears in full armour, battling Edmund and badly wounding him. When Goneril tries to help, Albany brings out the letter and Goneril runs off in desperation
- Edgar reveals his identity to Albany. He explains that he revealed his identity to his father just as he was preparing to fight, who was torn between joy and grief, then died.
- A gentleman carrying a bloodied knife announces that Goneril has committed suicide and also poisoned Regan before she died
- When Kent enters and asks where Lear is, Albany recalls with horror that Lear and Cordelia have been imprisoned. Edmund then explains that he had ordered for Cordelia to be hanged
- Lear enters, carrying Cordelia in his arms. Lear grieves over his loss. A messenger announces that Edmund has died from his wound. Lear is unable to take the emotional pain and dies.
- Albany gives Kent and Edgar their powers back, Edgar readily accepts, and they march off

Important Extracts and Analyses**1. Extract 1+2: Act 1 Scene 1 (line1-121) The love test**

**Introduction:** This is the very first scene to the entire play. It is part of the main plot in the play, involving King Lear, his daughters and Kent, thus setting reader's expectations and first impressions of the characters. Shakespeare establishes all of the fundamental themes and concerns in the play here, and these are developed as the play proceeds.

**Summary:** King Lear is addressing the court. He reveals that he is imparting his inheritance to his daughters to prevent future chaos as he recognises that he is old and does not have the energy to run the kingdom. He also administers a love test in which his daughters must tell him how much they love him in return for their portion of inheritance.

**Fundamental Themes****A. Order and Hierarchy**

- Elizabethan worldview and hierarchy reflected through formal setting of court
- Hierarchy is very important (Kings, earls, dukes, princess, guards and bastards all the way at the bottom)
- Order in which daughters speak shows importance of hierarchy: Oldest to youngest
- Formal setting and tone: Lear speaks in verse showing order and authority

**B. Power and authority of kingship**

- Since order exists, Lear has the ultimate power and authority in the kingdom shown through the use of royal plural such as “we”, “our”. Reflects regal structure of Elizabethan society as only kings use royal plural.
- Lear’s use of imperatives in “give me the map” and “tell me my daughters” reflects a commanding tone. The fact the people listen to his orders shows his power to dictate. Shows his influential and authoritative character.
- Tone of finality in “know that we have divided in three our kingdom”, no democracy as Lear makes all the decisions on his own
- These show Lear’s authoritative and powerful character. However, this consolation of power contributes to his feelings of pride and he wants to flaunt it to everyone.

#### C. Flattery and love

- Seen through the love test. He wishes for a public declaration of love from his daughters as he is looking for flattery and wants everyone to know how much he is loved by his daughters
- The excessive use of punctuative caesurae shows how impulsive and reckless Lear is. The use of dashes shows his hesitation before administering the love test, showing his rash nature.
- Emphasis on Lear’s insecurity and need to feel loved. He however has a flawed idea of love as he believes that it is quantifiable, giving off the impression that he is superficial and full of pride.
- Lear employs a tone of anticipation when asking Regan to speak after hearing Goneril’s speech, showing his childish excitement. When it is Cordelia’s turn, Lear portrays a frenzied state of excitement as she is his “joy” and favourite daughter. All this shows his desperation for flattery

#### D. Deception

- Goneril’s speech
  - Full of hyperboles and superlatives . She is verbose, showing her deceitful nature and the audience are made to question her sincerity and authenticity
  - Irony in her speech at “love that makes speech unable”. She says that she is unable to express her love with words while using flowery language to quantify and express her love for Lear. Contradiction emphasises her superficiality.
  - The very thing that Goneril claims she loves Lear more than (beauty, health, honour, liberty) are the things she takes away from him at the end of the play, foreshadowing her deceitful nature
- Regan’s speech
  - Even more manipulative and cunning than Goneril and says that her sister “comes too short”-ruthless and backstabbing nature
  - Her exaggerates by professing herself as an “enemy to all other joys” than the joy of loving Lear
- Both Goneril and Regan use long sentences, which represent their unceasing attempt at deceit and flattery, which is in contrast to Cordelia’s short but sincere sentences
- Lear is blinded by the deceptively mellifluous speeches made by Goneril and Regan. But he isn’t very bothered by what they say, as it only builds up his expectations for his favourite daughter, Cordelia’s speech.

#### E. Nothingness

- Cordelia repeats “nothing” which contrasts her sisters’ exaggerated speeches. Cordelia is so disgusted by her sisters that she will not stoop to their level and attempt to flatter her father. This use of repetition emphasises her resoluteness and strong moral compass
- Lear is absolutely horrified at Cordelia’s response and says “How, nothing will come of nothing.” This is ironic as the whole play and an entire series of events unfold simply because Cordelia says “nothing”.

#### Cordelia’s Aside

- Induces tension by breaking the hierarchy and order in which the daughter’s speak, hinting at the inevitable pandemonium
- The audience can recognise Cordelia’s inner conflict when she asks “What shall Cordelia do?”
- She says to herself “love and be silent” which is in contrast to her sisters’ speeches.



### Lear's Character

- Lear favours Cordelia the most and even promises to give her “a third more opulent” than her sisters. He is excited and can't wait to hear Cordelia's flattery as he believes it would be even better than Goneril and Regan's. He has already kept the best part of the kingdom for Cordelia, which shows his bias toward her. It makes the audience question the fairness of a king who lets his feelings get in the way of his decisions.
- He is superficial as only outward displays of affection satisfy him. When Cordelia refuses to speak, he asks her to mend her speech while using words with nasal sounds, having the effect of decreased volume due to embarrassment. Lear gives Cordelia repeated opportunities to say something and is in disbelief that she is “so young” yet so “untender”.
- He then becomes incensed and employs dark imagery in his speech such as “Hectate” and “orbs” as well as several words with plosive sounds such as “paternal”, “propinquity”, “property” and “blood”. He then proceeds to disown her. Display of his rashness and childish tantrums.

### Foreshadowing

- Image of secrecy when Lear speaks of “expressing his darker purpose”. The division of the Kingdom was kept in the dark, only Kent and Gloucester knew about it. This hints at the negative repercussions of Lear's actions, since darkness alludes to evil and death, foreshadowing the negative consequences that occur toward the end of the play
- Lear wants to give his kingdom away so that he can “crawl unburdened toward death”. Foreshadows how he will to his death burdened by powerlessness, homelessness and the guilt of causing Cordelia's death, whom he physically carries while crawling to his death.

## 2. Extract 3: Act 1 Scene 1 (Line 122-188) Kent's banishment

**Introduction:** Previously, Lear had disowned Cordelia as his daughter after her refusal to take part in his love test. In this extract, Kent attempts to argue with Lear to stand up for Cordelia, accusing Lear of rashness and Goneril+Regan of their superficiality. However, this enrages Lear even more and Kent is banished too. Being blood sisters, Goneril+Regan should have stood up for Cordelia too but didn't do so as they are selfish and want a larger share of the kingdom. Lear, despite having given up his throne, banished Kent and asks for a “reservation of his hundred knights” and his name. Goneril+Regan are angered by this and want to remove all power from Lear.

### Fundamental Themes and Motifs

#### A. Courage and Loyalty

- Kent has always been respectful toward Lear. However, there is a sudden shift in his tone in this extract, he refers to Lear as “old man”. He uses a tone of outrage and exasperation as he is upset by the injustice meted out against Cordelia. His willingness to stand up against Lear shows his courage as he is willing to stand up for what is right. Evokes admiration in the audience.
- Has great moral courage, he is willing to let the fork “fall to the region of (his) heart”. He is brave and willing to get hurt as long as he knows he stood up for the right thing
- Lear is irritated by Kent as he constantly interrupts his speech and train of thought, shown through the use of pauses in Lear's speech. Kent could be seen as rash as well, since he becomes disrespectful out of anger. Kent emphasises the fact that he had been risking his life for Lear all this while so it shows how much he cares for Lear. He is simply trying to make Lear open his eyes to his daughter's trickery
- Kent's interrogative tone in “what will thou do, old man?” expresses his exasperation and also shows his irreverence as he acknowledges Lear's humanity instead of his Kingship.
- There is a parallel between Kent and Cordelia. Both of them stand up to Lear and speak of duty and moral courage. Lear is clearly insecure about his power since anybody who tries to stand up against him will be banished. The irony here is that anyone who genuinely cares for Lear will be banished. Courage is not rewarded, but punished for.
- Kent is the voice of truth and reveals the reality that Lear is blind to by questioning Goneril +Regan's sincerity. Kent is highly virtuous, wise and morally courageous at the expense of his own life
- Even now, it seems as though Kent is protecting Lear from folly and Goneril+Regan

- When Lear calls upon the gods of Apollo, Kent tells him that he “swears in vain” and reminds him that even God cannot help him
- Kent uses a sarcastic tone in “do kill thy physician and the fee bestow upon thy foul disease”. The use of this imagery shows that Kent is the only one that can help Lear like a doctor curing a disease. So if Lear kills Kent, there will be nobody to help him.
- Kent is a selfless character as his life “he never held but as a pawn To wage against thine enemies”. This illuminates the darkness of the play

#### B. Violence, disorder and chaos

- Lear threatens Kent with “the bow is bent and drawn; make from the shaft”. Shakespeare’s use of violent and tense imagery emphasises Lear’s fury. There is a build up of tension as the audience expects Lear to lose his temper anytime.
- Lear uses condescending/disparaging words against Kent by calling him “vassal, miscreant” to highlight the differences in class to remind Kent that he is still King and above him (trying to recreate order amid the chaos)
- The fact that Kent, someone lower in status than the King, speaks against him, hints the beginning of chaos and foreshadows disorder in the Elizabethan worldview

#### C. Motif of sight

- Kent tries to make Lear realise that he is blind to the truth when he mentions “the true blank in thine eye”. Kent is urging Lear to use him to see the truth
- Lear however refuses to see as he wants Kent “out of his sight”. There is a permanent curtain over his eyes as he fails to see Kent’s good intentions

#### Lear’s speech

- Lear has gone berserk before his last speech. Lear cannot stand Kent’s irreverence any longer and wants to take control of the situation. The mood and atmosphere is that of confusion, tension and darkness.
- Switch in Lear’s emotional state. He cannot stand not being in control of everything and everyone. So much so that he is losing a control of his own emotions as well, which is driving him to madness.
- Lear switches back to royal plural, which shows how he is trying to regain control of the situation
- Lear finally banishes Kent, but allows him “five days for provision”. He is kind to Kent for his loyalty. There is a tone of finality when he says “This shall not be revoked” and marks the beginning of his downfall.

### 3. Extract 4: Act 1 Scene 2 (Line 1-115) Edmund’s Soliloquy

**Introduction:** Previously in act 1, the audience gets to see a strained relationship between Gloucester and his illegitimate son Edmund. In Elizabethan times, illegitimacy is viewed as taboo. The audience is then made to feel empathy for Edmund who is looked down upon for being illegitimate, something he had no control of.

**Summary:** In this extract, Edmund’s opening soliloquy shows the reasoning for his discontentment. He is defiant and mercenary, wanting to have the inheritance of his brother. The intensity of his speech also reveals his thirst for recognition. He deceives Gloucester by making him believe that Edgar seeks his life.

#### Themes

##### A. Birthright, illegitimacy and rivalry

- Role of soliloquy: Verse, conveys Edmund’s deep emotions to audience
- Edmund subscribes to the laws of nature, equating them to his “goddess” because unlike society, nature does not have a bias. “why should he remain subject to the evil of customary usage or laws which denied a bastard any share by inheritance in his father’s property” he says. Nature’s law states the survival of the fittest. However, even though Edmund has everything he needs to survive, he didn’t have the birthright to receive the love and respect he wanted. This evokes sympathy in the audience.
- Its ironic how Edmund is trying to reassure himself of his own importance. He feels that his shape is as “true as honest madam’s issue”. Honest here refers to chaste and madam can be



referring to Edmund's mother. Chastity is anything but honesty. Edmund is delusional and foolishly trying to comfort himself.

- It is also ironic that Edmund is considered an unnatural, yet he worships nature like a goddess.
- The alliterative use of plosive 'b' sounds in "Brand us with base, bastardy? Base Base?" creates emphasis, showing Edmund's frustration and disgust towards how he is being treated by society.
- The word "base" connotes the lowest place in the social hierarchy, where one is vile, has no virtues and has nothing redeeming. The repetition of base within a rhetorical question highlights his disbelief toward societal label.
- The repetition of "legitimate" also shows Edmund's obsession with something he can never achieve, as well as his obsession with societal status.
- Edmund is also a very self absorbed character who is motivated by self interest. This is shown through the use of several personal pronouns and even his own name. He is one who thirsts for power and inheritance, in "I must have your land". The audience is perhaps disgusted as they are shown the flaws of Edmund's true character.
- The last 5 lines of Edmund's soliloquy are full of sarcasm, he mocks at the legitimate, something he wants yet cannot get. It shows how bitter he really is on the inside.

#### B. Disorder

- Edmund, who belongs to the lowest level in the social hierarchy, tries to achieve greater recognition and top the hierarchy, as seen in "Edmund the base shall top the legitimate" and "Even the Gods will stand up for bastards". The use of exclamatory sentences shows his conviction and defiance and how he is willing to go against Gods and the natural order. The irony again is that he is going against the very gods of nature he worships.

#### C. Deception

- Edmund is portrayed as a manipulator and master of deception. When Gloucester enters, he immediately acts proper and full of reverence. As seen in "lordship" and "I beseech you, sir", there is a stark contrast to the anger he previously displayed in his soliloquy. The setting in Gloucester's house is informal, yet he employs a deceptively formal tone.
- He deliberately lets Gloucester see the letter he is hiding, using reverse psychology to force Gloucester to gain suspicion toward the letter. He also portrays Edgar as a greedy person who wants to kill his father.
- Ironic how he knows that portraying Edgar as greedy will turn Gloucester against him, when he himself is greedy yet wants love and acceptance

#### D. Nothingness and Motif of Blindness

- In "quality of nothing hath not such need to hide itself" it is ironic that Gloucester is so blind that he cannot see the plot that Edmund has hidden in the use of the letter
- There is dramatic irony seen in "if it be nothing I shall not need spectacles". The letter is obviously not nothing, but Gloucester is still blind, where the lack of spectacles allude to a loss in vision, to Edmund's intentions. It also foreshadows Gloucester's eventual physical blinding

#### Parallel link to main plot

- The subplot mirrors the main plot, hinting that the both will combine. Gloucester's swift rejection of Edgar mirrors Lear's rejection of Cordelia, while Edmund's villainy prepares the way for Goneril +Regan's treachery later. Similarly, Gloucester is fooled by false words and appearances, just as Lear was. Both plots also involve inheritance issues. This important parallel foreshadows a convergence of the two plots and what chaos is to come.

### 4. Extract 5: Act 1 Scene 4 (Line 180-285) Goneril's rage at Lear and his Knights

**Introduction:** At the start of this scene, Lear visits G at her castle, along with Kent and his 100 Knights. When Goneril hears that Lear had hit her servant and that his Knights were being rowdy, she sends Oswald to them to be as rude as he can, after which he is abused and pushed. She couldn't stand it anymore and raged at Lear. Lear then vents at Goneril and leaves to stay with Regan instead. However, G writes to R, plotting in the shadows.

**Themes****A. Reversal of Authority and Loss of Power**

- Lear no longer has any power as he is in Goneril's caste and has given away everything that came with his kingship, along with his authority. He tries to command without the authority to do so and even gets violent when Oswald doesn't show him the respect he desires
- Goneril is in her own castle and has the authority over her father, constantly throwing imperatives at him. She rages at him and curses him for his behaviour and his knights. The power has been reversed and Lear left in complete shock
- Lear is in such disbelief that he seems as if he is unable to recognise Goneril as his own daughter: Evokes sympathy in the audience for the ill treatment Lear is receiving from his own blood
- Lear spouts a string of rhetorical questions from "Does any here know me?..." which shows the loss of his identity as King
- The fool mocks Lear "I am better than thou art now..." Lear has been reduced to absolute baseness, even lower than the fool
- Fool uses metaphor of "cuckoo" to represent Goneril's betrayal (social commentary)
- Fool refers to Lear as a shadow: In the shape of Lear, but empty of substance

**B. Anger**

- Lear's boiling fury shown through his speech- "Darkness and devils" dark imagery to represent the evil of Goneril
- He is so spiteful that he reduces her to a "degenerate bastard" but it is ironic since she is his legitimate child. He is so incensed that he's being illogical. Parallel to Edmund in the subplot
- Repetition of plosive sounds in "darkness, devils, degenerate, detested" show his anger
- Grotesque metaphor of a "sea monster" used to dehumanise G shows how disgusted Lear is at her "hideous" character
- Refers to her as "detested kite"- Kite is a bird which feeds on flesh and is made even worse as it is detested, gruesome visual imagery shows the physical pain that Lear is experiencing
- Lear is so enraged that he begins to descend into madness, striking his head while repeating "Lear, Lear, Lear!"

**C. Disorder and the unnatural**

- Lear rages on and curses Goneril even further, asking the gods of nature to deprive her of the blessings nature provides
- Irony: Lear calls upon nature to do all things unnatural upon Goneril, foreshadowing the chaos and disorder that is to come
- Lear uses obscene and grotesque visual imagery to express the wrath of his curse upon her
- Lear uses the dark and ominous metaphor of a serpent to compare Goneril to something venomous and also tactile imagery in "sharp tooth" to emphasise the pain he endures
- Sibilance mimicking the hissing sound of a serpent and also showing how infuriated he is
- There is also disorder in the way Lear speaks, with a combination of imperative, exclamatory and interrogative sentences, showing the chaos within his mind
- The use of dashes act as caesura which show Lear disrupted flow of thoughts
- Lear continues to interrogate Albany without waiting for an answer, showing the disjointedness of his thoughts and his descent into madness
- Loss of iambic pentameter. Before Lear began cursing G, his speech followed an iambic pentameter, reflecting nobility and authority. As soon as he began cursing, it lost the flow, showing disorder once again

**5. Extract 6: Act 2 Scene 4 (Line 371-476) Goneril and Regan turn against Lear**

**Introduction:** Before this scene, Lear raged at Goneril for not letting him and his knights stay with her and left her castle, heading toward Regan's castle in the hopes of better treatment. In this scene, Lear arrives at Gloucester's castle and finds Kent at the stocks, after which he wants to meet Regan. He tells Regan about how G mistreated him, hopeful that R will treat him well. However, R and G are with one another and they both turn against their father, asking him to get rid of his 100 Knights which are the only remaining symbol of his power. He then curses the both of them, both incensed and hurt by the way he is being treated by his daughters.

**Themes****A. Ingratitude and disrespect**

- Regan refuses to let Lear and his Knights stay with her and even questions “what need you 5 and 20?” and then mercilessly reduces it to “what need you 1?” when referring to Lear’s knights. This is the coup de grace as it humiliates Lear completely
- The daughters team up and hurl interrogatives at Lear, pushing him to a corner. The relentlessness in their attack shows the extent of their ingratitude and disrespect
- R+G are so cunning that they make it seem as if they’re being logical about not wanting the knights there-“so disordered, debauched”, but really they only want to strip Lear of his power
- Regan is being harsh and disrespectful toward Lear by interrupting his speech, seen by the dashes: “I gave you all—”, “and in good time you gave it”

**B. Anger**

- Repetition of plosive alliterative consonant b and p in “basest, beggars, beasts” and “patience, patience!” guttural alliterative consonant g in “gorgeous, grief” his anger is evident in the harshness of his speech
- Lear is exasperated, just before the point of despair.
- Even in anger, Lear tries to reason that we have wants that exceed basic needs, which is what sets us apart from animals or “beasts”
- Anger transforms into sorrow and grief as he recognises himself in his true state, as a “poor old man”: evokes sympathy in the audience
- Motif of weeping and tears which shows the unending pain and grief that Lear is put through, which only justifies his tears as he explains

**C. Old age and madness**

- Lear’s thoughts are incoherent, shown through the dashes in his speech. It also shows that Lear is choking with an overflow of emotions
- Lear’s turbulent emotions shown through the shift in his tone. Initially he tries to gain sympathy by pleading -“ Made you my guardians, my depositaries” but it then turns into restlessness and rage in “those wicked creatures...”
- Lear’s dramatic speech, overflowing with emotions is contrasted with the calm tone of the younger ones, R+G. This shows Lear’s increasing madness that comes with old age, foreshadowing the impending doom that the old in the play have to bear.
- Use of “storm and tempest” in his speech also foreshadow the storm that will rage

**D. Disorder**

- R uses imperative in “I entreat you to being but 5 and 20”, showing reversal of power. Tone of finality also shows rebelliousness, and Lear’s loss of power. Disorder in the family where the daughters have authority over their father
- Disorder in Lear’s mind as he is in disbelief that his daughters have wronged him so, represented by the brewing storm outside. Lear is bottling up his anger, just as the storm brews, before releasing it in the later part of the play

**Lear’s character**

- Full of pride as he refuses to weep, he wants to show his daughters that he is strong. This however is only an external display. Internally, he is completely shattered.
- Lear is still foolish as he is willing to go back to G if she lets him keep 50 knights. It also shows his superficiality as he believes that love is quantifiable in terms of knights and land, as seen earlier from the love test
- Lear is foolish at first but toward the end of the extract, he realises his folly and curses himself for it

**Conclusion:** There is a shift in power from old to young and the relationship between Lear and his daughters is deteriorating.

**6. Extract 7: Act 3 Scene 2(Line 1-79) The storm**

**Introduction:** Before this extract, Lear was mistreated by both his daughters, causing him to rage and leave Gloucester’s castle, running out to the heath in the storm. In this extract, we see Lear become increasingly mad as he rants at the storm, hoping that the tempest will obliterate the world.

Lear is preoccupied by the thoughts of his daughter's actions and his vulnerable physical + emotional state is revealed to the audience, evoking their sympathy.

### Themes

#### A. Madness and destruction

- The storm itself is a symbol of Lear's inner turmoil and conflict where Lear's speech parallels the intensity of the storm
- The apocalyptic nature of the storm is emphasised through the use of plosive and guttural monosyllabic sounds such as "blow, crack, rage, blow" and emphasises the intensity of the storm and the intensity of Lear's fury
- Lear rants at and addresses the storm directly- "Blow winds and crack..." The fact that he's trying to communicate with the storm already shows that he is going insane. The use of exclamations emphasises the extent of the chaos in his mind. Personification of the storm gives it a destructive quality, emphasising the pandemonium at the scene.
- The futility of Lear's commands at the storm parallels his authority in his kingdom, nobody is listening to him and that he has lost all power
- Lear uses powerful and destructive visual imagery such as "executing fires, oak cleaving thunderbolts" which highlights the extent of destruction he wishes upon the world. This reveals his own emotions and how devastated he himself feels. He wishes unto the world what has been done to him.
- Excessive use of hyphenated adjectives such as "oak-cleaving, all-shaking, thought-executing" shows that Lear cannot find the words to express the havoc within him
- Lear is so devastated that he wishes for his own harm- "sing my white beard". He is not only descending into madness, but also cursing his white beard, a symbol of his old age, for bringing him to where he is.
- Lear does not blame the elements for they don't owe him anything, and wants the storm to continue pouring down on him relentlessly. However, R+G he gave his kingdom, called daughters betrayed him, which is completely unfair to him.
- The fool points out Lear's madness by mentioning an inversion in nature as Lear "turns his sleep to wake". In Elizabethan times, insomnia was believed to lead to madness, hinting to Lear his mental decline.

#### B. Folly

- The fool speaks with rhyme, providing Lear with a moment of relief by trying to enliven the dark atmosphere.
- As Kent enters, he asks "who's there" which is a form of role reversal where it is unclear who is who. The harsh environment doesn't distinguish between the wise or the foolish and hints that Lear is in reality the foolish one
- Foreshadows Lear's decline and downfall in the later part of the play due to his foolishness

### 7. Extract 8: Act 3 Scene 4 (Line1-107) Lear meets Poor Tom at Hovel

**Introduction:** Before this scene, Lear had been shut out by R+G in the midst of a horrendous storm, accompanied by the fool and disguised Kent. Having given away all his power to his daughters, Lear is nothing but an ordinary man. Kent finds Lear in the storm and manages to convince him to take shelter in a nearby hovel.

**Summary:** Lear is a lot calmer now, and the storm has come to a still. The audience feels reassured by the appearance of Kent and not all hope seems lost. As Kent manages to bring Lear to the hovel, his duty and loyalty are highlighted.

### Themes

#### A. Isolation and suffering

- The setting itself is isolated and deserted, found somewhere in the vast heath. A hovel is a lowly place for a King to take shelter, showing how much he has fallen
- Lear has suffered so much that he expects cruelty from everyone and asks "wilt break my heart?" He has given up on humanity. Since his own blood treats him so horribly, he doesn't expect anything better from anybody else

- Lear doesn't trust anybody anymore and feels that he is safer when he is isolated-“let me alone”. Shows the extent of his suffering and paranoia
- Lear mentions a “roaring sea” which represents a sea of his sufferings
- He is already experiencing a storm in his mind, so he is desensitised to the physical storm of the external world-“tempest in my mind doth from my senses...”
- When Lear thinks about his heart, he is reminded of how he was mistreated by R+G
- When asked to enter repeatedly, Lear refuses, he seeks isolation and wants to stay out in the storm and pray

#### B. Nothingness

- Lear seeks shelter in a barren land and a small, empty hovel which hints at the idea of plainness and nothingness
- Lear is praying for a fairer world by giving his excess to the poor- “shake the superflux to them and show the heavens more just” but he has nothing left to give
- Lear is left with no knights, no servants or place, nothing. He can now truly sympathise with the poor, referring to Edgar/Poor Tom, and removes his clothes to “expose thyself to feel what wretches feel”, so that he is left with nothing on his body

#### C. Loyalty

- Despite being banished, Kent remains loyal to Lear and cares for him.
- Kent repeats “enter” four times to Lear, showing that he is the voice of reason and practicality. He is not worried about Lear’s emotional worries, he is more focused on his physical wellbeing and safety.
- Kent continues to address Lear as “my lord” even though Lear is now an ordinary man, showing his reverence toward him and that no matter what happens, he will always serve him
- A touching reply from Kent when Lear asks “wilt break my heart” and he says “I had rather break my own” shows the extent of his care. The irony is that every shelter Lear has entered has broken his heart except the hovel, despite the palace being a place of luxury and comfort
- Kent is the epitome of loyalty, which gives the audience a sense of hope and illuminates the darkness that has been cast over the play.

#### Lear’s character

- Lear is initially preoccupied with the ingratitude of his daughters. This is shown through the analogy of being eaten alive by a bear. The bear is a symbol of the storm so he would rather die in the storm than die at the hands of his daughters
- Lear is so focused on his emotional pains that he is numbed to the physical pains of the storm
- Lear’s sufferings lead to his madness which he absolutely dislikes. Lear relished in having control over everything and losing control of his own mental faculty is frightening for him
- There is a positive change in Lear and a newfound realisation of the people around him. He cares for others before himself- “go in thyself, seek thine own ease” and “in boy, go first”
- There is a newfound spirituality in Lear. “I’ll pray” combined with the physical action of kneeling shows Lear’s humility, contrasted to his pride at the start of the play
- He displays empathy for the first time because he knows what it must be like for the poor to be homeless and unfed-“how shall your houseless heads...” He understands the pain of being homeless in the storm, emphasised by the plosive alliteration in “bide the pelting of this pitiless storm”
- Lear faces a point of growth and maturity as he realises that he has “ta’en too little care of this”
- The audience is instilled with a sense of hope after seeing the positive development in Lear’s character

#### 8. Extract 9: Act 3 Scene 7 (Line1-98) Gloucester’s blinding

**Introduction:** Previously, Gloucester tells Edmund that he intends to help Lear, and proposes that Edmund assist Lear as well. Edmund decides to betray Gloucester to Cornwall as he wants him dead for his inheritance. He passes the letter which contains the information of the French invasion to Cornwall who decides to punish Gloucester for treachery.

**Summary:** This scene contains the most horrifying and gruesome act of physical violence in the play and the physical torture here matches the mental torture Lear endured in the storm. Although



the entirety of this extract is foreboding and dark, it is illuminated by the virtuous servant who stood up for Gloucester, his master for the injustice that had been done.

### Themes

#### A. Inversion of roles and reality

- This theme is portrayed through the extensive use of irony throughout this extract
- The old way of judging human behaviour is deleted at this scene and it gives way to a new reality where cruelty and villainy are virtues that are held up by society.
- There is gender inversion. Elizabethan women should be gentle and affectionate but Regan and Goneril are being animalistic and violent
- Inversion of the guest and host relationship. Guests are supposed to be grateful to the host. However, as guests, instead of repaying Gloucester with gratitude, they gorge his eyes out. It is thus ironic that Gloucester is killed in his own palace, a place that is supposed to be a safe retreat for him.
- There is no reverence for Gloucester's old age as Regan plucks Gloucester's beard with disrespect, inversion of societal virtues
- Regan uses animalistic metaphors used against Gloucester- "ingrateful fox" ironic since Regan is the animal
- Gloucester has a thick white beard and old age is associated with wisdom, yet he is absolutely clueless as to what is happening to him shown through the string of rhetorical questions
- "Upon these eyes on thine I'll set my foot", inversion occurs as the basest part of the body is placed on one's eye, one of the most vital organs
- The servant uses an imperative against Cornwall- "hold your hand, my lord"
- It is ironic that after he is blind, Gloucester calls on the very one who caused his torture- "where's my son, Edmund?" He is figuratively blind to Gloucester's deception as well
- Regan kicks out Gloucester of his own palace in the most cruel and ruthless manner possible- "Go thrust him out at the gates and let him smell his way to Dover"

#### B. Sight and Blindness

- First reference to eyes- Lear's "poor old eyes" shows Gloucester's sympathy and loyalty toward Lear but at the same time, foreshadows his blinding and builds tension
- Second reference to eyes- "I shall see" which triggers Cornwall's anger as he is incensed by Gloucester's constant references to sight. He then decides that "see shalt thou never" and gorges out Gloucester's eye

### Gloucester's speech

- Passionate and emotional, with a lot of truth.
- In "I would not see thy cruel nails...poor old eyes" there could be a double entendre on the word 'poor', emphasising Lear's figurative blindness to the cruelty of his daughters. It is ironic that it is Gloucester's eyes that they remove, not Lear's.
- Animalistic visual imagery of "cruel nails" and "boarish fangs" portrays Regan and Cornwall as beast-like and merciless, contrasted with Lear's "anointed flesh"
- Even wolves, dangerous and wild creatures, will be allowed to enter their gates in the harshest storm, but not Lear. Shows Regan and Cornwall's heartlessness

**Conclusion:** At the end of this extract, the audience feels sympathy and anguish. However, there is a small glimmer of hope as seen through the generous actions of the servants to show Gloucester the way.

### 9. Extract 11: Act 4 Scene 2 (Line1-98) Goneril and Albany argue

**Introduction:** Before this extract, evil has seemed to triumph. Edmund has abandoned his father, who was blinded by Cornwall and Regan. In this extract, there is a heated argument between Goneril and Albany as he learns of how G has been ill treating her father. Albany sheds the role of a moral coward, turning against G with sharp words, showing the struggle between good and evil.

**Argument**

- Acts as an opportunity for emotional duality: There is admiration for Albany for having the courage to stand up for what is right, be it against his own wife. There is also disgust for G and her horrible treatment of her father that provoked even her own husband to speak against her
- The conflict in ideas leads to verbal violence
- There is a change in language style in “I am guiltless as I am ignorant” use of striking imagery here, which sets the pace of the play and the development toward a conclusion

**Albany's Speech**

- His verbal attack emphasises on the unnatural act of betrayal in “that nature which contemns its origins cannot be bordered certain against itself” If G cannot behave with moral boundaries and show filial piety and gratitude, she will suffer the consequences of a break down in family ties
- Claims that Goneril will come to “deadly use” which foreshadows her death in the final scene
- Constant rhetorical questions-“what have you done” “what have you performed” etc shows his disbelief and righteous rage at her actions. He also sees through her pretension of love for her father, a “gracious aged man”
- There is an emergence of antipathy as Albany loses his respect for G, she is acknowledged as a villain- “wisdom and goodness to the vile seems vile; filths savour but themselves”
- “Woman shape doth shield thee”- He wishes to punish G but is noble and would never harm a lady
- He is condescending toward her and says she is “not worth the dust”
- He dehumanises her and labels her with “tiger”, “barbarous”, “degenerate”, “monster of the deep”
- He shifts from a passive character to stand against G, development of his moral compass and esteem, contrasted with earlier when he had simply followed the “great love” he has for her

**Goneril's Speech**

- Mocks Albany viciously, and mocks his attempt to preach in “the text is foolish” and calls Albany a fool for pitying others and having poor judgement in “fools do those villains pity who are punished”
- She mocks his courage and lack of proactivity in “whilst thou, a moral fool, sits still and cries”
- However, at this juncture, the audience is able to perceive that the use of “fool” associates Albany with Lear's fool, the truth teller and the true wiseman
- Attacks Albany's manhood in “marry you manhood mew!” -Ironically, the moment she challenges this, he shows spine and promises Gloucester revenge for his eyes. This makes G look like the fool
- There is a degradation of G's character in the eyes of the audience and she is left isolated from her husband, without the protection of a man, having to struggle for herself

**10. Extract 12: Act 4 Scene 7 (Line1-97) Lear and Cordelia reunite**

**Introduction:** At the beginning of the play, as a result of Cordelia's refusal to speak during the love test, she is banished by King Lear. Prior to this scene, Lear is brought to Cordelia as a murder is being plotted against him. Lear however, is asleep. When he begins to wake, Cordelia asks the doctor to speak to him as she is unsure of how he might react.

**Summary:** In this extract, Cordelia being the filial daughter that she is has come back in an attempt to rescue Lear from his madness. Lear initially doesn't recognise who she is and is insane but towards the end of the extracts, his insanity is reduced with the help of Cordelia. Kent and the doctor are also present in this extract, all hoping that Lear would recover.

**Theme:****A. Love and affection**

- Portrayed through the character of Cordelia
- She is a static character who sticks to her moral values throughout the play. In this extract, we see her tenderness and her care, her comforting and sensitive nature, as she is perceived as a woman full of virtues and quality

- She had the right to be angry with Lear and not choose to care about him as he was unkind and banished her, but she still chooses to help him out of her love and reverence for him
- This is in contrast to Regan and Goneril, both of whom ill treated and threw out their father. Cordelia however received him with loving arms. This shows the universality of the phrase “actions speak louder than words”. R+G are empty vessels who don't truly love Lear the way Cordelia does
- Cordelia still treats Lear like a king and addresses him with respect as “how does my royal lord?How fares your majesty” she is helping him to recover by giving him back what he had lost, his kingship: shows how much she truly cares for him
- Her actions and speech reveal how much reverence she holds for Lear- (*kneels*) “O look upon me, sir, and hold your hands in benediction o’er me!”
- Cordelia restrains Lear when he wants to kneel as she still preserves the sense of order and is highlighting to Lear that he is still above her, as a father and as a king. This sense of order, a key element of the Elizabethan world view, has been missing after the administration of the love test. Cordelia reintroduces order in the play.
- When Lear is finally able to recognise her-“I think this lady to be my child Cordelia” she is overwhelmed with joy, showing how genuine she is about her love for him
- Cordelia even tells Lear “no cause, no cause” that she has no reason to do him wrong despite him being unkind toward her
- Cordelia is seen repeating certain words and phrases, almost in a reassuring manner, showing her understanding toward his current state of mind and her care for him
- Cordelia also speaks in short sentences throughout the scene, similar to the start of the play. This is juxtaposed with there sisters’ long and flowery yet superficial speeches. This brings up the theme of deception and the contrast between pure hearted and sly, which has been present throughout the play
- She yet again refers to him as “your highness” and granting him the respect he never got from R+G, once again treating him like a king, perhaps aiding him in recovering his pride and sanity

#### Lear’s character

- In this extract, Lear is beginning to recover and he is not concerned about the past too much, which gives hope for a turn of events
- Lear also speaks with personal pronouns such as “I” and “Me” instead of royal plural, showing his loss of power and authority
- Lear would rather die than go through earthly suffering as seen in “you do me wrong to take me out of the grave”- This highlights the trauma he has been through and how grieved he has been. It also shows how he is weak and fragile, as though he felt more at peace when he was dead
- The imagery of burning in “bond upon a wheel of fire that mine own tears do scald like molten lead” creates a hellish atmosphere through Lear’s speech, as though he had been through retribution and punishment for his folly, which evokes sympathy in the audience
- He refers to Cordelia as an angel in “you are a spirit, I know”, this is appropriate as it accurately reflects her character.
- Lear is still confused and disoriented as evident from the string of rhetorical questions
- He says he is “mightily abused” which emphasises the extent of his pain
- In “do not abuse me” and “pray do not mock me” Lear’s vulnerable and helpless state is evident and he can only request that *no more pain be inflicted upon* him, shows the extent to which he has been devastated, both physically and mentally
- Lear has been so damaged that he finds Cordelia’s love and affection surreal and says “I know you do not love me” He refuses to be foolish and is very paranoid after all the deceit he has witnessed
- Lear prays for Cordelia’s forgiveness one more time, doubtful that she has never held anything against him and says “pray you now forget and forgive” and admits his folly once again by saying “I am old and foolish”, seeking repentance and reconciliation.

### 11. Extract 13: Act 5 Scene 3 (Line1-254) Lear and Cordelia captured

**Introduction:** Before this extract, Lear and Cordelia were reunited, but their joy was soon taken away from them as they had to fight against Edmund who was leading Cornwall's army, Albany and his army, Goneril and Regan. After a brief war, Lear and Cordelia were captured by Edmund.

**Summary:** In this extract, the wheel has come to a full circle as the main characters come together, with Edmund in control and Lear and Cordelia as his prisoners. We see the scheming and deceptive nature of Edmund as he has already made plans to kill them both. Despite the hopelessness of the situation however, Lear is happy he is with Cordelia, showing how detached he is from reality. Cordelia's and Kent's innate goodness can also be seen in this scene, placed in contrast to the evil of Edmund, Goneril and Regan. I will take on a Linear approach to this extract as it shows the development of the plot better.

#### Edmund

- The extract begins with stage directions, whereby Edmund enters with Lear and Cordelia as prisoners, accompanied by soldiers and a captain. There are drums and colours, highlighting the celebration and victory of the British forces and Edmund's newfound power
- He uses imperatives and commands, much like Lear at the start of the play, such as "some officers take them away" which emphasises his newfound power and pride. The tone he employs is also dismissive and arrogant which shows his disrespect toward Lear

#### Cordelia

- Adopts an indignant tone to show her anger toward Edmund when she says to him "we are not the first who with best meaning have incurred the worst" with we referring to the good characters in the play, including Cordelia, Lear, Kent, Edgar, Gloucester who had good intentions and a good heart, yet they suffered the most. This could also be directed at the audience to remind them of the injustice throughout the play
- Refers to Lear as "oppressed king" as he is not being given the respect he deserves by Edmund
- Her distress is also seen when she says she is "cast down" and cannot "outfrown false future's frown", meaning she cannot turn her frown upside down to a smile. The fricative alliteration adds conviction to her speech to emphasise her emotions
- Her compassion and goodness is seen once more when she says "shall we not see these daughters and these sisters" meaning that she wants to see R+G once again and reconcile with them. She has no hatred for them and is genuine, as seen from her gentle and compassionate tone (she's almost like an angel)

#### Lear

- Lear appears to be lively and energetic as seen from his upbeat tone. So much so that it seems almost as if he's excited to go to prison.
- He replies "no no no no" to Cordelia's suggestion as all he cares about at the moment is being with Cordelia, he wants nothing to do with R+G. His absolute refusal to see them is shown by the repetition of the word "no"
- Lear's excitement is seen in his eagerness to go off to prison and "sing like birds in a cage". This is ironic as prison is a place of confinement and dreadfulness yet Lear wants to go there, just so he can spend time with Cordelia. Clearly, Lear is detached from reality and can only think about his beloved daughter
- His joy is seen through words such as "sing, blessing, pray, laugh, talk" as though he has not a worry in the world. He goes on and on about frivolous things he wants to do with his daughter in prison, showing how blind he is to the reality of his situation
- Lear still harbours feelings of guilt as he says he would kneel down in front of Cordelia and beg her forgiveness for banishing her

#### Edmund again

- Breaks in with an imperative-"take them away", reasserting his dominance and power

**Lear again**

- Still doesn't realise the severity of the situation and the jeopardy he is in
- He is still celebrating and says "upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia, the gods themselves throw incense". Sacrifices refer to Cordelia's failed rescue attempt to rescue Lear and perhaps the future consequences she has to bear for coming back to him
- Lear then asks "Have I caught thee?" and embraces her, again reflecting his disbelief that Cordelia is before him and with him
- He speaks of how nobody can part them and they will always be together, calling upon "heaven" thus depicting his firm belief in how they will not be separated
- Lear then tells Cordelia to "wipe thine eyes" as she is crying due to his speech. She could also be grieving as she realises the severity of the situation, unlike Lear.
- Lear and Cordelia exit and the audience sees Edmund's scheming nature once more

**Edmund and Captain**

- Edmund's speech is full of imperatives and is commanding the captain with short and to the point sentences such as "come hither, captain, hark. Take this note. Go follow them to the prison"
- Edmund is clearly efficient in getting rid of Lear and Cordelia quickly using underhand means and bribing the captain with "noble fortunes"
- The captain immediately accepts his offer as he understands the extent of Edmund's power, unlike Lear, and is also driven by greed
- A reversal of virtues is seen when Edmund claims the captain should be "happy" after killing Lear. This is ironic as murder is a deadly sin and Edmund makes it appear like a good deed that one should be happy and proud of, shows his twisted character

**Conclusion:** At the end of the extract, the audience hence fears for the safety of Cordelia and Lear. This is because the audience knows Edmund's plan to kill them off, yet they think they are merely headed to prison and hence Shakespeare has created much suspense through this scene.

**12. Extract 14: Act 5 Scene 3 (Line 255-325) Lear's death**

Introduction and summary: This extract has been taken from the last scene in the play and the events are coming to a close and the tensions that were introduced at the start of the play are being steadily resolved. Before this extract, Goneril poisons Regan and later, when her adulterous relationship is revealed by Albany, she commits suicide. Edmund, who as been wounded by Edgar, dies later in the scene as well. Seen through Lear carrying Cordelia's body in his arms at the beginning of this extract, the attempt to stop the execution ordered by Edmund was too late. Hence, the impending sense of doom adds to the tragedy of this play and invokes sympathy in the audience. However, Lear is so grief stricken by the hell he and his family has gone through, that is poor old heart can no longer take the pain and he dies. I will be approaching the extract in a linear fashion to place emphasis on the order of events in this scene.

**Line-by-line**

- Lear enters with the word "howl" repeated four times, which emphasises his grief through the use of onomatopoeia. Alludes to the howling of a wolf when it is trying to call out to his pack. Lear, in similar distress, is calling out to Cordelia and pleading for her not to leave him
- When he refers to those present as "men of stones", it parallels back to him calling Goneril a "marble hearted fiend" for being unfeeling. The hyperbolic expression "heaven's vault should crack" emphasises the deep anguish he feels, so great that it would even destroy the universe and nature itself
- When Lear exclaims "she is gone forever", it is evident that he finally realises the gravity of the situation and is hit hard by the reality which he had been avoiding all this while, too distracted by the joy of being with Cordelia once again
- Lear even devises tests to convince himself that Cordelia is dead- "If her breath will mist or stain the stone, why then she lives" and "This feather stirs, she lives" Lear is clearly unstable and is on a downward spiral



- “The promised end” that Kent speaks of is pessimistic and hopeless, which is contrary to the happiness at the start of the play and even the hope and reassurance brought about by Edgar’s defeating of Edmund. To Lear, he has lost everything, his power, his daughters, his kingdom
- Watching his master on the brink of madness, after recovering from it, Kent tries to reassure Lear in “O, my good master!” However, Kent is asked to go away, somewhat like in Act 1 Scene 1 where he was asked to leave after trying to show Lear R+G’s true colours
- Lear’s third rant blames everyone but himself, he states that “I might have saved her”. Ironical in the sense that him disowning her contributed to this tragic turn of events in the first place.
- He repeats “gone forever” which conveys an air of finality and amplifies the shock Lear is in
- He tries to show that he indeed tried to do good in repentance of his treatment toward her by claiming that he “killed the slave that was a hanging” Cordelia. Yet, it was not enough and it just adds to the tragedy of the situation. His claim is confirmed by the captain, who is perhaps trying to show some compassion and support for Lear as he is aware of his grief
- Lear recalls his bravery with his “good biting falchion”, referring to a sword. By this he is acknowledging that he is old. Furthermore he says “mine eyes are not o’ the best” it signals to the audience that Lear is deteriorating both physically and mentally and that death is imminent, a convention in Elizabethan theatre.
- Lear is unable to recognise Kent and doesn’t seem to show much emotion when Kent reveals himself to Lear as he is too distraught by his daughter’s death
- Kent is eager to reveal himself to Lear to give him the joy of knowing that he has had such a loyal subject all this while. He is cut off, as shown by the dash and ignored by Lear who says “I’ll see that straight” This is dark humour as Lear is physically losing his eyesight, causing him to be unable to recognise Kent as seen from his description of the “dull sight” of Kent
- Lear’s dismissal of Kent adds to the tragedy as he dies alone without anyone in the world
- When Kent mentions “dark and deadly”, it brings to mind the “darker purpose” that Lear talked about at the beginning of the play. Everything has come to a complete circle and it indeed is the tragic promised end to the play. Plosive alliteration also emphasises air of finality and disgust at the situation
- Lear still does not care as seen from his dismissive and flippant reply “Ay, so I think” his mind is completely focused on Cordelia
- Edmund’s death is announced and there is a glimpse of hope, as an evil has been destroyed and punished to balance out the injustice that has been done upon Lear and Cordelia
- Lear’s final speech contains short sentences which builds up the rhythm temporarily and creates tension before his eventual death
- Lear is still in disbelief and exclaims “no, no, no life!”
- Lear also repeats “never” which has a dramatic hyperbolic effect and gives a sense of finality and doom
- He also repeats “O”. The fact that most of Lear’s speech consists of repeated words shows that he is at a loss of words and just like Cordelia in Act 1, he cannot “heave his heart into his mouth” and cannot express the pain he endures
- The undone button is a metaphor for Lear’s release from the worldly pains and sufferings. He is finally unrestricted and free, and dies.

Conclusion: Placed at the end of the play, this extract can be effectively contrasted with the events of the beginning. The initial excitement and anticipation at the love test versus the hopelessness and despair at the end. It is a tragic ending to the play and leaves the audience in shock and despair.