

# King Lear



*Themes presented through imagery and symbolism*

# The Question

- ❖ “The themes evident in King Lear are skilfully presented through a series of dramatic symbols and images.” Discuss this view, supporting your answer with suitable reference to at least two of the themes y in the text.



# Approaching the Question

- ❖ Note the words ‘at least two of the themes’. You could confine yourself to two, but it would be better to aim for three or even four.
- ❖ However, you should be careful not to give each theme too brief a treatment in your essay.



# Organising Your Essay

- ❖ There are two obvious ways to approach this essay.
- ❖ 1. Go through various themes and say how imagery and symbolism help to present them to the audience
- ❖ 2. Go through various aspects of imagery - animal, diabolical, disease etc. - and say what themes are shown by each of these.

# Sample Plan

- ❖ While either approach is perfectly fine, I will opt for the second option (imagery and symbolism to the fore) when planning this essay.
- ❖ You should be aiming to write around twelve paragraphs in total. This is a rough guide! Make your own judgement call based on **timing** and the **number of points** you wish to include.



# Natural Imagery

- ❖ Highlights the connection between man and nature
- ❖ When characters behave in an unnatural way, disharmony and disaster inevitably follow
- ❖ Lear behaves in an unnatural and foolish way when he divides his kingdom between Goneril and Regan and banishes his loyal and loving daughter

- ❖ Goneril, Regan and Edmund behave in an unnatural way towards their fathers
- ❖ Focus on the storm scene as it shows just how strong is the connection between man and nature
- ❖ The importance of the natural order is shown at the end of the play in that all of those who flouted the natural order of things are dead
- ❖ Because of their actions, innocent characters are dead or close to death too.
- ❖ Albany and Edgar are left to restore the natural order

# Animal Imagery

- ❖ Highlights the theme of human nature
- ❖ Also highlights theme of evil
- ❖ If we are ruled by animal instincts we lose our basic humanity and we will be subject to / cause dreadful pain and suffering



# Sight and Blindness

- ❖ Highlights theme of judgement

# Clothing and Disguise

- ❖ Power and corruption
- ❖ Appearance and reality