

# KING LEAR – SINGLE TEXT

REVISION SOURCES

APPROACHING THE ESSAY – STRUCTURING  
AN ANSWER – STRUCTURING PARAGRAPHS

KEY SCENE – FINAL

ROLE OF WOMEN IN ‘KING LEAR’

APPROACHING AN ESSAY QUESTION ON  
IMAGERY AND SYMBOLISM / THEMES

AOIFE O’DRISCOLL

[WWW.AOIFESNOTES.COM](http://WWW.AOIFESNOTES.COM)



# SPARK NOTES

## ADVANTAGES

- Free website
- Excellent summary and analysis of each scene
- Brief character sketches
- 'No Fear' modern English version
- Infographic

## DISADVANTAGES

- Character sketches too brief for essay purposes
- 'No Fear' language is rather basic, and the grammar is sometimes inaccurate (see next slide)
- App is available but subscription required

**KENT**

I cannot conceive you.

**GLOUCESTER**

Sir, this young fellow's mother could, whereupon she grew round-womb'd, and had indeed, sir, a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a fault?

**KENT**

I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being so proper.

**GLOUCESTER**

But I have, sir, a son by order of law, some year older than this, who yet is no

**KENT**

I can't conceive of what you mean.

**GLOUCESTER**

You can't conceive? Well, this guy's mother could conceive him all to well. She grew a big belly and had a baby for her crib before she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell something naughty?

**KENT**

Well, I wouldn't want to undo the naughtiness, since the boy turned out so well.

**GLOUCESTER**

But I have a legitimate son a few years older than this one, and I don't love him

# LIT CHARTS

## ADVANTAGES

- Detailed notes on themes and characters
- Summary and analysis of each scene
- 'Shakescleare' modern English version (see next slide)
- App available

## DISADVANTAGES

- Subscription required
- Character sketches based on quotes
- Notes longer and more detailed in places than needed for LC answers

**KENT**

I cannot conceive you.

**GLOUCESTER**

Sir, this young fellow's mother could, whereupon she grew round-wombed, and had indeed, sir, a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a fault?

**KENT**

I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being so proper.

**GLOUCESTER**

But I have, sir, a son by order of law, some year older than this, who yet is no dearer in my account. Though this knave came something saucily to the world before he was sent for, yet was his mother fair, there was good sport at his making, and the whoreson must be acknowledged.— Do you know this noble gentleman, Edmund?

**KENT**

I can't conceive of what you mean by that.

**GLOUCESTER**

Well, sir, this young fellow's mother certainly could conceive—she conceived *him*. She got pregnant and had a son for her crib before she had a husband in her bed. Do you perceive a sin in this?

**KENT**

Well, I can't wish to undo the sin, since its result—your son—turned out so well.

**GLOUCESTER**

I also have a legitimate son, sir, a few years older than this one, though he's not more valuable to me than Edmund. This rascal Edmund may have come into this world somewhat rudely, and before he was meant to, but his mother was beautiful, we had a good time making him, and I must now acknowledge the bastard as my son. [*To EDMUND*] Do you know this noble gentleman, Edmund?

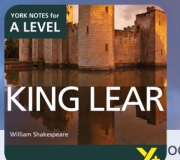
# YORK NOTES

## ADVANTAGES

- Website
- App
- Printable flash cards

## DISADVANTAGES

- Subscription required



A LEVEL STUDY NOTES AND REVISION GUIDES  
**King Lear: A Level York Notes**  
 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

OVERVIEW CONTENTS STUDY **REVISE** MY NOTES

Podcasts Sample Answers Essay Plans Essay Wizard Critical Wheel Key Quotations **Revision Cards**

### Revision Cards

1. Choose a topic

2. Revise the key points

Context

Themes >

Genre, structure and language

Key extracts

### REVISE THE KEY POINTS

PRINT CARDS

Read through the key points, then print the cards as a handy revision aid.

#### 1 Nothingness

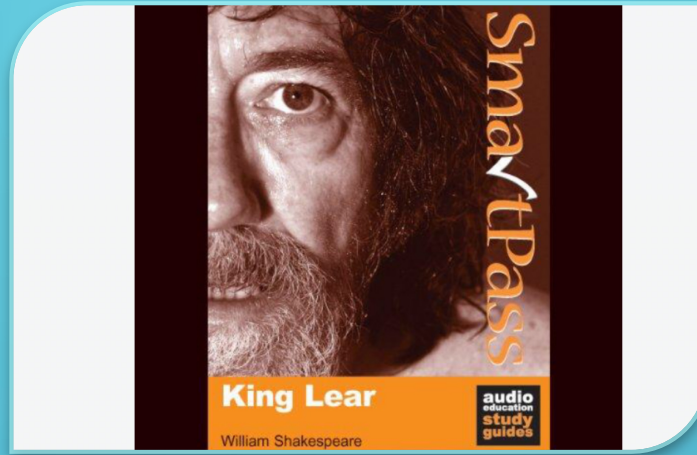
- Lear loses everything: his kingly status, his family, his mind.
- Lear has to come to terms with his own 'nothingness' as a man – instead of seeing himself as 'constructed' king.
- Gloucester is a second figure of authority who is reduced to nothing in order to see more clearly.
- Goneril and Regan's so-called speeches of love are worth nothing.

# OTHER RESOURCES



NATIONAL THEATRE – A SERIES OF SHORT VIDEO CLIPS IN WHICH THE DIRECTOR AND ACTORS TALK ABOUT THE WORLD OF THE PLAY AND THE CHARACTERS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9sjgVW05GM>



SMART PASS AUDIO GUIDE – DRAMATISED – WITH AND WITHOUT COMMENTARY

audible.co.uk – listen for free for 30 days or buy for around 15 euro

Apple audiobooks – 14 euro



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# THE SHAKESPEARE SESSIONS



BBC  
SHAKESPEARE  
SESSIONS

FREE, FULL-LENGTH AUDIO  
DRAMATIZATION OF THE  
PLAY

[HTTPS://WWW.BBC.CO.UK  
/PROGRAMMES/P069JFNW](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p069jfnw)

## OTHER RESOURCES

- Full online text of the play: <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/lear/full.html>

OR annotated version at

[https://shakespeare-navigators.com/king\\_lear/King\\_Lear\\_Act\\_2\\_Scene\\_1.html](https://shakespeare-navigators.com/king_lear/King_Lear_Act_2_Scene_1.html)

Tip: Press Ctrl + F OR Command + F to search within the PDF. Use the arrows to jump to the next instance of the search word or term.

- All speeches for individual characters:

<https://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/views/plays/characters/charlines.php?CharacterID=earlkent&WorkID=kinglear>

Tip: Click on Act and Scene number for full speech

# KEY MOMENTS IN THE PLAY - RSC

## **Lear divides his kingdom (Act 1 Scene 1)**

King Lear announces his intention to divide his kingdom into three and asks which of his daughters loves him most. He banishes Cordelia and splits his land between his other two daughters.

## **Edmund deceives Gloucester (Act 1 Scene 2)**

In parallel to Lear's actions, Gloucester is deceived by his son Edmund and doubts the loyalty of his other son, Edgar.

## **Lear is cast out (Act 2 Scene 2)**

Enraged by his daughters' refusal to allow him to keep 100 knights to attend him, Lear and his Fool depart into the stormy night alone.

## **'Poor Tom' (Act 3 Scene 4)**

Lear, Kent and the Fool meet Edgar, disguised as Poor Tom, on the heath and are persuaded to take secret refuge in Gloucester's home.

## **Gloucester is blinded (Act 3 Scene 5)**

Gloucester is accused of treachery by Goneril and Regan for having sent Lear to Dover to meet Cordelia's army. His eyes are gouged out and he is thrown out of his home unattended. Cornwall is killed by one of his own servants.

# KEY MOMENTS - CONTINUED

## **Cordelia searches for her father (Act 4 Scene 3)**

As they prepare for battle, Cordelia and her army hear news of the mad king and set out to find him.

## **Gloucester and Lear are rescued (Act 4 Scene 5)**

Gloucester, led by Poor Tom, is saved from suicide by his son's trickery. They then meet Lear and are reconciled. Lear is found and helped by Cordelia's troops.

## **Lear and Cordelia are reunited (Act 4 Scene 6)**

The king recovers his wits and is reconciled with Cordelia.

## **Edmund's plot (Act 5 Scene 1)**

Edmund reveals that he has seduced both sisters and that he intends to kill both Lear and Cordelia if his side wins the battle.

## **The tragic ending (Act 5 Scene 3)**

Cordelia's army loses and both she and Lear are sent to prison. Edmund's plotting is exposed, and he is killed by Edgar in a duel. Goneril kills herself after poisoning Regan. Cordelia is hanged on Edmund's instructions. Lear dies of grief when he learns that both Gloucester and the Fool are also dead.



# APPROACHING THE ESSAY

# THE QUESTION

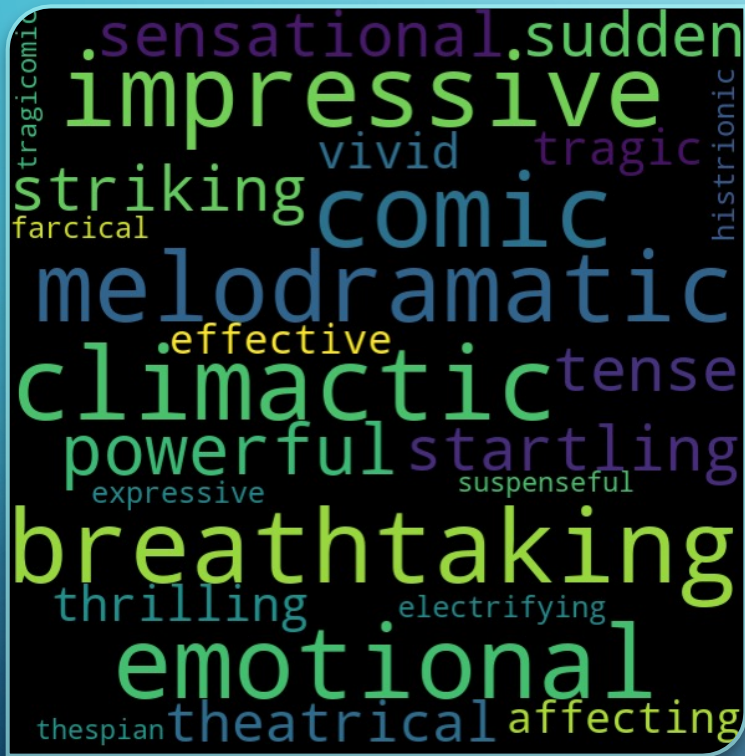
Careful and detailed analysis

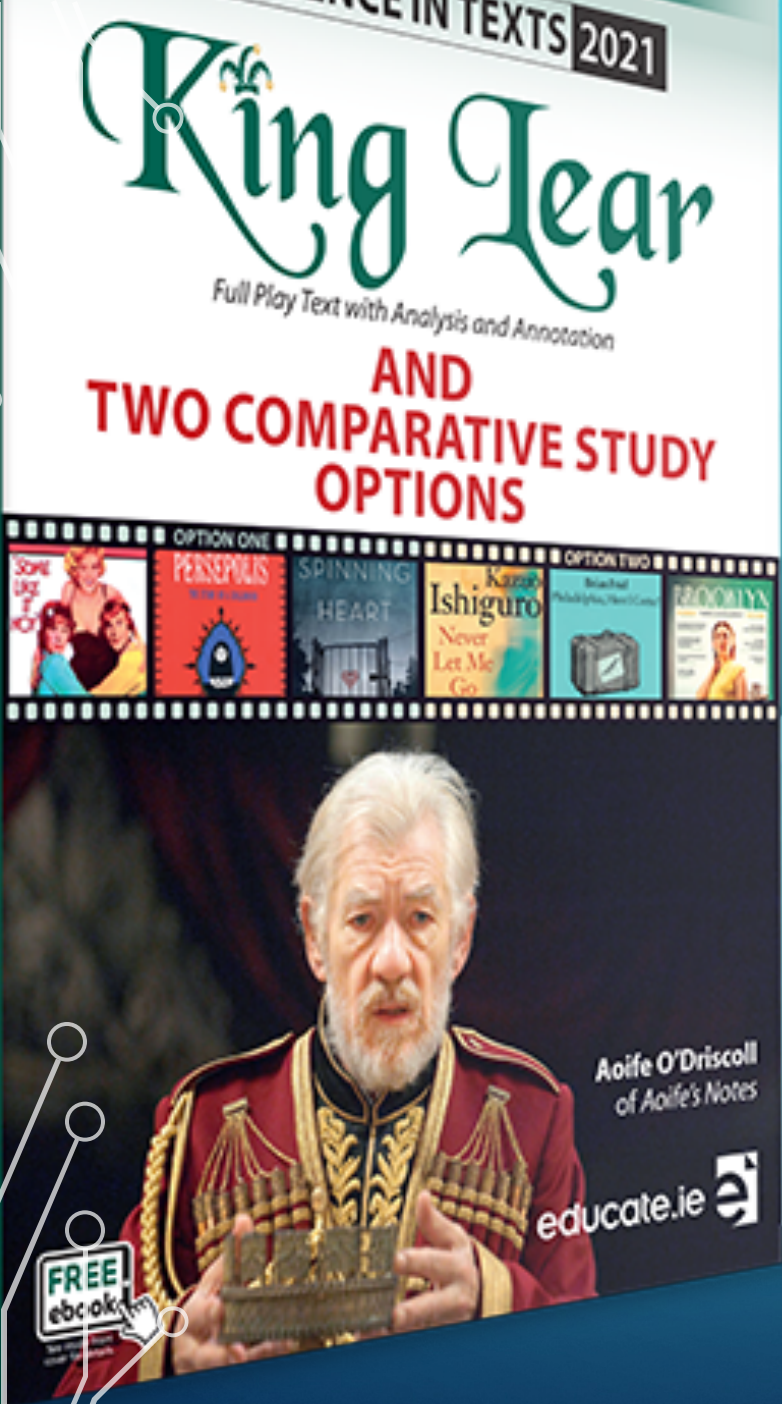
Underline key words

Do not focus on one word only - the name of a character or a theme - as you will never be asked to re-hash your notes.

## TIP

Write down as many **synonyms** as you can for the key words in the title. This avoids repetition in your answer.





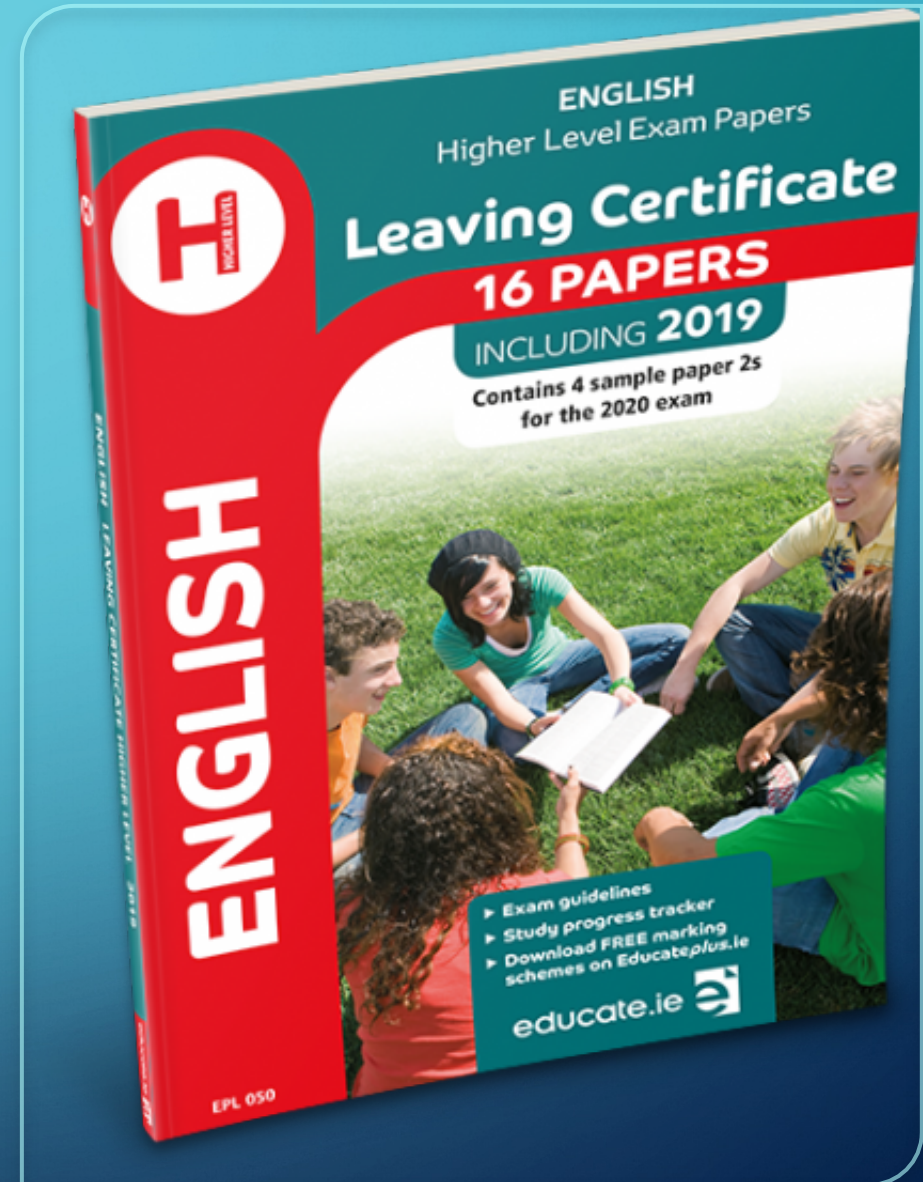
## BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS

- Dramatic techniques and their effect on the audience
- Dramatic techniques / imagery and symbolism and how they convey themes
- Key scenes - effect on audience / what they tell us about the human condition
- Comparing characters' roles



# CODING

- Every *King Lear* answer will be coded by the examiner
- If you can work out the coding and bear it in mind throughout, you will stay focused and gain a higher mark than you would otherwise do.



# CODING - EXAMPLE

'In *King Lear*, honour and loyalty triumph over brutality and viciousness.'

Write your response to this statement, supporting your answer with suitable reference to the text. (2010 SEC)

Code HT +/- for honour/loyalty triumphs

Code BT +/- for brutality/viciousness triumphs



## THE PLAN

- Remember, there are five acts in the play, and it is likely you will be dealing with each, so make sure your plan and essay are balanced.
- You will be focusing on some scenes more than others
- Jot down all your responses to the question
- Read through your points and remove any which you could not code/which do not relate directly to the question
- Arrange your remaining points in order
- Now plan your introduction and conclusion

# COMMON ERRORS



- Not realizing that there are several elements to the question
- Not planning the answer and wandering off the point
- Making contradictory points
- Writing unfocused narrative (telling the story of the play)
- Writing simple character sketches
- Not quoting accurately / not quoting enough
- Not weaving quotes into the fabric of the sentence

# TIMING AND LENGTH STRUCTURE



- You have just under an hour to write your answer
- You should aim to write four or five pages
- Your essay should flow naturally: if it were cut into individual paragraphs, the reader should be able to reassemble them correctly because there should be clear links between paragraphs

# INTRODUCTION

- Your introduction should be **based on your essay plan**
- Tell the examiner **where your essay is going**
- A reader should be able to **reverse-engineer** the introduction to work out what the **question** is; if they can't, you have not addressed the question properly
- Make sure that **everything you raise in your introduction** is dealt with in the **body** of the essay.
- A **short** introduction is fine: you can address the question and give your response to it in a few sentences.



# STRUCTURING EACH PARAGRAPH – THERE IS NO ‘RIGHT’ WAY, BUT THIS IS ONE OPTION



- **Sentence One:** Topic sentence which addresses the question
- **Sentence Two:** Explain your point in a little more depth (this may take more than one sentence)
- **Sentence Three:** Use evidence, including quotations, to support your point
- **Sentence Four:** Comment on the evidence/quote and explain how it proves the point you made in your topic sentence
- **Sentence Five:** Use a link phrase to introduce your second piece of evidence/quotation (see next slide for link phrases) and give your second piece of evidence
- **Sentence Six:** Comment on the evidence etc.

# BODY OF THE ESSAY

- Each paragraph should advance your argument
- The topic sentence in each paragraph should answer the question
- Each paragraph should be linked to those before and after it
- Use link words or phrases to connect your paragraphs: however; it is not only; we can also see; it becomes increasingly clear; as the play progresses...



# EXAMPLES OF LINKS BETWEEN POINTS



*After an exploration of Lear's difficult journey to self-knowledge: Gloucester also suffers terribly for his error, but his fall is not as great as Lear's, nor is there such a dramatic change in his character...*

*After a discussion of the reunion of Gloucester and Edgar: While Lear has also been reunited with the child he wronged and has acquired self-knowledge and compassion, his tragedy is that...*

*Looking at the appeal of the villainous characters: As the play progresses and the division between good and evil becomes more apparent, the villainous characters go from strength to strength...*

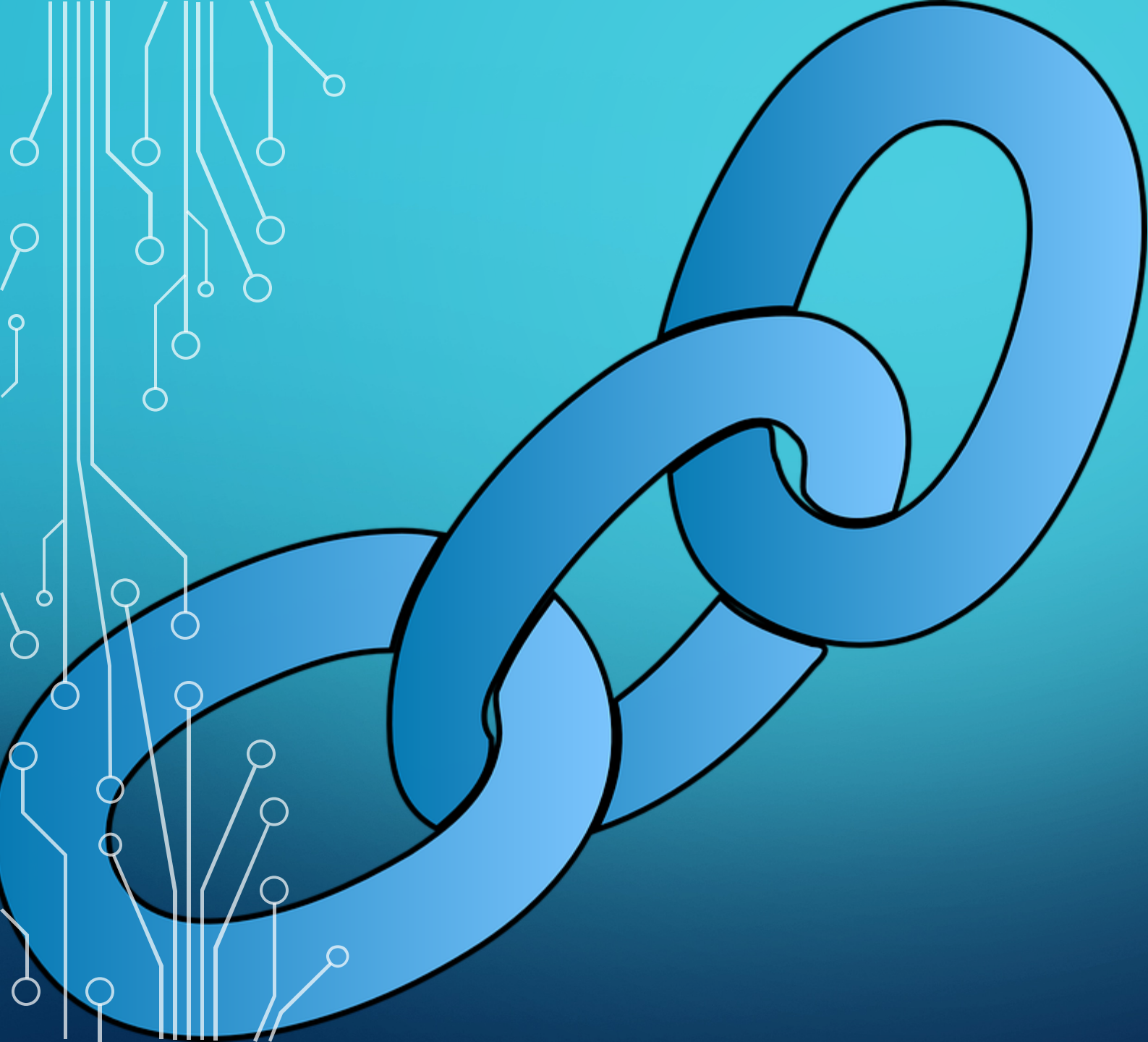
*After a discussion of Goneril and Regan's treatment of Lear: Similarly, Edmund betrays his father's love...*

# REFERENCE AND QUOTATION

**“HAVE MORE  
THAN YOU SHOW,  
SPEAK LESS  
THAN YOU KNOW.”**

- William Shakespeare, King Lear

- It is essential to comment on references and quotation in the context of the question.
- Try to include two or three quotes per paragraph. Don't force it, though! If you feel your point is well-made and well-supported, leave it be.
- Quotes should be short and woven into the fabric of the sentences where possible. You may need to use a quote that is a few lines long if it is particularly relevant, but that is the exception rather than the rule.
- Do not paraphrase the quote.
- Show how your example reinforces the point you are making
- Make sure all quotes are relevant: they should explore characters, themes or technical aspects of the play



## LINK PHRASES TO CONNECT EVIDENCE AND/OR QUOTATION

- This idea is reinforced by/when...
- This is cemented by/when...
- X adds to the sense of...
- This is further driven home by/when...
- This message is even more powerfully expressed by/when...
- We see this same idea...
- In much the same way...
- Furthermore...
- In addition...

# SAMPLE PARAGRAPH ON FASCINATION OF VILLAINOUS CHARACTERS

- From the outset, the devious and manipulative characters fascinate us. *Topic sentence answering question.* Goneril and Regan's behaviour in the love test is entirely motivated by self-interest but we are gripped by their lying and vying to persuade their father of their worth. *Point explained in a little more depth.* Goneril's outrageous flattery in claiming to hold her father dearer than 'eyesight, space and liberty', seems the ultimate praise, but we quickly see that Regan is more than willing to take Goneril on at her own game. *Evidence and quotation to prove the point.* She cements our growing belief that the sisters are merely fawning over their credulous father when she claims Lear is her only source of happiness and professes herself 'an enemy to all other joys'. *Link phrase and second piece of evidence.* The conflict between the pair and their unscrupulous determination to say whatever it takes to get what they want is a large part of what makes this scene so gripping. *Comment on the evidence and link back to the question.*

# ENDING YOUR ESSAY



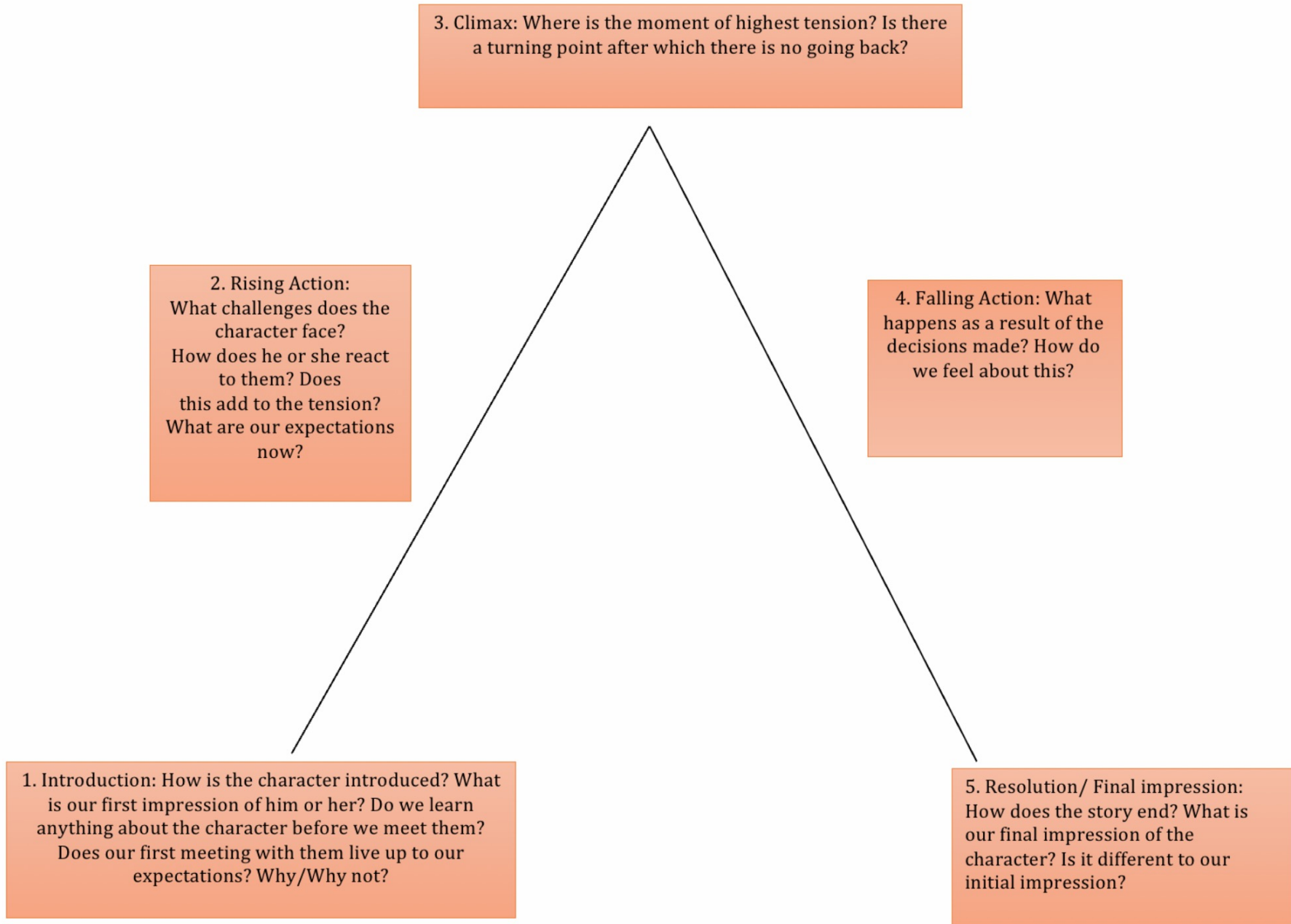
- Summarise your argument
- Restate your thesis
- NEVER bring up a new idea in the conclusion
- If you have an apt quote from or about the play, this is a good time to use it.
- Don't say, 'As I have shown...' Let your essay speak for itself.



# FIVE QUESTIONS

When examining relationships, themes, characters etc. ask yourself FIVE questions. The answers will help you plan your essay. Let's use relationships as an example.

1. How is the relationship **introduced**?
2. Are there **challenges or difficulties** which threaten the relationship?
3. Is there a moment of **crisis** in the relationship?
4. How is the crisis **resolved**?
5. What is our final impression of the **relationship**?





# EXPLORING A DRAMATIC SCENE

ACT 5 SCENE 3



# WHAT MAKES THIS SCENE SO DRAMATIC?

Only 330 lines long  
yet every word and  
action is significant

Highly emotionally  
charged: moves  
between hope,  
despair, sorrow and  
horror

The resolution of the  
plot and the violent  
deaths of so many of  
the characters, both  
good and bad

The callousness of the  
gods

The powerful  
language and  
imagery

“THE SUDDEN REAPING OF A TERRIBLE SOWING.”



- *Henry Norman Hudson, American critic and essayist*

## EFFECT ON THE AUDIENCE

- Act 4 Scene 7 – At this point the play could be assumed to be near an end. Audience may have felt reunion between Lear and Cordelia would lead to a happy ending (it did in Nahum Tate's rewriting of the play and that version lasted from 1681 until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century)
- Shocking to see the deaths of all the royal family
- Hopes are raised and then dashed
- Unbearable tension at times

## LEAR AND CORDELIA - A SHADOW HANGS OVER THEIR JOY

- ‘We are not the first / Who with best meaning, have incurred the worst’ - Cordelia is pragmatic. Her words remind us of martyred saints - she has sacrificed all for love.
- Audience is **moved** by love between Lear and Cordelia, yet **worried** for their safety.
- Edmund’s presence adds to the **sense of threat**: we know he intends to kill them.





## EDMUND

“As for the mercy

Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia,  
The battle done and they within our power,  
Shall never see his pardon.”



## LOVE AND HATRED – GOOD AND EVIL - FEAR

- Lear's joy at being reunited with Cordelia is **deeply moving**. He has at last realised her worth. He mocks the shallowness of court life and politics but does not seem to realise it still has power over him.
- Edmund's order to the captain **dashes any hope** the audience might have. He promises the captain advancement: 'noble fortunes' which reminds us just how ignoble Edmund is. His villainy knows no bounds. Having seen how he treated his father; the audience has good reason to fear that he will be equally treacherous and cruel with Lear and Cordelia.

## LEAR TO CORDELIA



“We too alone will sing like  
birds i’ the cage.”

## NOTE OF HOPE

Albany seems to  
have risen in  
stature

He sees through  
Edmund (he has  
read the letter  
Goneril sent to him)

He orders Edmund  
to hand over Lear  
and Cordelia

Perhaps they will  
be saved?





## ALBANY TO EDMUND

“I hold you but as a subject of this war  
Not as a brother.”

## ALBANY'S WEAKNESS

Unfortunately, Albany is indecisive and does not insist that Edmund obey him.

He allows himself to be distracted by a fight between Goneril and Regan.

There is great tension here: the fight between the sisters is at last coming into the open and Albany must act.



## THE CLOCK IS TICKING...

There is some **black humour** in the way Albany treats his wife's claim that she will marry Edmund

He acts as a broker, telling Regan that Edmund cannot marry her as he is promised to Goneril, his - Albany's - wife and thus he ironically forbids the banns

Through all of this, the **audience is keenly aware of the fact that Lear and Cordelia are in grave danger and every second counts**



## HORROR – GONERIL'S INHUMANITY

- The depths of depravity to which she has sunk are clear here
- She gloats as her sister suffers, knowing that Regan has been poisoned
- Asks Regan, 'Mean you to enjoy [marry] him?' knowing that her sister is dying
- As Regan leaves, crying out that she is sick, Goneril remarks that if Regan is not sick, she - Goneril - will 'ne'er trust medicine' and it is now that the audience realises the full horror of her actions.



## DRAMA – TRIAL BY COMBAT

- Albany turns on Edmund, alluding to his bastardy: 'half-blooded fellow'
- The alliance is ended - all the parties are now at war with one another
- He arrests Edmund and Goneril
- There is mounting excitement and anticipation as the trumpet sounds repeatedly, calling for a champion

# TENSION – GOOD AND EVIL



- The formal challenge and the lengthy exchanges **drag out the action** and reduce the prospect of Lear and Cordelia being saved in time, something of which the audience would have been keenly aware.
- The fight between the brothers is a fight between **good and evil**.

# IS JUSTICE SERVED?



- Justice and order **appear** to be served when Edgar defeats Edmund
- Edgar says, 'The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices / Make instruments to plague us'.
- Even Edmund, who scorned the idea of fate in Act 1, now says that 'The wheel is come full circle'

# TENSION



Goneril's treachery has been exposed and she leaves, clearly suicidal

There is **relief** that the evildoers have been exposed, but what of Lear and Cordelia?

Edgar's long-winded speeches at this stage both serve to **tie up the loose ends** (he tells us about Gloucester's death and Kent's revelation that he has served Lear all along) and **increase the audience's anxiety**: what about Lear and Cordelia?



# HORROR AND RELIEF



- The entrance of a man crying holding a bloody knife is **horrifying**. Who is dead?
- He stops before telling us the name of the person: 'It came even from the heart of - O! She's dead!'
- Audience is **appalled**: can it be Cordelia has been murdered by Edmund's man?
- **Relief** comes, along with a sense that justice has been served, when the man reveals that it is Goneril who is dead, having taken her own life.
- Albany sees her death as fitting, and we agree.

# ALBANY



“This judgment of the heavens,  
that makes us tremble

Touches us not with pity.”

## HORROR AND DESPAIR

Albany finally remembers the 'Great thing of us forgot!' and asks Edmund to tell him where Lear and Cordelia are.

Edmund's repentance is too late.

He admits that Cordelia's death has been planned

Albany calls for the gods to defend Cordelia, but we immediately learn that this has not happened.





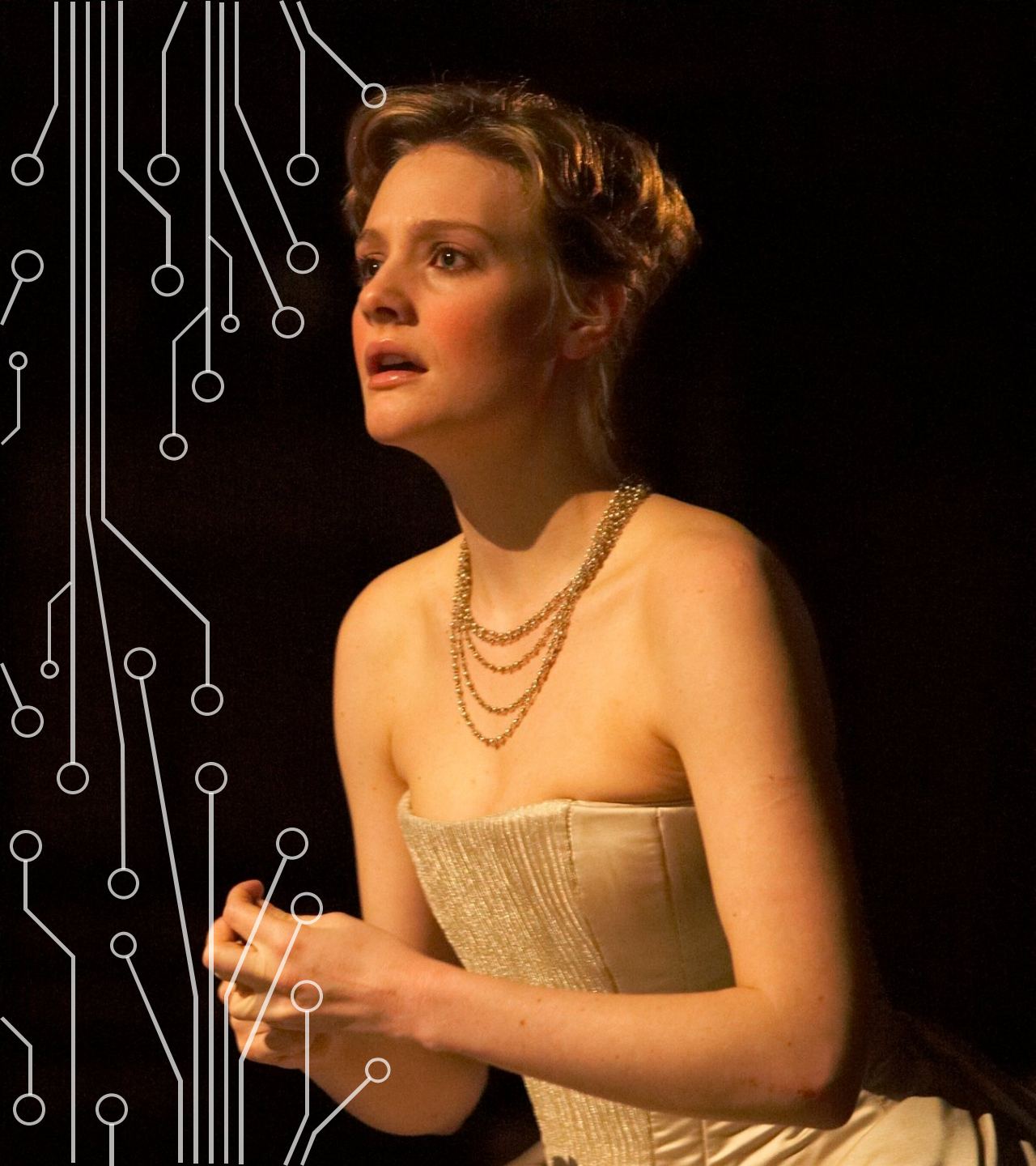
## LEAR'S AGONY

- Lear **suffers greatly** and is brought as low as he could possibly be.
- His **anguish** is clear and his repetition of 'Howl, howl, howl, howl!' reminds us of his words of rage and grief when he wandered through the storm.
- There is **no hope** that Cordelia might be alive: Lear calls for a mirror to see if she is breathing. His **heartbreak** is such that he tries to convince himself the feather at her lips is stirred by her breath

# DEATH OF LEAR AND THE DEATH OF HOPE



- Lear's despair and subsequent death make the restoration of order seem **irrelevant and cheerless**
- Kent tells Edgar not to try to revive Lear as the world is too painful for him. Images of torture are used when Kent talks about 'the rack', reminding us of the extent of Lear's suffering.



# WOMEN IN 'KING LEAR'

AOIFE O'DRISCOLL



## CONSIDER

ARE THE WOMEN IN THE  
PLAY MERELY STEREOTYPES?

# ROLE OF WOMEN IN SHAKESPEAREAN ENGLAND

Social status of women  
had declined

Women were viewed as  
sinful, weak and  
incapable of reasoning

Man was perfect as he  
was made in God's image

Women were responsible  
for the fall of man

Duty was to be obedient  
to God and her  
husband/father

Could disobey a husband  
if he was behaving very  
badly, but only in order to  
save him and set him once  
again on the path of  
virtue





## CORDELIA, GONERIL AND REGAN ALL RESEMBLE LEAR

- Strength of character
- Cordelia - Lear's courage, stubbornness and dignified pride
- Goneril and Regan - Lear's arrogance, pride and quick temper



## CORDELIA


Cordelia grows in moral strength but becomes less of a real person and more of a stereotypical martyred saint

In Act 4, Cordelia says to her sleeping father, 'O dear father, / It is thy business that I go about', in an echo of Jesus' 'I must be about my father's business'. She is seen as someone concerned with greater things than human affairs.

Act 4 Scene 3: News of Lear's predicament causes Cordelia to shake 'The holy water from her heavenly eyes'.

Although 'King Lear' is not a Christian play, Cordelia's role is that of the female saint


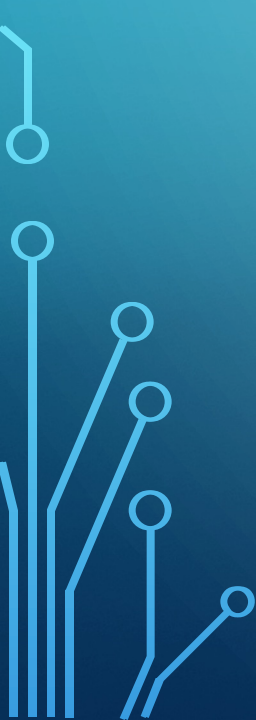
Has she true moral strength or is she merely a stereotype?



There is another hint of saintly martyrdom in her words to Lear in Act 5:  
'We are not the first /  
Who with best meaning  
have incurred the worst.'



She likens herself and Lear to others who have been marginalised and prosecuted



She was strong-willed and independent at the start of the play but has now become more of a stereotypical obedient, dutiful, saintly woman.



## CORDELIA BECOMES THE PERFECT WOMAN

- Lear's praise of his dead daughter: 'Her voice was ever soft, / Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman'.
- This is not how Cordelia could have been described in Act 1 Scene 1



HOW IS OUR UNDERSTANDING OF  
THEMES AND/OR CHARACTERS  
DEVELOPED THROUGH  
SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF  
LANGUAGE, INCLUDING IMAGERY?

# APPROACHING THIS TYPE OF QUESTION

- Ask yourself how the themes and characters are presented through the various aspects of language, imagery and symbolism.
- You will need to plan carefully!



# ORGANISING YOUR ESSAY

THERE ARE TWO OBVIOUS  
WAYS TO APPROACH THIS  
ESSAY.

1. GO THROUGH VARIOUS  
THEMES/CHARACTERS AND SAY  
HOW LANGUAGE AND  
IMAGERY HELP TO PRESENT  
THEM TO THE AUDIENCE

2. GO THROUGH VARIOUS  
ASPECTS OF IMAGERY -AND  
SAY WHAT THEY TELL US ABOUT  
THEMES / CHARACTERS.

NOTE: LANGUAGE USUALLY  
INCLUDES IMAGERY



# ESSAY LENGTH

You should be aiming to write four to six pages. This is a rough guide! Make your own judgement call based on **timing** and the **number of points** you wish to include.





## ACT 1 SCENE 1 – THE LOVE TEST

- Lear believes love can be quantified.
- Goneril and Regan's responses also quantify love but Lear does not see this.
- Cordelia may be playing Lear at his own game; she too quantifies love.
- Cordelia's honest, straightforward language shows how ridiculous the love test is.

# LANGUAGE AND CHARACTERS – LOVE TEST

## GONERIL

Her words **quantify** love but are **absurd**.

‘I love you **more than** words can wield the matter, **Dearer than** eye-sight, space and liberty,

**Beyond what** can be valued rich or rare’

## REGAN

Raises the stakes. Even more **ridiculously flattering** than Goneril

‘I am made of that **self-same metal as my sister**, and **prize me at her worth**’

Only that she comes **too short**: that I profess

Myself **an enemy to all other joys**’

## CORDELIA

Shows how ridiculous the test is / **Scornful** tone when talking about her sisters / **Quantifying** language / **Simple and straightforward**

Cordelia represents true love; she is **honest** ‘I love your majesty

According to my bond; **no more nor less.**’

‘Why have my sisters husbands, if they say They love you **all?**’

‘That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry

**Half my love** with him, **half my care and duty.**’



## LEAR'S LANGUAGE – LOVE TEST

- Lear is initially **good-humoured and in control**. His language is **formal and kingly**:  
‘Which of you shall we say doth love us most?  
/That we our largest bounty may extend /  
Where nature doth with merit challenge?’
- Lear’s **anger, heartbreak and disbelief** when Cordelia refuses to engage with the nonsensical love test reflects his changed mood. In a powerful metaphor which shows his **self-importance**, Lear warns Kent not to come between ‘the dragon and his wrath’.

# ACT 2 SCENE 4 – LANGUAGE REFLECTS QUANTIFYING LANGUAGE IN LOVE SCENE – SHOWS GONERIL AND REGAN'S FALSENESS AND CRUELTY

Lear has left  
Goneril's house and  
gone Gloucester's  
castle, where Regan  
is.

He is horrified to see  
Goneril arrive.

Goneril and Regan  
engage in a cruel  
parody of the love  
test.

They compete now to  
see who can allow  
Lear the fewest  
followers.

Lear quantified love,  
now his daughters  
show him the true  
measure of their  
'love'.

Distraught, Lear  
rushes out into the  
storm.

	Quotes	Exploration
<b>Regan</b>	<p>'What, fifty followers? Is it not well? What should you need of more?'</p> <p>'I entreat you To bring but five and twenty.'</p> <p>'No more with me.'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Deliberately cruel</li> <li>✓ Forcing Lear to accept humiliation or leave</li> </ul>
<b>Lear</b>	<p>'I'll go with thee. Thy fifty yet doth double five-and-twenty, And thou art twice her love.'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Lear still quantifies love</li> </ul>
<b>Goneril</b>	<p>'What need you five-and-twenty, ten or five'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Deliberately cruel</li> <li>✓ Lear has just linked the number of knights to the amount of love his daughters have for him. Goneril reduces it</li> </ul>
<b>Regan</b>	<p>'What need one?'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Reinforces the deliberate cruelty</li> </ul>



## LEAR'S DETERIORATION

- Lear's **helplessness and obvious suffering** is reflected in his language. In Act 2 Scene 4, he begs, curses and rails against Goneril and Regan but can do nothing. Nowhere is this clearer than in his rather **pathetic claim** that he will unleash 'the terrors of the earth' in revenge for their betrayal.
- Lear's **disjointed speech patterns** reflect his distress and confusion, evoking pity in the audience.
- 'I will have such revenges on you both / That all the world shall – I will do such things - / What they are yet I know not'.
- As the play progresses, Lear's rage and madness increase. In the storm scene - Act 3 Scene 2 – Lear's **powerful exhortations** show both his fury and his impotence as he calls on nature to destroy the world: 'Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage! Blow' ... 'Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! Spout, rain!'
- Lear's final entrance in the play is one of the most heart-breaking moments in theatre. As he carries Cordelia's body, he cries in agony, 'How! How! How! How!'

# 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



CLOTHING  
AND  
DISGUISE

Power and corruption

Appearance and  
reality



# SIGHT AND BLINDNESS

HIGHLIGHTS THE THEME OF JUDGEMENT