

TEACHER PACK

KING LEAR

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ABOUT THIS PACK

This pack supports the RSC's 2016 production of *King Lear*, directed by RSC Artistic Director Gregory Doran. The production opened on 17 August 2016 at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon.

The activities provided are specifically designed to support KS3-4 students attending the performance and studying *King Lear* in school.

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These symbols are used throughout the pack:



READ

Notes from the production, background info or extracts



ACTIVITY

A practical or open space activity



WRITE

A classroom writing or discussion activity



LINKS

Useful web addresses and research tasks

About the Production

The 2016 production of *King Lear*, directed by Gregory Doran, responds very much to the idea of how this play relates to us 'now'. Originally written by Shakespeare just after James I's failed attempts to unify England and Scotland in 1606, the play was extremely current and this production aimed to replicate that. In the wake of the EU referendum the concept of a Kingdom divided and the fall out of those divisions for those who once held power felt just as strong as it would have done for Shakespeare.

Designed by Niki Turner, the stage contains a box across the back which fills with smoke or fog and becomes slowly more hazy in the second half of the play as Lear loses increasingly more control. This sense of both personal and political turmoil influenced the production very heavily, with Antony Sher who plays King Lear talking about the fear of losing your mind being the greatest fear about growing old. After Lear hands over control to his daughters in the first scene, we see him lose increasingly more throughout, something which is reflected in his grip on reality and language and which the set here emphasises.

EXPLORING THE STORY

NOTES FROM THE REHEARSAL ROOM

During the first stages of rehearsal Gregory Doran spent time exploring the text with the acting company, looking at the meaning in the text and talking about its relevance for audiences today. He was very keen to respond to the play now and as a starting point the company explored what it had meant to other people throughout history, looking at what had come before to help deal with the new. One of the things the company did in response to this was to look at Nahum Tate's alternative ending for *King Lear* which was performed for 150 years throughout the Renaissance period and created their own version of it. Looking at this 'happy ending' allowed the acting company to talk through why *King Lear* resolves the way it does and to discuss what the resolution means now.



SYNOPSIS

A full synopsis of the play is available at:

<https://www.rsc.org.uk/king-lear/the-plot>



ACTIVITY 1: THE STORY IN SCENES

The following activity will introduce students to the play and ensure that the whole group is familiar with the story. It is also an opportunity to introduce some of the key questions that will be explored in more depth in later activities.

- Divide students into small groups.
- Using the 'Story in Scenes' Resource in this pack, assign one or two scenes to each group.
 - To mirror Nahum Tate's ending to the play, ask one or two groups to think about creating a happy ending for the play in which Cordelia does not die, marries Edgar and Lear gives her the crown.
- Ask each group to create a tableau or freeze frame for each of their scenes.
- Invite each group to then develop their tableaux by adding in 30 seconds of movement. As part of their movement, encourage them to use the extracts from the text they have been given and show what happens in their scene.
 - Encourage them to narrate their scene, using the descriptions they have been given to make the story clear. This could be done by one student or by several different students in the group.
- Allow each group the time to perform their scenes, watching them in the correct order so that students can see the whole play.
- Ask the groups with the alternative endings to play that scene last, encouraging students to think about why people preferred this ending for 150 years. Explain that the company did exactly this, performing the alternative ending so that they could compare the two.



Antony Sher as King Lear and Graham Turner as the Fool in *King Lear*. Photo by Ellie Kurtz.

WAYS TO EXTEND THIS WORK

- Look at any comic moments in the story overview and discuss with students what they think this lends to the play. Why does Shakespeare include this?

- Discuss the different ending with students. Do they prefer it? What is so uncomfortable about the ending Shakespeare wrote? Why might people want an alternative? Which is more appropriate for a modern audience and why?

One of the other views Gregory Doran brought into the rehearsal room was that of George Bernard Shaw who said 'no man could ever write a better tragedy'. Ask students to think about this statement. How true do they think that is? What makes this play so effective as a tragedy?

DIVIDING A KINGDOM

In the opening scenes of *King Lear* we witness the King dividing his kingdom and separating it. Following the 2016 UK referendum, in which the country voted to leave the European Union, Gregory Doran was keen to explore the relevance of this in the text.



ACTIVITY 2: HOW MUCH DO YOU LOVE ME?

Played in the 2016 production by Sir Antony Sher, *King Lear* is a central figure in the play. His decision to divide his kingdom between his children and hand over his power results in his loss of authority, as he struggles and tries to retain control of himself. This move from total power to becoming 'ordinary' seems to change Lear and age him.

- Organise students into a line on one side of the room, facing the opposite wall.
- Ask one volunteer to play King Lear and to stand by the opposite wall, with their back to the others.
- Explain to the students lined up that they need to creep up on King Lear without him noticing, but if he turns round they can't be caught moving. If they are caught moving Lear should ask them 'How much do you love me?'. If they give an answer that makes him happy King Lear can agree to keep them in the game, but if their answer isn't good enough they will need to go back to the start. Some students will know this game as 'Grandmother's Footsteps'.
- After playing, reflect with the student playing King Lear on what sort of answers they wanted to hear, or caused them to let people stay in the game. Were they promises? Were they extravagant answers?
- Share with students the responses that Lear's three daughters give to this question and ask them to think about which answers the King might want to hear most.
- Reflect with students on what they think of this King. What sort of man would ask his daughters that question? What kind of relationship do they think he has with them? What does he think love is? What is love and what is duty?



Antony Sher as King Lear, Nia Gwynne as Goneril, Natalie Simpson as Cordelia and Kelly Williams as Regan in *King Lear*. Photo by Ellie Kurtz.

NOTES FROM THE REHEARSAL ROOM

When looking at the opening scene Gregory Doran explored the idea that it felt like it should be Cordelia's betrothal ceremony and that Lear hijacks the ceremony where his daughter will choose France or Burgundy. In discussion, it didn't feel like anyone but Lear himself knew why he'd gathered all those people. This impacted on design and costume, with Cordelia appearing dressed in white throughout the play and everyone else but the fool dressed in black and gold. When Lear enters he is on a moving throne, surrounded by knights and the imagery reflects a lot of the sun and eclipse imagery in the text.

- Provide students with copies of the images below which all show Lear's entrance and the sights of the opening scene in the play.
- Ask students to pick out any evidence they can see in the design and imagery used that shows:
 - King Lear's authority and status
 - Cordelia's difference from her sisters

Discuss with students whether this setting changes or supports the view they had of King Lear after discussing his relationship with Regan, Goneril and Cordelia.

- Challenge students to create their own set design for the opening scene. Ask them to think about how they show:
 - King Lear's authority and status
 - Cordelia's difference from her sisters



The Company of *King Lear*. Photos by Ellie Kurtz.

LEAR THE KING

NOTES FROM THE REHEARSAL ROOM

The imagery at the start of the production is incredibly strong and definite but by the end of the it has become much more hazy, through use of the box on stage with fog inside it. The company discussed how this related to Lear and the kingdom itself, as boundaries and ideas become less clear and distinct and Lear's own mind more clouded and uncertain.



ACTIVITY 4: CONTROL AND FEAR (LEAR SPEECHES)

The way Lear speaks and communicates changes throughout the play and the company spent a lot of time looking at the shifts in his language as clues to his state of mind. In the following activity, students will be able to explore how his language changes between Act 2 and 3, looking at his control.

- Organise students into groups of three or four and provide each of them with the extracts from Lear's speeches in Act 2 Scene 2 and Act 3 Scene 2.
- Ask students to focus on the Act 2 speech first, and to work backwards through the speech – looking at the last line first. Looking at the speech one line at a time ask the groups to question how Lear has reached this point.
 - For example, the first line they explore will be 'O fool, I shall go mad!' With this line, they will need to ask what would drive him to make this statement. The fool is there, for him to talk to, but what might make him exclaim like this in public? After discussing it, they can then look at the thought before this to see if it does what they think it will.
- Explain to students that this idea, of working backwards through a speech, was used by Head of Voice at the RSC Kate Godfrey who worked with the company on this production. Sometime tracking a thought backwards can help you to understand where it comes from. Where do students think Lear's thought comes from here?
- Arrange students into pairs and ask each pair to create an image, using their bodies, for each line of the speech.
- Allow students to present back their images, still working through the speech backwards. As each image is revealed, reflect with students on how that image could or might connect to the one before it and how one thought might lead to another. Is this a character who is in control? Do the thoughts feel connected?
- Discuss with students what kind of images they see in this speech. Are they all similar or connected? What does it reveal about his character that so much natural imagery is used and so many commands?
- Provide students with a copy of the speech from Act 3 and ask them to read it out loud while standing in the space. Each time they feel that he is commanding someone or something ask them to stamp their foot.
- Ask students to read the speech again, this time walking around the space. Ask them to change the direction they are walking in each time they reach a punctuation mark.
- Reflect with students on what these two exercises taught them about how Lear is feeling. Is this a well paced speech? How much authority does he have in this speech and does that authority feel genuine?
- Invite students to compare this speech with the one from the previous Act. What is Lear talking about here?
- Reflect with students on what this change shows about leaders in the face of change and loss of power.



...er as
the Fool in King Lear. Photo by Eline Kartz.



ACTIVITY 5: LEAR AND THE FOOL

The relationship between Lear and the Fool is arguably one of the most complex in the play, something with the acting company really explored throughout rehearsal using music to help the Fool communicate. Students will be able to explore this in the following activity.

- Arrange students into pairs and provide them with a copy of Act 1 Scene 5.
- Ask each pair to think about the line Lear says, "I did her wrong". Who do they think Lear is talking about here?
- Invite the pairs to create a still image or freeze frame which shows what is in Lear's head when he says this line.

- Allow each pair the chance to show the rest of the group their still image. Discuss with students as they watch what they have seen, and what interpretive choices have been made.
- Ask the pairs to go through the scene again and pick out everything that Lear says and write it out as if it is a single speech. Who says most in the scene, Lear or The Fool? Next, ask them to edit out anything that is said in answer to The Fool. What does this reveal about Lear's state of mind in this scene?
- Encourage students to think about what they think the two characters might be doing during this scene. Are they waiting for their horses so they can leave Goneril's house? Any other ideas? What could they be doing?
- Invite each pair to perform the scene, using just their edited version of the script and only Lear's lines. Reflect with them as a group on how it felt to perform it that way, with only Lear speaking. How did the person playing the Fool feel? Left out? Sympathetic? Frustrated?
- Invite students to stand in a circle and explain that they will be looking at the scene as a whole together. Ask all the students who played King Lear to read his lines together in unison and those who played the Fool to read his lines in unison.
- Reflect with the group on which lines they think Lear says directly to the Fool, and which he says to the audience.
 - Lear also has several short or one syllable lines, where the Fool says a lot. What effect does this have on the pace of the scene? Ask them why they think Shakespeare chose to have this scene as a conversation between the Fool and Lear rather than Lear speaking directly to the audience. What do they think the role of the Fool is?

DECEPTION AND DISGUISE

Disguise is a really important theme in King Lear. Ask students to think about all the characters they remember who, in some way, pretend to be someone or something they are not in the play. Who are the most genuine characters and why?

A lot of the design choices in the production reflect this theme and characters like Kent and Edgar change their appearances drastically during the play to persuade the world around them they are someone different.

NOTES FROM THE REHEARSAL ROOM

One of the features of Niki Turner's set design for the 2016 production is a large Perspex box in the centre of the stage. This box is treated like an executioner's chair by other characters in the second half of the play, something they recognise as being like a hangman's noose. The moment in which Gloucester's eyes are gouged out is staged in this box, with the audience able to see into it. Niki and Greg wanted to use this to play on the idea that people are often transfixed by death or the prospect of violence and unable to look away.



ACTIVITY 6: GLOUCESTER LOSES HIS EYES

The scene in which Gloucester loses his eyes and has them gouged out is one of the most dramatic in the entire play. In

WAYS TO EXTEND THIS WORK

- Thinking about the choices in the production you might want to allow students to experiment with playing this scene in a roped off area, on public display.
- Encourage other students to keep the role of servants, reacting to the space where the punishment will happen.
- Reflect on how this impacts on the way Gloucester feels and how the other characters might behave in this scene. Does this change the significance of Gloucester losing his eyes?

the following activity students will consider how this scene might be staged.

- Ask students to take on the role of servants and to move around the room.
- Explain that in the production, the servants on stage before Gloucester's eyes are gouged out in the box have to react to the box.
- Encourage students to continue moving but select one object in the room and ask them to react to it in different ways:
 - As if they have never seen it before
 - As if they know what it is and it's a bad thing
 - As if they know what it is and it's a good thing

You might want to develop this by being specific about what the object is – is it a counter where free cake is offered or a plinth that people are executed for touching.

- Reflect with students how this impacted on their movement and how they responded. Did they react as a group; how did they respond? How do they think it might change the dynamic in this scene in the play if all the characters on stage know the box is an execution room?



James Clyde as Duke of Cornwall and David Troughton as Earl of Gloucester in *King Lear*. Photo by Ellie Kurtz.



ACTIVITY 7: EDMUND AND EDGAR

In both Lear's storyline and Gloucester's storyline, an old man gets it wrong and misjudges the younger generation – choosing to trust the wrong people. Shakespeare draws a natural comparison between the two men as well as between the sets of siblings.

In the following activity students will have the chance to explore the backstory of Edgar and Edmund, looking at how the two brothers compare.

- Explain to students that Gloucester has a very different attitude to each of his sons. He says that he has 'blushed to acknowledge' Edmund. Ask students to think about this phrase. What do they think that means? What sort of things might a father blush to acknowledge about his son these days?
- Discuss with students how the acting company spend time thinking about the relationships between characters and discussing the meaning behind comments like this one, which hint at what life might have been like for Gloucester's sons growing up.
- Provide students with the text extracts from the Resource Materials or with full copies of the text if they are already familiar with the play.
- Organise students into groups of five or six and ask them to create the following four still images, or freeze frames, using evidence from the text to help them consider what life might have been like for Edgar and Edmund at each stage.
 - The brothers as toddlers
 - What are they doing and are they different? Are their parents in the picture?
 - The brothers at primary school age
 - What sort of lessons are they good at? Who else is in the picture? What's their relationship with their teachers?
 - The brothers as teenagers
 - Edmund is sent away to train as a gentleman for nine years so they are apart. Who is influencing them both at this time? What is their relationship with their Father like?



Paapa Essiedu as Edmund in *King Lear*. Photo by Ellie Kurtz.

- The brothers as adults
 - Edmund has returned. Why has Edmund returned? What do they think of each other? What sort of relationship do they have with their Father now?
 - Encourage students to name each of their still images, giving it a caption. These might come from the text or might narrate the circumstances in the image.
 - Invite each group to practice performing their four still images, with the captions they've created, finding a way of moving from one image to the next.
 - Allow each group time to perform their image sequence to the rest of the group.
 - Discuss with students what choices were made about these characters and how their relationship has changes and evolved. Reflect on how they think each of them would be feeling towards the other at the start of the play.
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- Discuss with students why they think Edmund's storyline is included. Is he a device to bring about the deaths of Goneril and Regan at the close of the play, or is Shakespeare trying to say something different by including him?

NOTES FROM THE REHEARSAL ROOM

There are lots of disguises and deceptions in the play, not least Edgar's three different personas. Kate Godfrey, RSC Head of Artist Development, worked with Oliver Johnstone who plays Eggar to perfect three different voices for these characters – including Poor Tom.



ACTIVITY 8: DOVER CLIFF

One of Edgar's greatest deceptions in the play is arguably when he pretends to lead his Father to his death, and allows him to throw himself off the edge of an imagined cliff. In the following activity, students will consider how this scene might be staged.

- Arrange students into pairs and ask one of them to play Gloucester and wear a blindfold or close their eyes, imagining they are now blind.
- Invite the students who are not wearing blindfolds to guide their pair around the room without touching them, using only their voice and spoken commands.
- Reflect with students on how easy it was for the Gloucesters to do this. What kind of qualities do you need to know the other person has in order to trust them? Why does Gloucester trust Poor Tom?
- Organise students into groups of four and provide each of them with an edited copy of the text from the Resource Materials. Ask them to create their own performance of it, thinking about the choices they make for:



Oliver Johnstone as Edgar/Poor Tom and David Troughton as Earl of Gloucester in *King Lear*. Photo by Ellie Kurtz.

- Edgar's voice: in the current production he uses a different voice to play Poor Tom and lead his Father. What kind of voice works best? How can you make it clear to the audience this is a deception and also when it breaks, if it breaks?
- Gloucester's Fall: in the current production he falls backwards rather than forwards off the cliff. How will they stage that moment? What difference does it make to an audience? What kind of response would they want?

THE STATE OF A NATION

At The end of the play King Lear has lost everything and dividing his kingdom, handing over control and refusing to listen to Cordelia leads to the destruction of his entire family.

This play was described by Cicely Berry, Head of Voice and Text at the RSC for many years, as a 'marxist' play.

- Discuss with students whether or not they think this is accurate. Would they consider it to be a 'marxist' play? What are the key political messages that Shakespeare seems to be sending? What lessons do they think this play might offer for us today?
 - Gregory Doran and the company looked specifically at Lear and Gloucester's realisations about the 'poor naked wretches', where they talk about redistributing wealth so that 'each man' has enough. You might want to look specifically at these moments with students in talking about the play's 'marxist' message. What do these scenes suggest a leader should do?
- Invite students to think about how they might describe the play in one line. Is there a way of condensing King Lear into a slogan or single message? Do they think that message is relevant for now, as Gregory Doran discussed in rehearsal? What is relevant about that message for us today?

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RESOURCES

The story in Scenes

1. King Lear, old King of Britain, decides it is time to retire from his throne. He calls all his court together and then calls his three daughters:

Lear: *Goneril, our eldest born; Regan our dearest and Cordelia, I loved her most.*

2. Lear asks his daughters:

Lear: *Which of you, shall we say doth love us most?*

And calls on Goneril, the eldest, to speak first.

Goneril: *Sir I love you more than word can wield the matter*

Lear is delighted and traces a third of his kingdom on the map to give to Goneril. He calls on Regan, the middle sister to speak next.

Regan: *I am made of that self metal as my sister*

Lear is again delighted and traces a second third of his kingdom on the map to give to Regan.

3. But when it is Cordelia's turn, she refuses to make a public declaration of love and says:

Cordelia: *Nothing my lord*

Lear: *Nothing will come of nothing*

Lear gives her third of the kingdom to Goneril and Regan and Cordelia is sent away penniless, but the King of France steps forward and agrees to marry her.

King of France: *She is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France.*

4. The Earl of Kent, a soldier, friend and supporter of the King is banished by Lear for daring to defend Cordelia.

Lear: *Five days we do allot thee for provision and on the sixth to turn thy hated back upon our Kingdom*

5. The Duke of Gloucester, a loyal supporter of Lear has two sons: Edgar 'Legitimate' and Edmund 'Bastard'. Edmund wants his father's lands.

Edmund: *Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit.*

So Edmund persuades Gloucester that Edgar is plotting to kill him. Gloucester believes Edmund and is very angry at Edgar's betrayal.

Gloucester: *Abhorred villain, unnatural, detested, brutish villain – worse than brutish!*

Then Edmund goes to Edgar and warns him to run away. Confused, but trusting his brother, Edgar runs off and disguises himself as a beggar, Poor Tom, to escape his father's anger

Edgar: *Poor Turlygod! Poor Tom*

6. On retiring from his throne, Lear set the condition that he would stay with each of his daughters in turn. But it won't just be him, his Fool and his 100 knights will be staying with him too. They stay at Goneril's house first. Goneril is not happy with these '**riotous**' knights in her house.

Goneril: Men so disordered, so deboshed and bold.

She asks Lear to send some of the knights away. Lear is horrified at the idea of losing his friends and supporters and curses Goneril:

Lear: Degenerate bastard! Into her womb convey sterility.

He decides to go and stay with Regan instead, muttering:

Lear: How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child.

7. Despite being banished, Kent returns to Lear's side, disguised as '**a very honest hearted fellow**' called Caius. Lear sends him with a letter to Regan, but Regan will not see him and instead takes a letter from Goneril's messenger, Oswald.

Regan and her husband Cornwall, decide to visit Gloucester so that they will not be at home for Lear's arrival. Kent follows them. When they all arrive at Gloucester's house, Kent argues with Oswald

Kent: Thou whoreson zed! Thou unnecessary letter!

And is punished for it.

Cornwall: Fetch forth the stocks!

Regan: Put in his legs.

8. Lear and his Fool catch up with Regan at Gloucester's house - and then Goneril arrives too. Lear is very upset to see his servant, Caius (the disguised Kent) in the stocks.

Lear: What's he that hath thy place so much mistook to set thee here?

Kent is eventually released and Regan says that Lear can stay with her but only if he sends away most of his knights:

Regan: If you will come to me. I entreat you to bring but five and twenty.

Lear turns to Goneril, hoping to go back to her with fifty knights but she says:

Goneril: What need you five and twenty, ten or five?

Regan: What need you one?

9. Lear is shocked to find Goneril and Regan joining forces against him. In a rage he goes out into the stormy night, followed by his Fool and by Kent. Lear dares the storm to do its worst:

Lear: Blow, winds and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow! Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! Spout, rain!

Goneril and Regan let him go and return to the shelter and warmth of Gloucester's house.

Cornwall: Shut up your doors my lord; 'tis a wild night.

10. Frightened that the King has gone mad, Kent leads Lear and the Fool to find shelter from the storm in a dirty, dark hovel where they meet Edgar, hiding from his father, disguised as a mad beggar, Poor Tom.

Edgar: The foul fiend follows me! Tom's a-cold!

In talking to his Fool and Poor Tom, Lear thinks about all the poor people in his kingdom

**Lear: Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm.**

11. Gloucester searches out the king, gives him food and shelter and sends him to Dover to meet up with Cordelia, who is newly returned from France. But Gloucester's bastard son, Edmund betrays him and tells Regan and Cornwall that Gloucester has helped the king.

Cornwall: Go seek the traitor, Gloucester! Pinion him like a thief; bring him before us.

Regan and Cornwall pluck out one of Gloucester's eyes as punishment. A servant tries to stop them and wounds Cornwall before being killed by Regan. Then Cornwall plucks out Gloucester's remaining eye.

Cornwall: Out vile jelly!

Regan: Go thrust him out at gates and let him smell his way to Dover.

Cornwall dies of his wounds.

12. Gloucester is now blind and knows that it was Edmund who betrayed him and that Edgar is innocent. He meets, but does not recognize his legitimate son, Edgar who is still disguised as the mad beggar, Poor Tom. Edgar leads Gloucester to Dover where Cordelia has landed with an army from France.

Gloucester: 'Tis the times plague when madmen lead the blind.

Gloucester feels he has nothing to live for and wants to throw himself from the cliffs at Dover. Edgar pretends to take him there, although they are really on flat ground.

Gloucester: Away and let me die!

Gloucester falls forward and faints. He believes he has fallen from the cliff top and somehow survived.

Edgar: Thy life's a miracle!

Edgar finally tells him the whole story including a plan to confront Edmund.

Edgar: But his flawed heart, alack, too weak the conflict to support, twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief burst smilingly.

And Gloucester dies.

13. King Lear is now with Cordelia in Dover where her doctors nurse Lear back to sanity:

Dotor: Be comforted good madam; the great rage, you see, is killed in him.

Father and daughter are reconciled. But Regan and Goneril bring the British army to meet Cordelia's French army and there is a big battle.

The British army win. Cordelia and Lear are captured by Edmund and imprisoned.

Lear: Come, let's away to prison: we too alone will sing like birds i'th'cage.

14. Meanwhile, Goneril and Regan have both fallen in love with the bastard, Edmund.

Edmund: To both of these sisters have I sworn my love. Which one of them shall I take? Both? One? Or neither?

Discovering that his wife is unfaithful, Goneril's husband, Albany, forces Edmund to defend himself against the charge of treachery. A disguised knight appears to challenge Edmund.

Edgar: Thou art a traitor, false to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father.

They fight. The disguised knight fatally wounds Edmund, then reveals himself to be Edgar.

Edgar: I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund; my name is Edgar and thy father's son.'

News comes that Goneril has poisoned Regan and then committed suicide herself.

Messenger: O, she's dead! And her sister by her is poisoned; she confesses it.

15. Before he dies, Edmund reveals that he has ordered the deaths of Lear and Cordelia.

Edmund: Some good I mean to do. Quickly send to th'castle; for my writ is on the life of Lear and Cordelia.

But his change of heart comes too late. Lear has survived but comes on carrying the body of his daughter who has been hanged.

Lear: No, no, no life! Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life and thou no breath at all?

His old heart is breaks and now he dies too. Only Albany and Edgar are left to rule the kingdom.

Edgar: The weight of this sad time we must obey; speak what we feel not what we ought to say.

Act 2 Scene 4

(Edited by RSC Education)

KING LEAR O, reason not the need: our basest beggars
Are in the poorest thing superfluous:
Allow not nature more than nature needs,
Man's life's as cheap as beast's: thou art a lady;
If only to go warm were gorgeous,
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,
Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But, for true need,--
You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need!
You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,
As full of grief as age; wretched in both!
If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts
Against their father, fool me not so much
To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger,
And let not women's weapons, water-drops,
Stain my man's cheeks! No, you unnatural hags,
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: but they shall be
The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep
No, I'll not weep:
I have full cause of weeping; but this heart
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,
Or ere I'll weep. O fool, I shall go mad!

Act 3 Scene 2

(Edited by RSC Education)

LEAR Blow winds and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow,
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
Till you have drenched our steeples, drown the cocks!
You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Strike flat the thick rotundity o'th'world!
Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once
That makes ingrateful man!

Edmund and Edgar

Act 1 Scene 1 Extract

- Kent** Is not this your son, my lord?
- Gloucester** His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge. I have so often blushed to acknowledge him that now I am brazed to't.
- 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 a son, sir, by order of law, some year elder 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 gentleman, Edmund?
- Edmund** No, my lord.
- Gloucester** *To Edmund* My lord of Kent; remember him hereafter, as my honourable friend.
- Edmund** My services to your lordship.
- Kent** I must love you, and sue to know you better.
- Edmund:** *To Kent* Sir, I shall study deserving.
- Gloucester** He hath been out nine years, and away he shall again.

Dover Cliff

Act 4 Scene 6 Extract (Edited by RSC Education)

EDGAR

Come on, sir; here's the place: stand still. How fearful
And dizzy 'tis, to cast one's eyes so low!
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
Show scarce so gross as beetles: half way down
Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade!
I'll look no more;
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
Topple down headlong.

GLOUCESTER

Set me where you stand.

EDGAR

Give me your hand: you are now within a foot
Of the extreme verge

GLOUCESTER

Let go my hand.
Go thou farther off;
Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

EDGAR

Now fare you well, good sir.

GLOUCESTER

With all my heart.

EDGAR

Why I do trifle thus with his despair
Is done to cure it.

GLOUCESTER

[Kneeling] O you mighty gods!
This world I do renounce, and, in your sights,
Shake patiently my great affliction off:
If I could bear it longer, and not fall
To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,
My snuff and loathed part of nature should
Burn itself out. If Edgar live, O, bless him!
Now, fellow, fare thee well.

He falls forward

EDGAR

Gone, sir: farewell.
And yet I know not how conceit may rob
The treasury of life, when life itself
Yields to the theft: had he been where he thought,
By this, had thought been past. Alive or dead?
Ho, you sir! friend! Hear you, sir! speak!

Thus might he pass indeed: yet he revives.
What are you, sir?

GLOUCESTER

Away, and let me die.

EDGAR

Hadst thou been aught but gossamer, feathers, air,
So many fathom down precipitating,
Thou'dst shiver'd like an egg: but thou dost breathe;
Hast heavy substance; bleed'st not; speak'st; art sound.
Ten masts at each make not the altitude
Which thou hast perpendicularly fell:
Thy life's a miracle. Speak yet again.

GLOUCESTER

But have I fall'n, or no?

EDGAR

From the dread summit of this chalky bourn.
Look up a-height; the shrill-gorged lark so far
Cannot be seen or heard: do but look up.

GLOUCESTER

Alack, I have no eyes.
Is wretchedness deprived that benefit,
To end itself by death?