

ACT FIVE

The last one!



A scene of uneasiness and some urgency...

- Gonerill and Regan's feud over Edmund continues.
- Gonerill and Albany are at odds.
- Albany and Edmund clearly share different intentions about the battle and its outcome.
- Edmund's brief responses to Regan suggest his impatience or discomfort with love talk.

Edmund...

- Soliloquy – reveals his **callous approach** to matrimony.
- Matches **ruthlessness** shown in all his dealings with **others** in King Lear.
- His only **loyalty** is to **himself**.
- His **last three lines** suggest that he **revels** in his **newly exalted position** and **power**.
- We **fear** the **outcome** of the **battle** and wonder how the **rivalry** between Gonerill and Regan will be resolved.



Act five, scene two



- The **battle** is dealt with perfunctorily.
- Shakespeare is most interested in its **consequences**.
- We get an **indication** of what is to occur in the final scene when Edgar says, '**Men must endure/Their going hence even as their coming hither;/Ripeness is all**' (lines 9-11).
- **Gloucester** still wishes **to die**.
- **Lear** (now a prisoner) is in **great danger**.
- Both old men **have endured more than enough**.
- Tragic **stoicism**.

Act Five, scene three



- Events occur **quickly**.
- Dominated by **violent deaths**.
- A **brief moment of hope** when Lear describes his life with **Cordelia** in prison.
- His **dreams** are revealed as **an illusion** almost immediately.
- Thereafter, **sorrow and pain** are emphasised, even though the **evil characters'** plots are uncovered and Albany and Edgar insist on **justice**.

Edmund's evil influence...

- Final devastating effects of **evil** are felt...
- Possibly **responsible** for the deaths of the whole **royal family** as well as his **father's fate**.
- His **own death** (as suggested by Edgar) is **richly deserved**.
- The same can be said of **Gonerill and Regan's deaths**.

Justice...



- Hard to feel that it has been served when **Cordelia's corpse** is carried on.
- **Good characters** have drawn together and **asserted themselves**, but are unable to **restore order** in the way that they wish.
- **Albany's offer to resign power** might be seen as an **ill-timed and futile gesture**, a distraction from Lear's grief.
- Edgar was **brave**, but unable to provide **a sense of hope** for the future.

At the end...



- Audience left **exhausted and numb** – like the characters.
- **Kent's tone** is **appropriate** for the occasion – **sorrowful stoicism**.
- No desire to live after his **master has lost** the battle.
- The **agony** of **Lear's** first words, '**Howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones!**' (line 255)
- Expresses the **misery** of the **characters** on stage.

, 'Howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones!'

- **Repetition** reveals the **extent of his grief** and suggests that **Cordelia's death** is an **unendurable blow**.
- Agree with **Kent** – Lear will find **release in death**.
- Dies feeling both **joy and pain**.
- The **outcome** of **King Lear** while not being entirely **just**, is in many ways **appropriate**.
- All those who have **sinned**, have been **punished**.

THE END!

Adapted from York Notes Advanced