

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S
**KING
LEAR**



DIRECTED BY
JULIA RODRIGUEZ-ELLIOTT

FEB. 6—MAY 12, 2017

Pictured: Geoff Elliott. Photo by Chloe Bates.



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- Historical content of the play
- Scholarly articles
- Production information (costumes, lights, direction, etc.)
- Suggested classroom activities
- Related resources (videos, books, etc.)
- Discussion themes
- Background on verse and prose (for Shakespeare's plays)

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More information? It would be our pleasure. We're here to make your students' learning experience as rewarding and memorable as it can be!

All the best,

Alicia Green
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION



Pictured: Donnlia Hughes, *Romeo and Juliet*, 2016. PHOTO BY CRAIG SCHWARTZ.

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Who's Who: The Actors	4
Who's Who: The Characters	5
<i>King Lear</i> Character List	6
Seeing the Play: Before and After	7
Synopsis	8
Playwright Biography: William Shakespeare	9
Shakespeare Timeline	10
Themes	11
<i>King Lear</i> : The Syntax and Scansion of Insanity By Brian Staveley	13
"Every Inch a King": The Universal and the Human in Shakespeare's <i>King Lear</i> By Miranda Johnson-Haddad, Ph.D.	15
Diagnosing <i>King Lear</i> : Renaissance Views of Madness By Adrian Ingham	16
<i>King Lear</i> : Dementia, Ageism, Stigma	18
What Alzheimer's Caregivers Can Learn From <i>King Lear</i>	19
The Wig Design Process for <i>King Lear</i>	21
Costume Research for <i>King Lear</i>	22
Costume Design for <i>King Lear</i>	23
Scenic Design for <i>King Lear</i>	24
Shakespeare's Verse and Prose	25
Try Your Hand At Shakespeare	27
Words coined by Shakespeare	28
The Art of the Shakespearean Insult	30
Essay Questions and Activities	31
Resources and Suggestions for Further Reading	33

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Who's Who: The Actors



King Lear
(Geoff Elliott)



Goneril
(Trisha Miller)



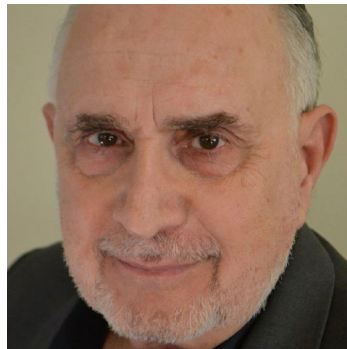
Regan
(Arie Thompson)



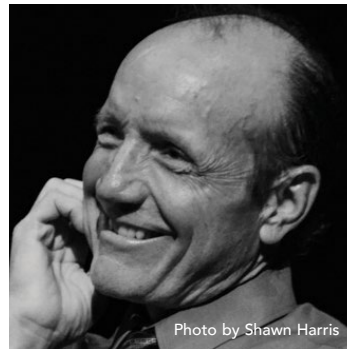
Cordelia
(Erika Soto)



Duke of Cornwall
(Jeremy Rabb)



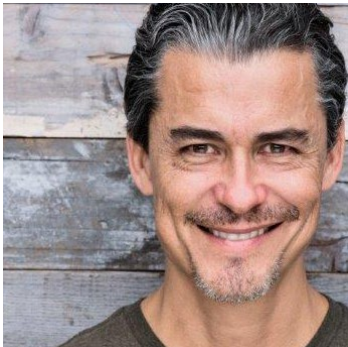
Earl of Gloucester
(Apollo Dukakis)



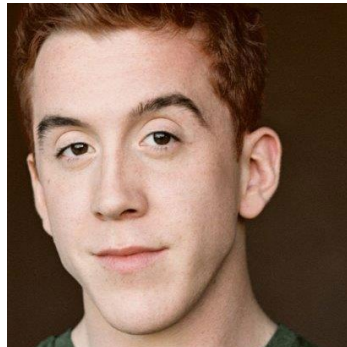
Earl of Kent
(Steve Weingartner)



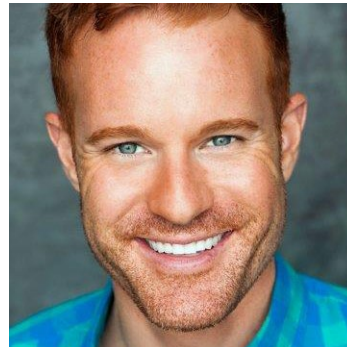
Edgar
(Rafael Goldstein)



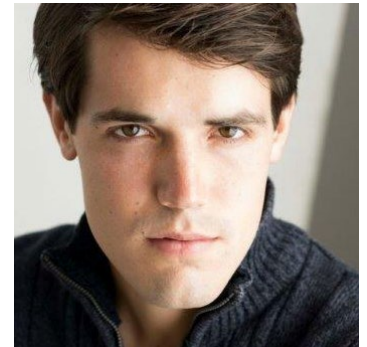
Edmund
(Freddy Douglas)



Oswald
(Craig Brauner)



Fool
(Kasey Mahaffy)



King of France
(Tyler MiClean)



Duke of Burgundy
(Troy Whiteley)



Ensemble
(Jonathon Padron)

Who's Who: The Characters

King Lear: King of Britain. At the opening of the play, Lear decides to divide the lands of his kingdom among his three daughters so he can retire and they can rule together. However, he announces that the portion of land received will be determined by each daughter's public declaration of how much she loves her father. Goneril and Regan flatter their father with insincere words of love, but Cordelia refuses to do the same. Lear, furious, banishes her and divides the country between Goneril and Regan.

Goneril: Lear's eldest daughter. She successfully declares her love for her father and gains half of the kingdom. But once in power, she denies her father's right to have attendant knights and to lodge with her. Her actions seem to show a daughter more concerned with power and status than her elderly father's well-being.

Regan: Lear's middle daughter. Like Goneril, Regan flatters her father to her advantage in declaring her love for him, and gains the other half of the kingdom. She also denies her father shelter, and she and Goneril abandon him to the storm.

Cordelia: Lear's youngest daughter. Too honest to flatter her father at his request, Cordelia voices her love to him as she sees it—and suffers his wrath as a result. He disowns her, and she marries the king of France. Later in the play she brings a French army to try and help Lear regain power.

Kent: Lear's advisor and friend. Kent voices his disapproval of Lear's banishment of Cordelia, and as a result is himself banished. Unwilling to abandon his king, Kent disguises himself as a simple servant to Lear, enabling him to stay close by and attempt to help him.

Gloucester: One of Lear's court companions, who also falls out of power and encounters betrayal at the hands of his son Edmund, who convinces Gloucester to trust him over Edgar, Gloucester's other son. Gloucester is eventually blinded in a savage act by Regan and Cornwall, and is left to wander in the wilderness like Lear until Edgar rescues him.

Edmund: the illegitimate son of the Earl of Gloucester. He manipulates his father into believing that his other son, Edgar, is out to kill him. Edmund then allies with Goneril and Regan to gain the title of Earl of Gloucester for himself.

Edgar: The Earl of Gloucester's legitimate and trustworthy son. Edgar flees the kingdom at his brother Edmund's urging—and thus appears guilty of plotting against his father. Banished from home and family, Edgar seeks refuge by disguising himself as Poor Tom, a beggar and madman. While acting this part, he encounters both Lear and Gloucester wandering in the wild, Lear mad, and his father blinded.

The Duke of Albany: Husband to Goneril. Albany eventually separates himself from his wife and tries to aid Lear and Cordelia.

The Duke of Cornwall: Regan's Husband. Cornwall is an equal partner in achieving his wife's ambitions. He helps her in the terrible act of blinding Gloucester, and suffers a fatal wound as a result.

Fool: Lear's court jester, who remains with Lear even after his kingdom is lost. He continues to entertain the king becoming a companion while also serving as the role of conscience.

Oswald: Oswald is steward to Goneril. Oswald is eager to please to get what he wants. Kent perceives him as false, flattering and disrespectful; Kent's outrage at Oswald lands Kent in the stocks.

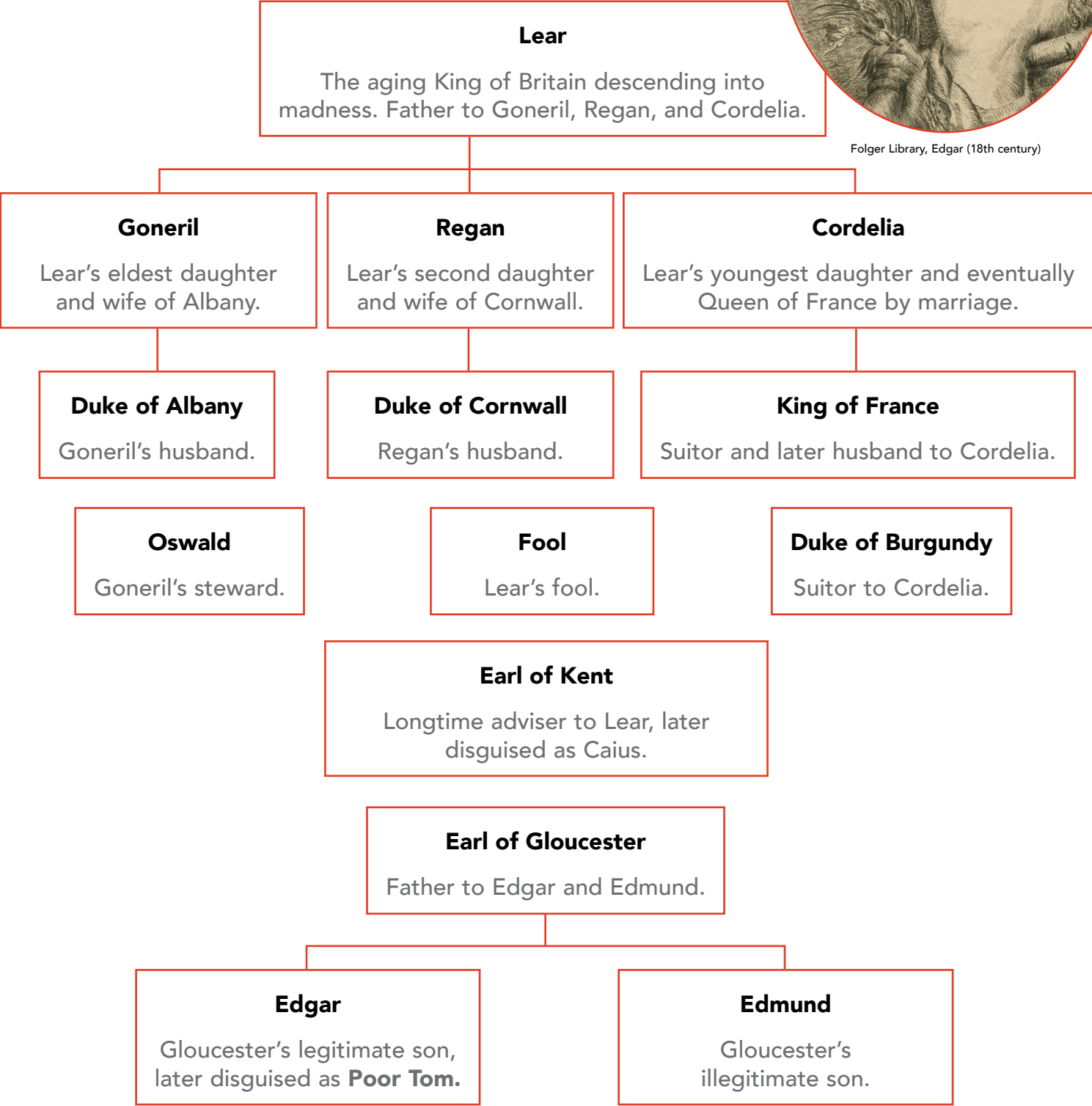
King of France: A suitor to Cordelia, the king of France maintains his courting of Cordelia even after her father strips her of her land and inheritance. Impressed by her honesty and integrity, the king marries her and makes her the queen of France. ♦

Source: California Shakespeare Theater www.calshakes.org

Character List



Folger Library, Edgar (18th century)



Seeing the Play: Before and After

(Singing) Then they for sudden joy did weep, And I for sorrow sung,
That such a king should play bo-peep And go the fools among.

Fool, Act 1, Scene 4

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BEFORE AND AFTER THE SHOW:

BEFORE viewing the play:

What to watch for:

- Keep count of how many things Lear loses over the course of the play (his kingdom, his house, his mind)
- How others treat him as an old man, good and bad.
- What Lear says about himself—how does he perceive himself as old, or powerful, or wise?
- Gloucester's problems with his sons and how that compares with Lear's difficulties with his daughters.
- How the theme of war and power influence Lear's decisions.

AFTER viewing the play:

What do you think of Lear?

- Some people say he's just an old man, so set in his ways that he doesn't realize (even as he is dying) what his actions have cost him.
- Others see Lear as sympathetic: without his family, property, and title of king, he is forced to suffer inhumane conditions that no one should suffer. Would you condemn Lear for his actions?
- Give reasons why or why not. What kind of picture do you think Shakespeare is trying to paint?
- Is Shakespeare telling us that people should be allowed to stay in power even if they are very old?
- Is he saying that people who are old are foolish?
- What is he saying about a family's responsibilities to older people? Or an elderly person's responsibility for himself or herself? ♦

Source: California Shakespeare Theater www.calshakes.org

Synopsis

LEAR, KING OF ENGLAND, decides to give us the throne and divide his kingdom among his three daughters, Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia. Before he divides the country, he asks each of his daughters to tell him how much she loves him. The two older daughters flatter Lear, but when Cordelia refuses to make a public declaration of love for her father she is disinherited. She marries the King of France, who accepts her without a dowry (i.e., without money or property). The Earl of Kent is banished by Lear for daring to defend her. The other two daughters, Goneril and Regan, and their husbands, the Dukes of Albany and Cornwall, inherit the kingdom. The Earl of Gloucester, deceived by his illegitimate son Edmund, disinherits his legitimate son, Edgar, who is forced to go into disguise as a mad beggar to save his life. Lear, now without power, quarrels with Goneril and Regan about the number of attendant knights they allow him to keep. When they ask that he give up all his knights, he goes out in a rage onto a heath (a piece of land, usually level and sometimes considered a wasteland) in a storm. He is accompanied only by his Fool and by his former advisor, the banished Earl of Kent, who is now disguised as a servant. Lear, Kent, and the Fool encounter Edgar, Gloucester's legitimate son, who is still in disguise as a mad beggar. Gloucester tries to help Lear, but is betrayed by his illegitimate son Edmund and captured by Lear's daughter Regan and her husband, Cornwall. They put out Gloucester's eyes and make Edmund an Earl. Lear is taken secretly to the port town of Dover, where Cordelia has landed with a French army to rescue her father. There, Lear and Cordelia are reconciled but in the ensuing battle are captured by the sisters' forces. Meantime, Edgar encounters his father, Gloucester, and after preventing him from committing suicide, leads him to Dover as well. Goneril and Regan are both in love with Edmund, who commanded their forces in the battle. Discovering this, Goneril's husband Albany forces Edmund to defend himself against the charge of treachery. Edgar arrives, disguised as an anonymous black knight, challenges Edmund to a fight, and fatally wounds his brother. News comes that Goneril has poisoned her sister Regan and then committed suicide. Before dying, Edmund reveals that he has ordered the deaths of Lear and Cordelia. Soldiers are sent to rescue them, but arrive too late: Cordelia has been killed. Lear enters carrying her body, and then dies. Albany agrees to give the throne to Edgar. ♦

Source: California Shakespeare Theater www.calshakes.org



Folger Library, Lear carrying the dead Cordelia (Act 5, scene 3; 19th century)

Playwright Biography: William Shakespeare



The Chandos Portrait of William Shakespeare. Artist unknown.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564-1616), poet, playwright and actor, was born to Mary Arden and John Shakespeare in Stratford-Upon-Avon, England on April 23, 1564.

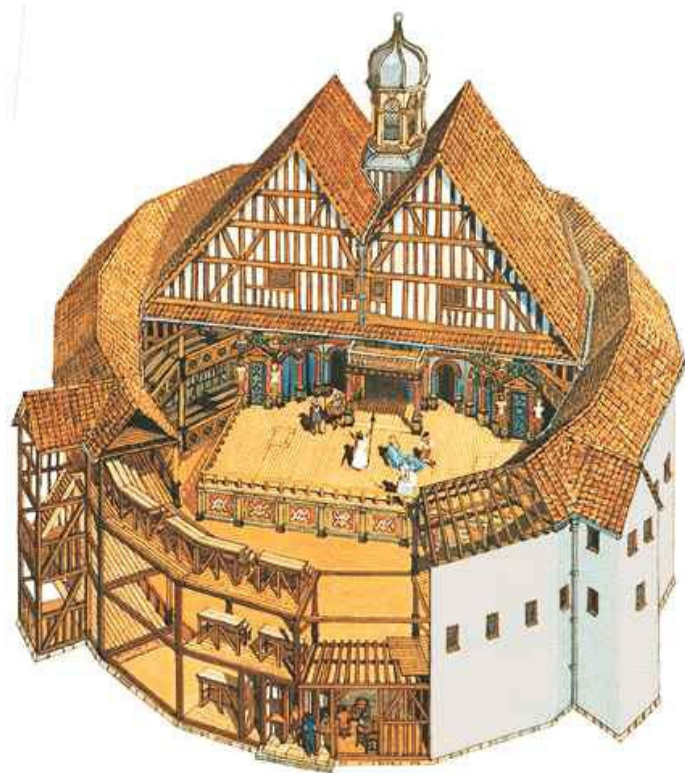
Although much is written about him, very little documentation of his life survives beyond the public records of his birth, death, marriage and financial transactions. Shakespeare probably attended the Edward VI Grammar School, where his studies would have been almost exclusively in Latin.

At age 18, he married Anne Hathaway (age 26), who gave birth to daughter Susanna, just six months after the wedding. In 1585, Anne gave birth to twins Hamnet (who died at the age 11) and Judith. From 1585-1591, not much is known about Shakespeare's life and this period is often referred to as the "lost years." However, it is clear that he moved to London to pursue theatre during this time (probably around 1587).

In 1592, Shakespeare was listed as an actor with the Lord Strange's Players, for whom he wrote his first play, the highly successful *Henry VI, Part 1*, followed immediately by the sequels *Henry VI, Parts 2 & 3* in the same year. He later joined, and became part owner of the Lord Chamberlain's Men continuing his career as a playwright. Over the course of twenty years, he wrote 148 sonnets, 3 long poems, and the 37 plays that continued to be performed around the world today. This season A Noise Within is producing Shakespeare's *King Lear* in Spring 2017.

In 1599, Shakespeare bought a share in the newly built outdoor Globe Theatre where his plays were constantly performed. The Globe Theatre was accidentally burned down in 1613 before being quickly rebuilt in 1614. However, the Globe closed in 1642 after all theatres were abolished by England's Puritan administration and was demolished in 1644. Today, visitors flock to London to visit Shakespeare's Globe, a reconstruction of the original theatre, that was opened in 1997.

Between 1610 and 1612, Shakespeare retired to Stratford-upon-Avon, where he died in 1616 at the age of 52. He supposedly died on the same day he was born, April 23rd. He is buried in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Stratford-upon-Avon. ♦



A Reconstruction of The Globe Theatre.

Shakespeare Timeline

April 23, 1564

William Shakespeare is born to John and Mary Shakespeare in Stratford-Upon-Avon.

November 17, 1558

Accession of Queen Elizabeth

The daughter of King Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth succeeded her Catholic sister Mary I and re-established the Protestant Anglican Church.

November 27, 1582

Shakespeare's Marriage License Issued

The marriage license was issued to William Shakespeare and Anne Whateley (Hathaway) of Temple Grafton, Warwickshire.

May 26, 1583

The Baptism of Susanna Shakespeare

Susanna was the Shakespeares' first child, born a mere six months after the wedding of her parents.

February 2, 1585

The Baptism of Hamnet and Judith Shakespeare

The twins were named after two very close friends of William: a baker named Hamnet Sadler and his wife, Judith. Tragically, Hamnet Shakespeare died in 1596 at the age of eleven.

1587

The Rose Theatre is founded in London. Shakespeare arrives in London to pursue theatre

1590-1592

Shakespeare Writes Parts 1, 2, and 3 of Henry VI.

Although we do not know the precise dates of composition, it is generally assumed that the *Henry VI* trilogy was composed by Shakespeare between 1590 and the summer of 1592.

March 3, 1592

First Production of 1 Henry VI

Theatre owner Philip Henslowe listed *1 Henry VI* as having been performed by Strange's Men at the Rose

1594

Shakespeare is an actor, playwright, and part owner of the Lord Chamberlain's Men.

1598

Shakespeare's name begins to appear on the title page of his plays.

1599

Shakespeare buys a share in the newly built Globe Theatre.

May 30, 1593

Christopher Marlowe Dies

Christopher Marlowe, the great Elizabethan poet and dramatist, was murdered in a tavern brawl.

March 24, 1603

Queen Elizabeth Dies

Queen Elizabeth, a generous patron of drama and literature, helped Shakespeare and his contemporary writers and actors flourish.

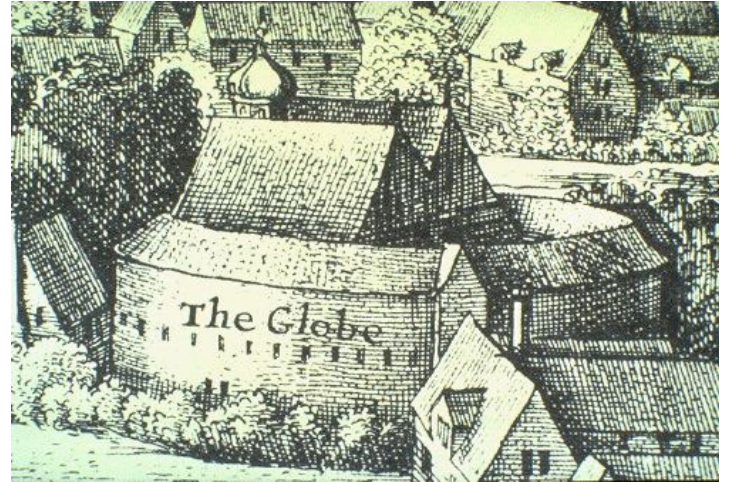
December 26, 1606

The first performance of *King Lear* is on Saint Stephen's Day.

1611

First Recorded Performances of *The Winter's Tale*, *Macbeth* and *Cymbeline*

Dr. Simon Forman, an English astrologer and doctor, gives detailed accounts of these early performances in his invaluable diary.



The Globe Theatre.

June 29, 1613

Fire at the Globe Theatre

The thatched roof of the Globe caught fire in 1613 owing to the discharge of a cannon during a production of *Henry VIII* (the first recorded performance of the play). No one was injured, but the theatre burned to the ground.

1614

The Globe Theatre is rebuilt.

April 23, 1616

William Shakespeare Dies

William Shakespeare dies at the age of 52 and is buried in the chancel of the Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon.

1623

The First Folio is published by John Hemminges and Henry Condell.

1642

The Globe closes after England's Puritan administration abolishes all theatres.

1644

The Globe is demolished.

1681-1834

The play, *King Lear*, with Shakespeare's ending is thought to be too tragic to perform and instead Nahum Tate's version is performed, which includes a happy ending where Cordelia and Edgar both survive and get married.

King Lear: Themes

MADNESS

King Lear centers on the mental decline of its main character, Lear. The play can almost be seen as a case study of mental health. Madness seems in part the catalyst for Lear's initial decision to split up his kingdom prior to his death. We experience his madness in his severe treatment of his favorite daughter and his long-time adviser. The stress on his already frail mind created by his eldest daughters' mistreatment worsens his condition. After taking away his entourage they cast him off to the elements and he laments; "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!" The literal tempest that follows becomes a metaphor for the chaos raging in Lear's mind. He rails against the storm, talks to furniture, treats another perceived madman (Poor Tom) as a sage, and wanders on a heath in Dover "fantastically dressed with wild flowers." When Lear finally encounters Cordelia, he recognizes that he is "not in his perfect mind." His acknowledgement of his insanity is a moment of regained sanity. However, her execution by Edmund's army irreparably crushes his psyche and he dies.

SIBLING RIVALRY

Sibling rivalry is as old as the human story; the source of this conflict is often jealousy-fueled competition over parental attention and resources. The rivalries between siblings in **King Lear** drives the dual plots of the play. The primary plot involves Lear's three daughters Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia; the secondary plot revolves around Gloucester's sons Edgar and his illegitimate half-brother, Edmund. Both sets of siblings seek to secure the lands, wealth, and position of their fathers. The two plots are interwoven as Lear's daughters vie not only for their father's kingdom but also for the affections of Gloucester's illegitimate son, Edmund.

Unlike his brother Edgar, Edmund has grown up in a society where he has no expectation of having the affections and inheritance of a legitimate son. The vastly disparate treatment of these two siblings drives Edmund to passionate rebellion; he plots against the "plague of custom" which bars him from any of the wealth or status



King Lear and the Fool in the Storm" by William Dyce (1806–1864)

that his brother Edgar is heir to. He invokes the gods to "stand up for bastards!" In order to disinherit his half-brother, Edmund deviously convinces Gloucester that Edgar is plotting to kill him. Edgar flees and takes on the persona of Poor Tom until he subverts Edmund's plot by revealing his treasonous intentions. Ultimately, their rivalry ends when Edgar kills Edmund in a duel.

Lear's narcissistic manner of dividing his kingdom triggers sibling rivalry among his daughters by pitting each against the other in a test of who loves him most. Goneril answers with a claim of the greatest love. Regan responds with a one-up of Goneril's declaration, stating, "I am made Of the self-same metal that my sister is...Only she comes short." Lear's favoritism of his youngest is apparent when he addresses Cordelia as his "joy" and asks, "what can you say to draw a third more opulent than your sisters?" Cordelia refuses to engage in the obvious pandering of her siblings and is consequently rejected entirely by Lear. The continuing rivalry between Goneril and Regan becomes intensified when each realizes that the other has romantic entanglements with Edmund. In the worst imaginable display of sibling rivalry, Goneril murders Regan to have Edmund to herself.



England in Shakespeare's time

SIGHT & BLINDNESS

Sight and blindness manifest as themes both literally and figuratively throughout *King Lear*. Gloucester's journey through the play from sighted to blind has an inverse relationship with his figurative ability to see. While he is sighted, he cannot see his scheming illegitimate son's machinations; however, upon becoming blind he has the revelation that Edmund has betrayed him. Gloucester finally realizing the uselessness of literal vision where there is no figurative vision says, "I have no way, and therefore want no eyes. I stumbled when I saw." Furthermore, because he has been blinded his servants lead him to Poor Tom, who is actually his true and loyal son, Edgar.

Lear is also blind to the truth about his children at the outset of the play and Kent pleads with him, "See better, Lear; and let me still remain the true blank of thine eye." Lear is forced to see the truth and also recognizes, as does Gloucester, that the perception of truth is not dependent upon literal vision. When talking to the blinded Gloucester on the heath of Dover, Lear explains, "A man may see how this world goes with no eyes."

NATURE

Throughout *King Lear* "nature," in its varied incarnations, figures prominently. Characters are either natural or unnatural in the way they behave. For example, Lear calls his daughters, Goneril and Regan, "unnatural hags" because of their heartless treatment of him. Their violence and manipulation of their father does not align with a "womanly nature." Women were expected to be kind, nurturing, and loving, as opposed to cruel and violent—qualities which might be expected of a man, but were shameful in a woman. Additionally, a person's "nature" can be judged as predisposed to good or evil. In *King Lear*, Cordelia's nature is seen as good, whereas Edmund's nature is seen as evil.

Lear is also set at a time when "Nature" was called upon as a higher power or god. Frequently, deities were thought to manifest themselves through natural phenomena such as eclipses and storms. Often, characters such as Lear, Gloucester, and Edmund, call upon "Nature" in times of crisis to do something on their behalf. Finally, nature also refers to the natural order of things, vis-a-vis the natural rights of inheritance as societally mandated—the legitimate Edgar and the illegitimate Edmund. ♦

King Lear: The Syntax and Scansion of Insanity | By Brian Staveley

MAYBE it's because I have this facial recognition problem that makes it tough for me to tell the difference between Robert De Niro and Al Pacino, but I don't think fictional character is a question of faces. Or bodies. Or clothes. Or even actions, actually. Those things are important, but I've become pretty convinced that the hot beating heart of character is language. If you know how a character talks, you know how she thinks, and if you know how she thinks, you know how she acts.

This isn't my idea. It's the whole premise of theater. A play's script is a record of spoken language. The task of those producing the play is to translate that language into character and scene. Sometimes there are stage directions, but stage directions are secondary. You can imagine performing a play stripped of its stage directions, but cut out the dialogue and you've got nothing.

Nowhere is this more evident than in Shakespeare, who was sparing with his stage directions and brilliant with his language. We can take, as one of the innumerable examples, the case of King Lear. We can look at how this horrible, tragic figure is built up from a series of syllables set on the page, one after the other.

I want to take a look at a series of Lear's speeches, five of them, one from each act of the play. All involve Lear at a moment of extreme rage or sorrow, but his rage and sorrow change dramatically from the first act to the last. **The character is the language, and what we see over the course of the play, is the utter destruction of that character.**

ACT I

Let it be so, thy truth then be thy dower!
For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,
The mysteries of Hecate and the night,
By all the operations of the orbs
From whom we do exist and cease to be,
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity, and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee from this forever. The barbarous Scythian,
Or he that makes his generation messes
To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom
Be as well neighbored, pitied, and relieved,
As thou my sometime daughter.

I.1.109-121

Let's start with a speech from the first scene. Here, Lear is leveling his curse upon his youngest and most loyal daughter, Cordelia, who has failed to play along with the idiotic farce he's hit upon to divide his kingdom. This is, to put it broadly, *royal* speech. Lear's verse is weighed and measured. The pentameter never strays far from the



King Lear and the Fool in the Storm, painting by William Dyce c.1851

iambic, and yet what kind of pentameter are we talking about here? It's not the blunt, sledge-hammer, monosyllabic pentameter we recognize from Tennyson's *Ulysses*, when he declares his final intention "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to fail." If Ulysses' line is one of blunt, military exhortation, Lear's language is the pentameter of legal kingship, strung as it is with polysyllabic Latinate gems like "operations" and "propinquity." His syntax, too, suggests a supple mind. The subject of that second sentence is buried five lines in, behind a prefatory wall of prepositional phrases that evokes both the **rhetoric of ritual and the careful legalistic hedging we might expect from a courtroom**. Lear's demands for praise from his daughters might be crazy, but **his language here indicates a mind that is still fundamentally whole, unbroken.**

ACT II

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.

II.4.272-277

Once again, Lear is angry, angry with his daughters Regan and Goneril this time—they're trying to whittle away his royal entourage—instead of Cordelia. And again, beneath that anger a deep emotional wound is festering, the sorrow of a father who feels (rightly or wrongly) that he has been betrayed by his children. But this speech is obviously different from the first. For starters, there's a change in idiom. The formal invocation of Hecate in Act I, that careful language calling upon the "sacred radiance of the sun"



Cordelia in the Court of King Lear (1873) by Sir John Gilbert

and the “operation of the orbs” has been ground down to simpler, more basic cry for help to “the gods.” In fact, the entire lexicon is starting to shift away from the Latin and toward the Germanic. **The sentences are shorter and the relationship between the clauses clearer, as though he can’t quite sustain the legalistic formulae of the opening act, as though he’s starting to have difficulty keeping track of his ideas. On the flip side, the pentameter is even stronger, more bald, thrown up like a desperate bulwark against his own incipient madness.**

ACT III

Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou ow’st the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha! Here’s three on’s are sophisticated. Thou art the thing itself; unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art.

III.4.103-108

Now we’re out in the storm, wandering on the heath. Lear has just encountered Edgar, who is naked and filthy, cavorting about in the guise of Poor Tom. **The king has abandoned verse, so we can’t make much of the meter, although it’s worth noting that the passage is heavily iambic, at least as much as the one we just looked at from Act II. Those thudding iambs, however—the beast no hide, the sheep no wool—are a world away from the fluid handling of terms like “propinquity” in the first speech, and when Lear hits on a word like “unaccommodated” here, it jars, shattering the rhythm of what comes before. He’s relying less on complex syntactical arrangements, too, leaning more eagerly on simple lists—a poor, bare, forked, animal—which comprise almost half of the passage. It’s all made more pathetic by the fact that he’s reaching for high-minded philosophical discourse, a disquisition on the nature of man. Given this language, though, “reaching” isn’t the right word. More like blindly groping.**

ACT IV

When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.

I pardon that man’s life. What was thy cause?
Adultery?
Thou shalt not die. Die for adultery? No.
The wren goes to’t, and the small gilded fly
Does lecher in my sight.
Let copulation thrive; for Gloucester’s bastard son
Was kinder to his father than my daughters
Got ’tween lawful sheets.
To’t, luxury, pell-mell, for I lack soldiers.

IV.6.108-117

Lear is talking to the blinded Gloucester here, **and by this point in the play, he’s utterly busted. We’re back in verse, but it’s a mangled, monstrous verse.** Some lines are perfectly iambic but way too short, others run to extra feet, while still others lack any metrical signature at all. If he was aiming for philosophy with his last speech, he’s groping for the language of law here, casting himself as the magistrate, and yet this is a monstrous magistracy, veering between pseudo-proclamation—*Let copulation thrive*—and a sort of bizarre naturalist’s focus on the sexual habits of birds and bugs, as though these could set precedent for human law. **He’s also starting to repeat himself, even within the same line: Thou shalt not die. Die for adultery? No.** Really, you don’t even need to understand this speech (and most of my students find themselves baffled by this entire scene) in order to hear the **mental breakdown in the language.**

ACT V

And my poor fool is hanged: no, no, no life?
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
And thou no breath at all? Thou’lt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never.
Pray you undo this button. Thank you, sir.
Do you see this? Look on her! Look, her lips,
Look there, look there—

V.3.312-318

We’ve come, finally, to the King’s heart-wrenching final words. What do we find? A fractured, interrupted syntax comprised of questions, exclamations, and fragments. Unlike those that come before, this speech isn’t leaning on any rhetorical tradition: it’s not trying to be regal, or philosophical, or legal. Lear is beyond rhetoric here, beyond any learned forms of language. The only shape we find is a return to the iambic rhythm of his early speeches—lines 313 and 314 are nearly perfect—but then look what happens. Those two rhythmically reassuring lines are only there to set us up for what has to be the most brutal ten syllables in the English language: *Never, never, never, never, never, never*. It’s a perfect inversion of the natural order, an unrelenting line of trochaic pentameter coupled with an abdication of any attempt at syntax. This line looks like it is comprised of words; it is not. The language breaks here, revealing **something older, darker, mere sound, rage, pain, loss, brute confusion beyond the power of any words to heal.** ♦

“EVERY INCH A KING”:

The Universal and the Human in Shakespeare’s *King Lear*

By Miranda Johnson-Haddad, Ph.D.

Although *King Lear* has historically been regarded as Shakespeare’s masterpiece, it has also endured an extremely vexed reception down the ages, seemingly because of its profoundly tragic vision. At one time the play appears to have been considered too depressing even to be performed, and for over 150 years the only version seen on the English stage was the infamous 1681 re-write by the Irish poet Nahum Tate, which omits the Fool and, through the addition of several new characters and musical numbers (among other questionable emendations), ultimately results in a happy ending. While the mere idea of “improving” Shakespeare in this way may be appalling to some twenty-first century theatre-goers, many of Tate’s contemporaries and later critics approved of the changes because the events as presented in Shakespeare’s original were perceived as so unjustly tragic as to be downright offensive. Even Samuel Johnson endorsed the so-called “Tatification” of *Lear*, noting in the preface to the play in his 1765 edition of Shakespeare’s dramatic works that “I was many years ago so shocked by [the original ending of the play], that I know not whether I ever endured to read again the last scenes... till I undertook to revise them as an editor.”

King Lear was entered in the London Stationers’ Register in late 1607, and it thus dates from the same period as Shakespeare’s other major tragedies, *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *Macbeth*. The storyline of *Lear* would have been familiar to Shakespeare’s audiences, for its many sources were familiar and varied, encompassing everything from Holinshed’s historical *Chronicles* (1577) to well-known fairy tales. Not present in Shakespeare’s historical sources is the subplot involving Gloucester and his sons, “legitimate” Edgar and the bastard son, Edmund. This subplot serves to underscore one of the central psychological themes of the play, which many scholars have described as being about the fury of the neglected child. Shakespeare’s brilliance in depicting that fury as it plays out in the characters of Goneril, Regan and Edmund ultimately prevents them from devolving into stock villains. Goneril’s pained acknowledgment to Regan that Lear “always loved our sister most”; Regan’s sharp retort to Lear’s claim that he gave her “all”—“And in good time you gave it”; Edmund’s poignant deathbed assertion, “Yet Edmund was belov’d!”; and many similarly revealing lines fully render these flawed but human characters in all their psychological complexity. They commit unspeakably evil acts; and yet a modern audience will readily comprehend that unspeakable psychological evil was also visited upon them and that actions have consequences. As Edmund himself acknowledges at the end of the play, “The wheel has come full circle. I am here.”

King Lear is both a domestic family drama and a timeless, universal tragedy because it operates simultaneously on both a local and a global level. The play depicts the unravelling of a family when its patriarch slides into the merciless ravages

of dementia, and decades of family dysfunction and anger are consequently revealed. But because that patriarch is also a king, and his daughters are the rulers of powerful realms themselves, the consequences of the family breakdown extend far beyond the immediate domestic arena. The inexorable quality of Lear’s horrifying descent into madness, and the resulting implosion of his family and then his kingdom, resonate today as powerfully as they must have done in the seventeenth century, when the political was also fundamentally personal (as Shakespeare’s audience had good reason to know). Theatrically speaking, Lear’s decline also remains one of the towering challenges confronting any actor; yet despite its formidable physical and emotional challenges, the role often proves irresistible, with the result that recent years have seen many well-known figures, from Ian Holm to Ian McKellen to Glenda Jackson, tackle this Everest of roles.

The powerful themes and the vivid imagery of the play have influenced many artists and authors over the centuries and continue to do so today. Many viewers (fans of Shakespeare and J.R.R. Tolkien alike) noted that in Peter Jackson’s 2002 film *The Two Towers* (the second installment of his *Lord of the Rings* trilogy), the moving scene of King Theoden’s awakening from the spell cast upon him by Saruman, and his subsequent recognition of his beloved niece, Eowyn, recalls Lear’s awakening and recognition of Cordelia late in the play. Jane Smiley’s mesmerizing novel *A Thousand Acres* (written in 1991 and made into a film in 1997) set the play on a large Iowa farm in late twentieth-century America. And outside of the realm of art, the very real risks faced by those who attempt—as do Cordelia, Kent and the Fool—to speak truth to power remain all too apparent to this day.

If it is hard to believe that *King Lear* was written by the same author who penned the delightful comedies of the 1590’s that can still make audiences laugh today, it is in some ways even more difficult to believe that this same author would go on to compose the Romance plays, such as *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*, with their emphasis on compassion and forgiveness. There is nothing uplifting or redemptive about the ending of *Lear*; all is darkness, and as Edgar observes, “we that are young / Shall never see so much, nor live so long.” Our only consolation—and it is a poor one—lies in our ability to accept the inevitable, and if there is any glimmer of hope in this most tragic of plays, it centers around whether we can manage to resign ourselves to endure whatever we must. “Ripeness is all,” as Edgar reminds Gloucester, who is forced to agree: “And that’s true too.” But regardless of our individual success in achieving such perspective, we are certainly all capable of experiencing the redemptive power that genius and art bestow; and that power is what Shakespeare offers us with this enduring, and enduringly moving, play.

DIAGNOSING *KING LEAR*: THEN AND NOW

Renaissance Views of Madness

By Adrian Ingham

SAMUEL JOHNSON describes the age of Shakespeare as a time when “speculation had not yet attempted to analyze the mind” (118), but there was a range of theories and opinions regarding madness. And although it has been demonstrated that Shakespeare’s portrayal of madness parallels Bright’s *A Treatise of Melancholie* (Wilson 309-20), that medical model alone is insufficient to describe the madness of King Lear. Shakespeare was not limited to a single book in his understanding of madness; he had at his disposal the sum total of his society’s understanding of the issue. Since Lear’s madness is derived from a mixture of sources, it can only be effectively described in this larger context.

Because much of Renaissance medical theory was based on premises from the Middle Ages, a starting point for our understanding of Lear’s madness can be found in the 1535 translation of *De Propriatibus Rerum* by the thirteenth century monk Batholomaeus Anglicus. This work is based entirely on the traditional model of illness as an imbalance of the four humours: melancholy (or black bile), choler (or yellow bile), blood, and phlegm. Batholomaeus classifies melancholy and madness separately, attributing them to different humours and different areas of the brain (1-4). ... [Lear] is choleric by nature and it is likely that his madness is caused by an excess of that humour. Goneril describes his choler and foreshadows his madness in an early attempt to discredit him:

The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash;
then must we look from his age to recieve, not alone the
imperfections of long-engrafted condition, but therewithal
the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring
with them. (1.2.294-298)

In Bartholomaeus’ model madness caused by an excess of choler is called “the frenesie”. Its signs are “woodnes and contynual wakyng, mevyng and castyng aboute the eyen, ragynge...” (3). It is caused by the red choler “made lyght with heate of it self... ravysshid upwarde by veynes, synewes, wosen and pypes” (2). The cure involves bleeding the patient, shaving his head and applying vinegar and ointment to the head. However it also recommends creating a calm environment for the patient, feeding him a sparse simple diet, and “above all things... men shall labour to bringe hym a slepe” (3-4). Kent seems to be aware of this most important part of the cure, and through him we realize that Lear’s madness may have been shortlived had he been able to rest before fleeing to Dover:



Folger Library, Johann Ramberg painting of Lear and the Fool in the storm (Act 3, scene 2; 1829)

Oppressed nature sleeps.

This rest might yet have balm'd thy broken sinews,

Which, if convenience will not allow,

Stand in hard cure. (3.6.94-98)

However, not all contemporary models of madness relied solely on humours. Timothy Bright’s model simplifies Bartholomaeus’ categorization of madness by calling all madness melancholy, but diversifies it by distinguishing two separate types of melancholy. In Bright’s words: “the difference is betwixt natural melancholie, and that heavy hande of God upon the afflicted conscience, tormented with remorse of sinne, & fear of his judgement” (37). Natural melancholy resembles Bartholomaeus’ model in that it has humoral origins and in its extreme manifestation the melancholy humour can cause “stormes of outrageous love, hatred, hope or feare, wherewith bodies so passionate are here and there, tossed with disquiet...” (Bright 38). But unnatural melancholy has no parallel in the medieval model. Natural melancholy can be recognized from the general symptoms of madness occurring in a stable person in a stress free environment. In this case the madness can only be attributed to physical imbalances (38), while unnatural melancholy, ironically, can be recognized by its occurrence in situations when it seems more natural to go mad: situations in which the mind is tormented by worry and stress (37). The natural/unnatural distinction should not be taken to imply rarity or probability but rather physical or non-physical causes. In Bright’s model, like Bartholomaeus’, Lear would probably not be diagnosed with natural melancholy. We have seen that he is naturally choleric rather than melancholic, and he certainly has recognizable cause to go mad from mental stress and guilt, as Kent, once again, recognizes:

A sovereign shame so elbows him: his own unkindness
That stripped her from his benediction, turned her To
foreign casualties, gave her dear rights To his dog-hearted
daughters—these things sting His mind so venomously...
(4.3.44-49) and because Lear is suffering from unnatural
melancholy, his prognosis is not good in Bright's model:
"Here no medicine, no purgation, no cordiall, no tryacle or
balme are able to assure the afflicted soule and trembling
heart, now panting under the terrors of God" (39-40). So
we see that mere rest may not have been enough to cure
Lear's condition. Upon his reconciliation with Cordelia
it is rest which calms his anger, but it is her forgiveness
which brings him out of his depression. Had Lear not been
parted from her again through her death he may well have
survived his madness.

[...] Lear's madness can be seen both as a result of his
arrogance and as a remedy for it: "Lear's experience is
purgatorial; madness is both punishment and insight" (Byrd
7). The Fool's statement that "truth's a dog must to kennel;
he must be whipped out" (1.4.111-12) foreshadows the
pain that Lear will have to pass through before attaining
enlightenment. This vision of madness is characteristic of
Shakespeare's era. The Renaissance held the Aristotelian
view that there is a fine line between madness and divine
inspiration (Skultans 20), but by the eighteenth century
madness was viewed as no more than degradation and
shame. In testimony to this, the eighteenth century's
favorite version of King Lear was a version rewritten by
Nahum Tate to include a happy ending (Byrd 7-8). In this
version Lear recovers from his illness, wins the battle and
reigns again: by suffering madness Lear pays for his sins
and is returned to health and prosperity. In contrast to
this, Lear's transformation in the original play leaves him so
guileless that it is unlikely that he would survive long with
the intrigues of running a kingdom even if he had won the
war. When Lear dies it is because he has finally learned to
love; and when the one he loves dies, the intensity of his
sorrow kills him. "His death is a release from suffering, but
also a testimony to what he has become" (Byrd 8).

Thus Lear's madness transcends a purely medical model.
Lear is a fusion of not only Bright and his predecessors, but
also of Renaissance feelings towards madness. The medical
model had not changed significantly by the eighteenth
century, but common opinions about madness had. The
fact that Tate's maudlin happy ending was ever preferred
to Shakespeare's original is testimony to the difference that
such attitudes can make. While the similarities between
Shakespeare's mad men and Timothy Bright's *A Treatise
of Melancholie* are evident, it would be a mistake to infer
from these parallels that the characters are based solely on
that model. They are, instead, derived from both medical
and non- medical sources, and they can be most effectively
analyzed using a similar variety of sources. ♦

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King Lear: Dementia, Ageism, Stigma

"Dementia is a major cause of disability amongst older people and constitutes one of the most serious challenges facing the older population, their families and health and social care services in the developed world (Care Services Improvement Partnership, 2005)."

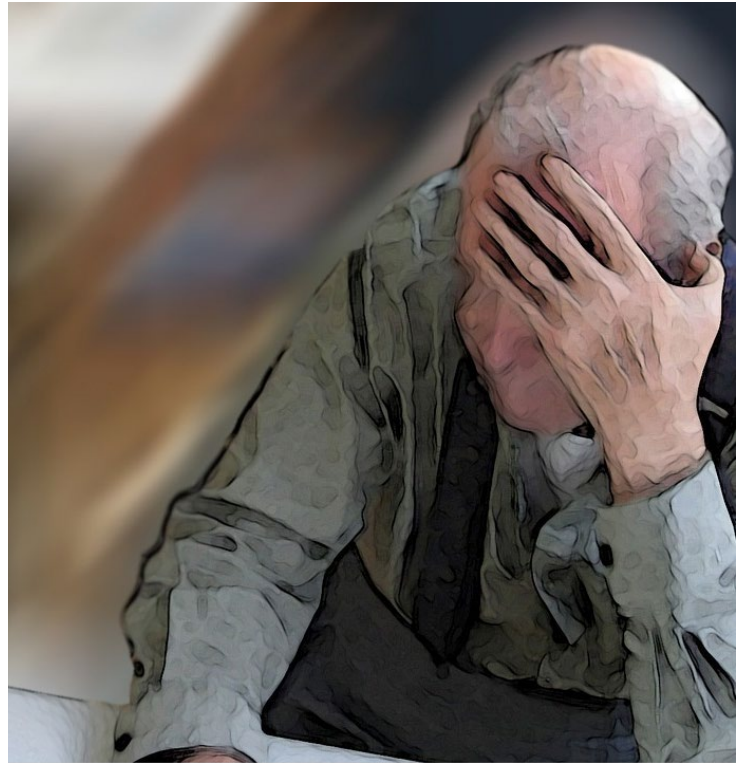
Although *King Lear* is not specifically diagnosed with dementia in the play, many mental health professionals suggest that the symptoms of his "madness" point to a form of dementia.

"The combined impact of the dementing illness itself—cognitive decline and memory loss—and the negative responses to diagnosis and symptoms, profoundly undermine psycho-social well being and quality of life. Loss of independence, roles and identity, and feelings of low self esteem, value and worth are widely noted in research with people with dementia (Husband, 1999)."

Can you find specific examples throughout the text of *King Lear* that might suggest he is suffering from dementia? How does his cognitive functioning and memory decline throughout the play? Try tracking how the quality of his life changes from the beginning of the play to the end.

"As an age-related disorder older people with dementia are thus exposed not only to the stigma associated with mental illness but to age discrimination as well—the so-called "double whammy" (Godfrey et al., 2005). Age discrimination represents an important element of the way in which older people experience later life and gain access to socially-valued roles and resources. It functions to reinforce age-related norms and perpetuate assumptions about old age and ageing as a process. (Bytheway, 1995). Old age stereotypes are almost universally negative and are associated with dependency, limited social and sexual lives, and incapacity to exercise autonomy and self determination (Victor, 2005)."

Find places in the text where people treat King Lear differently because of his perceived madness or because of his age. Do you think Goneril and Regan would have been so keen to take advantage of him if he were younger? How do the stereotypes imposed on Lear reinforce his own perception of himself or influence his behavior?



"Recent attempts to re-conceptualize dementia as a disability and to locate it inside the social model of disability has helped to provide a "new" way of understanding the condition and challenge stigma (Gilliard et al., 2005). As a framework, this is wholly consistent with the promotion of personhood and acceptance that it is our approach to people with dementia—the language we use to describe the condition and people with it, and the service environments we create for them, that disempower, dehumanize, marginalize and ultimately stigmatize, not the condition itself (Cantley & Bowes, 2004)."

If Lear were treated differently throughout the course of the play, how do you think his personal progression would be different? How much of Lear's deterioration is worsened by his mistreatment? ♦

QUOTES SOURCE: The 'D' word: Reflections on the relationship between stigma, discrimination, and dementia by Alison Milne. Publication: Journal of Mental Health, 2010.

What Alzheimer's Caregivers Can Learn From *King Lear*

WATCHING KING LEAR through the lens of an Alzheimer's professional is a curious experience. From the very first scene when the aging monarch—the King of all Britain—decides to step down from the throne and divide his kingdom among his three daughters by testing their love for him, I knew something was very wrong. Who in their right mind would put their children in that situation?

The answer, of course, is no one. As I watched the performance earlier this summer in Central Park's Delacorte Theater, I thought, *The poor man is demented*. And I braced myself for disaster.

Goneril, the eldest daughter, went first: "Sir, I do love you more than word can wield the matter..."

It rang false. But, right answer, I thought.

Regan, up next, one-upped her sister, saying that Goneril "comes too short, I profess myself an enemy to all other joys..."

Good girl, I thought, play along with him. That's what he needs to hear.

Lear, now very pleased, turns to his youngest and most beloved child and chides her, "A third more opulent than your sister? Speak."

Cordelia, angered by the game and by her duplicitous, scheming sisters said, "Nothing, my lord... Nothing."

My heart stopped. I wanted to stand up, right there in front of John Lithgow, Annette Bening and the entire magnificent cast and yell, "1-800-272-3900! Call the Alzheimer's Association 24-hour Helpline. We can help you."

What ailed King Lear has been the subject of scholarly debate for centuries. As far back as 1866, author A.O. Kellogg in his book *Shakespeare's Delineations of Insanity, Imbecility and Suicide*, opined that Lear's behavior could be attributed to senile dementia. H. Somerville, in *Madness and Shakespeare* (Richards Press: London, 1929) wrote that Lear showed "signs of mental deterioration due to old age." And as recently as February, British actor Simon Russell Beale said that medical research he did in preparation to play Lear suggested that the monarch could have been suffering from Lewy Body dementia.

Regardless of a specific diagnosis, if my 10 years at the New York City Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association has taught me anything, it's that communication and planning are key to helping a family deal with dementia.

The problem, in Lear's case, is not that he is asking the wrong question—because there is no right or wrong question for a person with dementia. It's that Cordelia is not able or willing to see the question for what it is: the product of her father's demented mind.

Before Act 1, Scene 1 is over, with Cordelia now



disinherited by a furious Lear, even the evil sisters recognize that their father is no longer their father.

Goneril says, "You see how full of changes his age is... He always loved our sister most, and with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off appears too grossly."

Regan responds, "Tis the infirmity of his age, yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself."

In professing their love as they did, Goneril and Regan were far more effective in controlling the situation than Cordelia, their underlying motivations notwithstanding.

As in any great Shakespearean tragedy, the consequences of Cordelia's words and Lear's reaction are devastating. At the end, the family members are all dead and the kingdom lies in ruin. And while today, such a dysfunctional family dynamic would not end in a tragedy of such global proportions, Alzheimer's can have an equally devastating impact on the personal lives of family members.

King Lear has many valuable lessons for family caregivers. Let's start with communication. One of the fundamental lessons that families must learn is: don't fight the reality of the person who is living with Alzheimer's—even though their words can be hurtful.

Without warning, one day, my mother who was in the late stages of dementia, looked at me angrily and demanded to know who I was. I was stunned by her harsh tone.

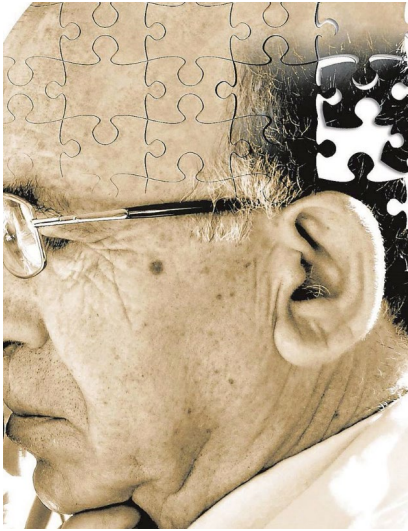
"I'm your daughter," I replied.

Her voice was cold. "Impossible."

"Who do you think I am?"

"I have no idea." She raised her voice. "Where is my daughter?"

I could have yelled and said, *What do you mean? Who am I? I have been your daughter for more than six decades. I*



have been breaking my back taking care of you for years. But I didn't. Social workers had taught me not to argue. So I calmly said, "Your daughter is close by. You'll see her soon."

The lesson here, as it should have been for Cordelia is: put yourself in the mind of the other individual, however hurtful or crazy they may seem. Part of your job as a caregiver is to create moments of

peace when there is agitation.

A second key lesson is: you must be prepared. Every day, I hear stories about children fighting over what dad would want. Who's in charge of his care? What do we do with his

finances? Do we take extraordinary measures at the end to extend his life? How are his assets to be divided?

At the beginning of every family's Alzheimer's journey there should be a planning process. Key legal documents must be in place.

Oh, if King Lear only had a Durable Power of Attorney authorizing someone he trusted to make legal and financial decisions. Also critical is a Health Care Proxy giving one person legal authority to make important medical decisions. A Living Will is a good supplement to the Proxy. Signed while the person is still of sound mind, it allows a person with dementia to clearly communicate wishes regarding end of life care. And finally, a Will can help you divide the kingdom without bloodshed.

With help and information from the Alzheimer's Association, communicating with someone who has dementia and planning for the inevitable end can be a smoother process—and one that avoids tragedy of Shakespearean proportions. ♦

SOURCE: Lou-Ellen Barkan, President & CEO of CaringKind 360 Lexington Ave NYC, NY 10017

The Wig Design Process for *King Lear*

MY FIRST STEP when I am designing any show is to read the script thoroughly. I want to get a feeling for who these characters are and see if there is any mention of business with wigs, hair, facial hair, or make-up. After reading the script I then begin researching images. I like to get any ideas out of my head and onto my desktop or in my hands. The library's books, catalogues, magazines and Pinterest aid my research process. If I am working on a production, which takes place in 1955, I tend to stick to around that year or a little before. Sometimes I will even use a modern image if it is the right feeling for the character. I usually like to do this even before I collaborate with any of the other designers or even the director. Certain characters are sometimes in a similar grouping or pairing. In *Lear*, for instance, the two sisters remind me of the evil stepsisters in *Cinderella*. I think they should be portrayed as such so that the audience can grasp the same sense of character.

I then look at the actors' headshots to see what canvas I am working with. Are they able to grow a beard, or can we use their own hair instead of a wig? With any company, along with design you have to think about budget. Wigs and facial hair, if they are human, aren't cheap. The goal is to be able to tell the story in the best way possible without breaking the bank.

Once I have all of my ideas and research in a presentable format I then like to meet with the director and other

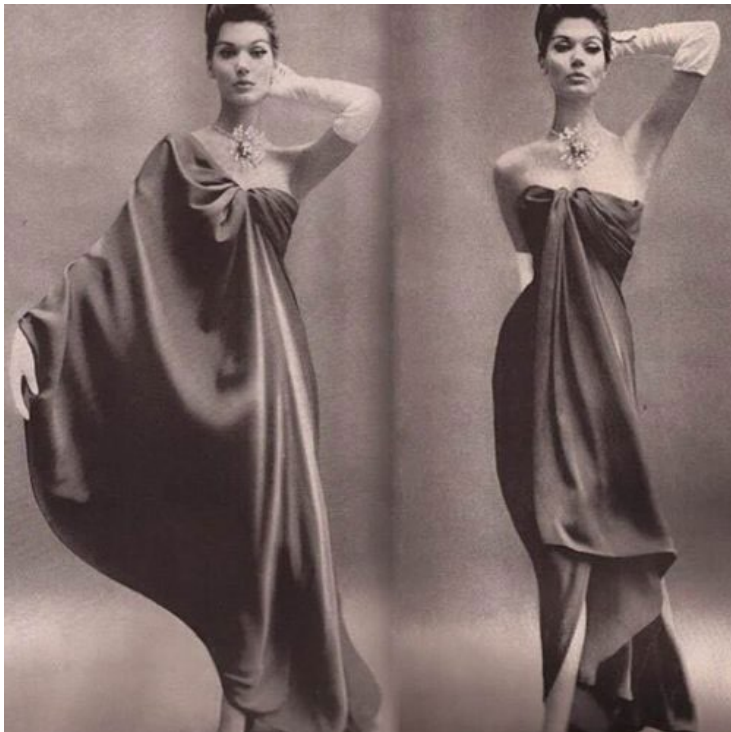
designers. Many times we have production meetings as a group to exchange thoughts, ideas, or even problems that need to be solved. Collaborating is one of my favorite parts of design. Sometimes the director might not agree with what I have designed for a character and that is fine. I then make adjustments find a new image and move forward.

After designs have been finalized, it is then time for me to come and get head wraps of the actors. These are very specific measurements I use to make sure the wig fits. This process is a great way for me to take their head molds and face tracings so that I can make sure and build a custom wig or facial hair. After I have this information I don't need to see the actors again until fittings or a costume parade, but this is when I go to work. I go back to my research images, then roller set and or style the wig as close to this image as possible. This is when the director will be able to see the design come to life on the actor's head. At this point the design process is still being tweaked. There could be notes such as "soften the hairline" or "this color doesn't work". If this is the case I then find a substitute and fix the problem. Once we go into first dress, we can then see all the aspects of design come together.

Seeing it all come together like this is why I love design. Theatre is an ever-changing growing work of art. That is what makes wig designing so challenging yet so beautiful. ♦

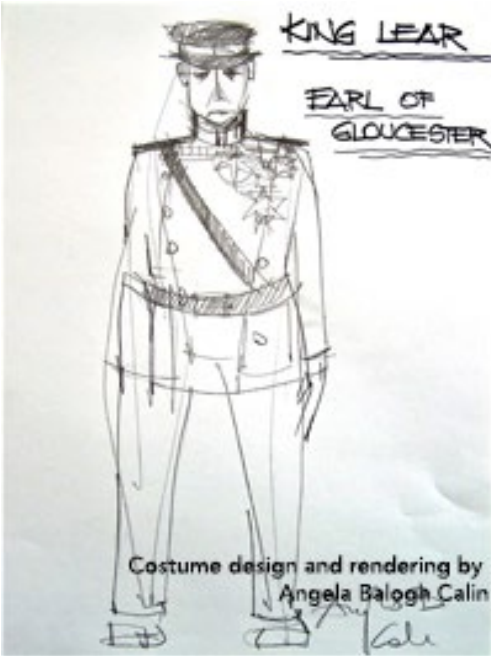
Costume Research for *King Lear*

Costume design by Angela Balogh Calin.
Photos are for research purposes only.



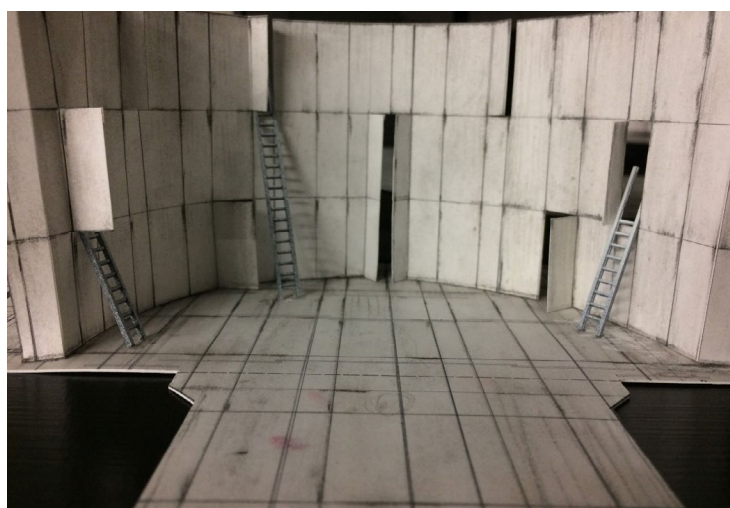
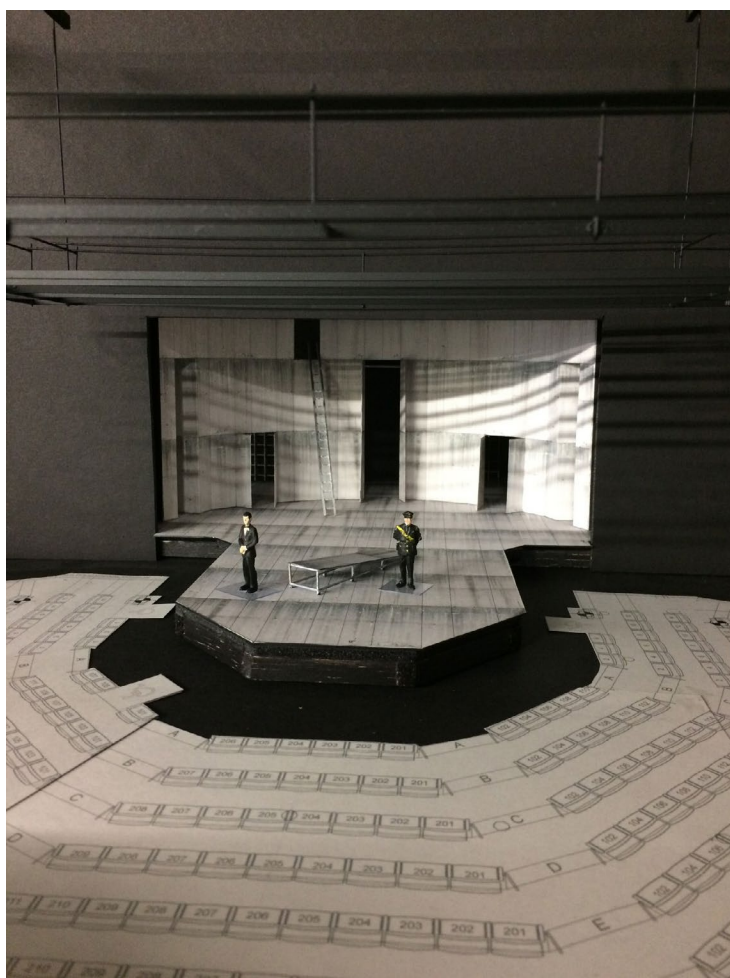
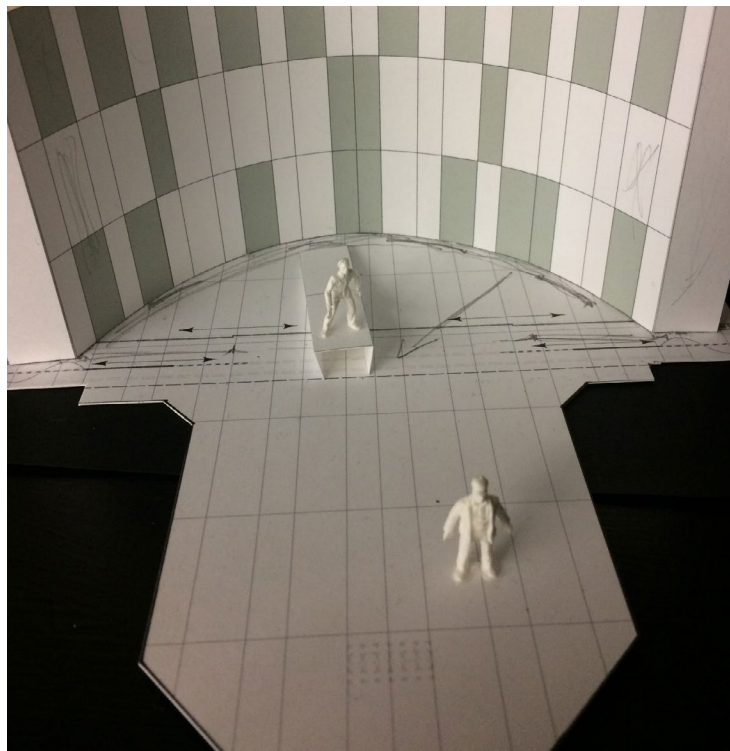
Costume Renderings for *King Lear*

Costume design by
Angela Balogh Calin.

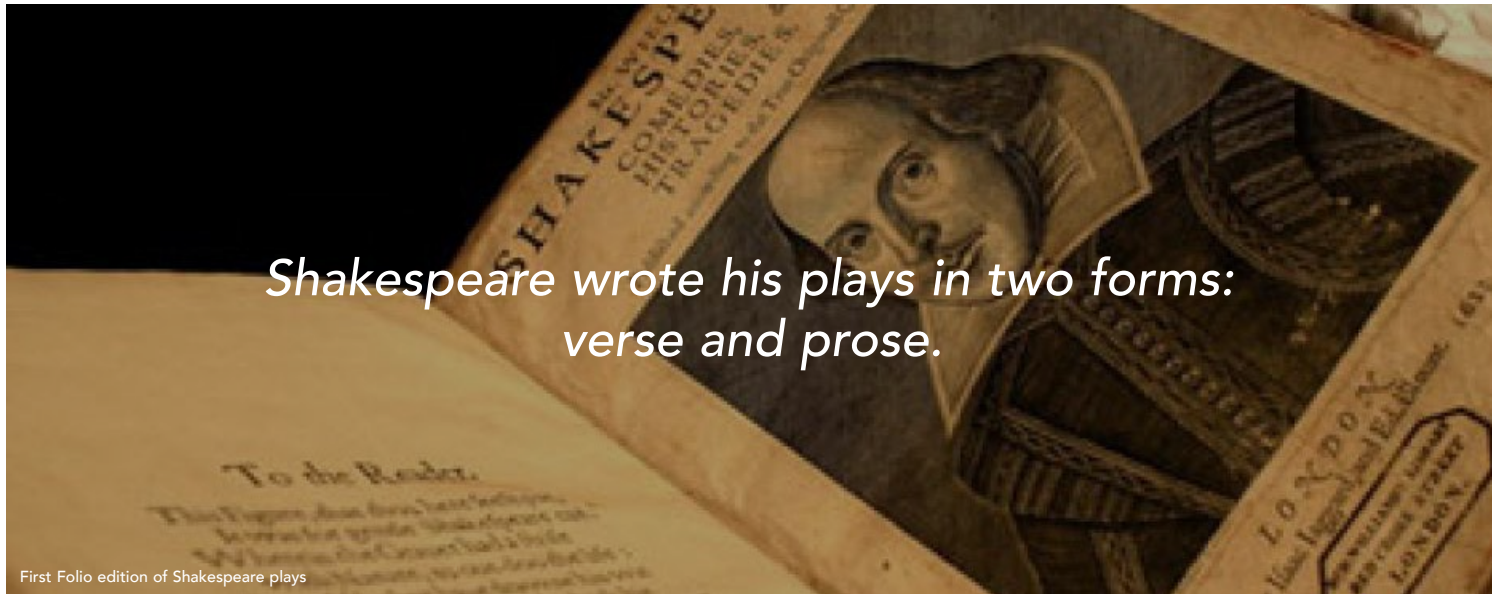


Scenic Design for *King Lear* | Fred Kinney

Generally, when I am asked about how or why I designed a set in a specific way, I respond to it by saying: "An artist cannot speak about his art any more than a plant can discuss horticulture." This is a quote by Jean Cocteau. But, when asked to provide context for this study guide, it made me sit down and give this some thought. Ultimately, I would say that designing a set comes down to figuring out a machine that is going to help the director tell the story of the play. This machine is composed of three important elements: 1) the shape 2) the color and 3) the movement. The shape, in the case of *King Lear*, is a large semi-circular wall which allows the director to create many locations on one set, i.e. Interior spaces, exterior spaces, small spaces or even wide open spaces. The color we've done here emulates the look and feel of concrete. It is cold, unrelenting and unforgiving. The movement is created when we move the scenery. The furniture changes in unique ways, again to help set the scene. For example, an actor might set a chair on top of a table and this creates a whole different space then just placing a table at a chair. Ultimately, my design helps the director create unique and surprising ways to help show the audience the various settings in the play.



Shakespeare's Verse and Prose



VERSE

is language with a set rhythm.

The majority of Shakespeare's plays are written in verse for two primary reasons: tradition and memorization. Since the beginning of theatre, plays had been written in verse, and verse is easier to memorize than prose. Shakespeare was one of the first playwrights to use both prose and verse when it suited him. Shakespeare used verse to denote members of the nobility and the upper class.

While Romeo & Juliet is 90% verse, King Lear is only 76% verse. Why do you think that is?

Shakespeare used a verse form called **blank verse**. While blank verse does not contain rhyme, each line has an internal rhythm and a regular rhyme pattern, like a heartbeat.

Shakespeare is known for utilizing **iambic pentameter**. An iamb is a poetic foot with one unstressed syllable followed by one stressed syllable. A pentameter means that there are five feet in a line. An iambic pentameter is then five iambs, forming a ten syllable line with a total of five stressed and five unstressed syllables per line.

Example:

The gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid,
That justly think'st and hast most rightly said
— King Lear, Act I, Scene I (Kent to Cordelia).

That **justly** think'**st**, and **hast** most **rightly** said!

dah-**DÚM**, dah-**DÚM**, dah-**DÚM**, dah-**DÚM**, dah-**DÚM**

PROSE

is language without a set rhythm or structure.

Prose is the form used by the common citizens in Shakespearean drama. There is no rhythm or meter in the line. It is everyday language that Shakespeare's audience would recognize as their own language. In Shakespeare's plays prose is rarely used by nobility or members of the royal family. Prose is what someone speaks when they are reading aloud or when they are crazy or acting crazy.

Why is Edgar, as Poor Tom, speaking in prose here?

Example:

A servingman, proud in heart and mind, that curled
my hair, wore gloves in my cap, served the lust of
my mistress' heart and did the act of darkness with
her, swore as many oaths as I spake words and
broke them in the sweet face of heaven

— Edgar, Act III, Scene IV



Three daughters of King Lear by Gustav Pope

Verse-Speaking Activities



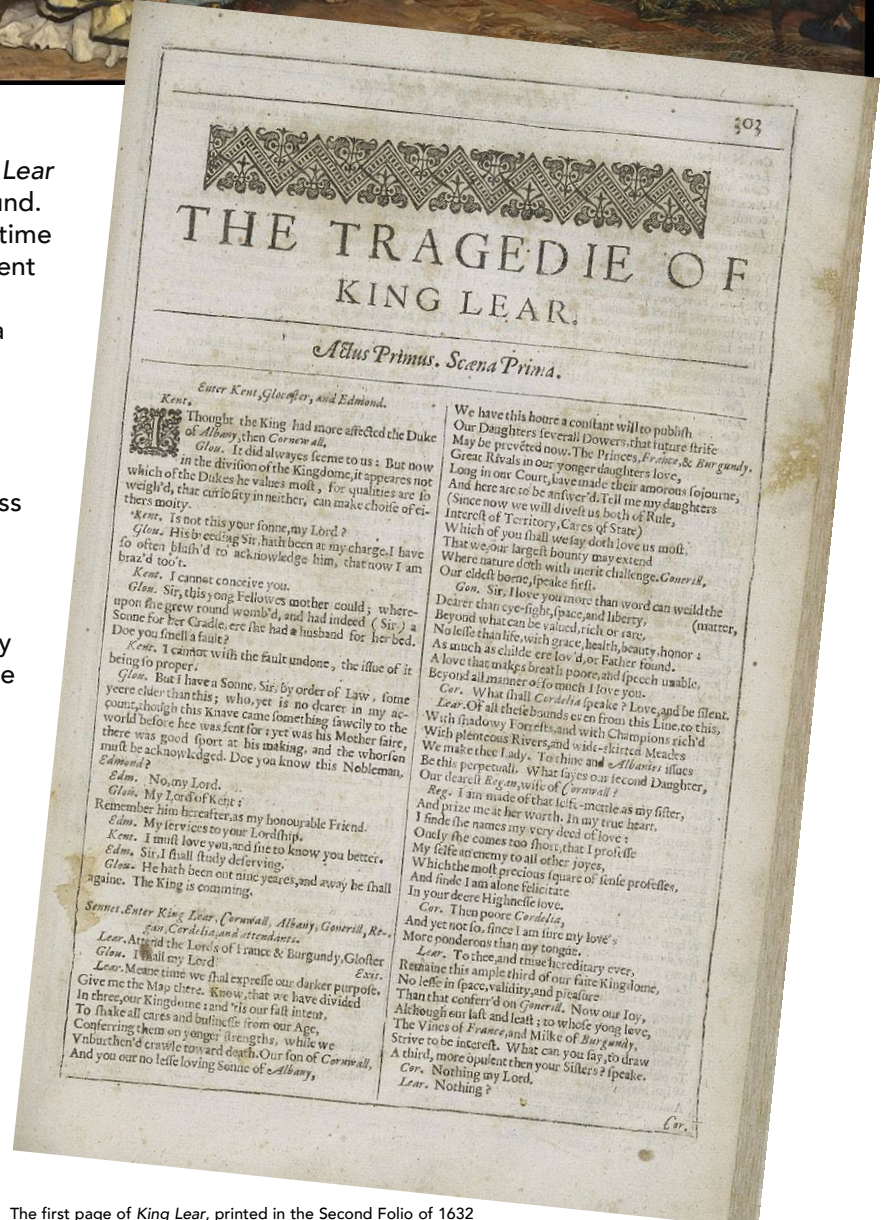
King Lear: Cordelia's Farewell by Edwin Austin Abbey

Choose a lengthy speech by any character in *King Lear* and have students read it aloud while walking around. Students should physically change direction every time they reach a comma, colon, or full stop. This frequent change in direction will illustrate how each clause in a sentence suggests a new thought or idea for a character.

Repeat this exercise, but instead of changing direction, have students say the words "comma" and "full stop" out loud when they encounter punctuation. This exercise helps heighten awareness of where punctuation is in our speech and what its purpose is.

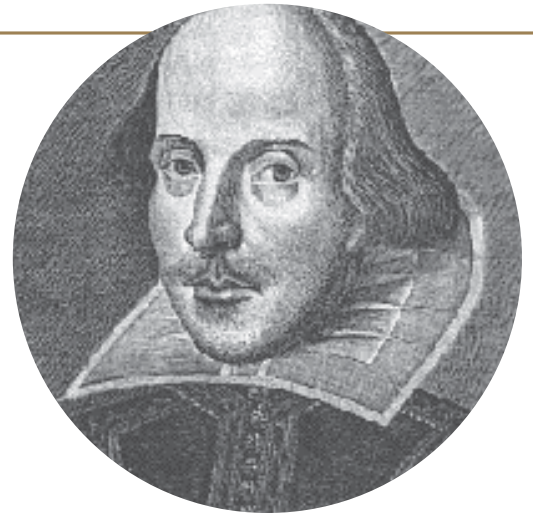
Using the same speech, have students underline what they think are the natural stress words. If they spot an often repeated word, they should underline that as well. Students can then practice speaking the text with an emphasis on these key stress words.

Have students speak the same speech aloud, forcing themselves to make a physical gesture on every single word. This gesture can be clearly connected to the word (for example, a finger point on "him") or can be more abstract. This exercise helps students to value every word in the text. Students will prioritize the correct stresses because they will naturally gesture more when saying key words.



The first page of *King Lear*, printed in the Second Folio of 1632

Try Your Hand At Shakespeare



The following expressions are a result of William Shakespeare's creativity with words. You may have heard some of them used. Or perhaps you have used them yourself.

Try your hand at using some of these phrases to create your own short story or poem.

as luck would have it
green-eyed monster
not slept one wink
as white as driven snow
give the devil his due
one fell swoop
bag and baggage
hold a candle to
seen better days
be all and end all
in a pickle

sharper than a serpent's tooth
blinking idiot
it smells to heaven
stood on ceremony
budge an inch
laugh yourself into stitches
the more fool you
but me no buts
laughing stock
too much of a good thing
dead as a doornail

make a virtue of necessity
tower of strength
elbow room
merry as the day is long
vanish into thin air
for goodness sake
my own flesh and blood
what the dickens
foul play
not a mouse stirring
without rhyme or reason

Darker purpose
Felicitate
Fortune's alms
"I can keep honest counsel."—Kent
Football player
Monopoly
Fond eyes
Lily-livered
Hot-blooded
Flibbertigibbet
Scurvy politician
**"Fie, foh, and fum, I smell the blood of a
British man."—Edgar (as Poor Tom)**
Fool of fortune

"Pardon, old father, my mistaking eyes, that have been so bedazzled with the sun that everything I look on seemeth green." —Kate

Dexterously—*Twelfth Night*, Act I, Scene V

How Shakespeare used it: In this scene from *Twelfth Night*, Olivia gets angry at Feste and asks for him to be taken away. Feste, however, challenges Olivia saying she is in fact the fool and that he can prove it *dexterously*. The word used in this sense most likely means something close to *easily*, as taken in context. Alternatively, the root of the word is “dexter”, the Latin word for “right”, so translated directly it would be *rightly*. Therefore, Feste is probably saying he can rightly, or correctly, prove Olivia is a fool.

Feste

Misprision in the highest degree! Lady, cucullus non facit monachum; that’s as much to say as I wear not motley in my brain. Good madonna, give me leave to prove you a fool.

Olivia

Can you do it?

Feste

Dexterously, good madonna.

Modern definition: To do something incredibly skillfully or cleverly.

Dwindle—*Macbeth*, Act I, Scene III

How Shakespeare used it: In this scene from *Macbeth*, the First witch tells the other two witches that she has been torturing a sailor whose wife was rude to her and explains to them how she will “drain him dry as hay” until he “dwindle, peak and pine”. Dwindle in this sense is used to mean waste away.

FIRST WITCH

I myself have all the other,
And the very ports they blow,
All the quarters that they know
I’ th’ shipman’s card.
I’ll drain him dry as hay.
Sleep shall neither night nor day
Hang upon his penthouse lid.
He shall live a man forbid.
Weary sev’n nights nine times nine
Shall he dwindle, peak and pine.

Modern Definition: to gradually become smaller

Fashionable—*Troilus and Cressida*, Act III, Scene III

How Shakespeare used it: Ulysses describes time through a series of metaphors and similes. One of the comparisons he makes is with a *fashionable* host. In this context, fashionable means a host who abides by the most current etiquette—who follows customs that are of the current fashion.

“For time is like a fashionable host that slightly shakes his parting guest by the hand, and with his arms outstretch’d, as he would fly, grasps in the comer: welcome ever smiles, and farewell goes out sighing.”—Ulysses

Modern definition: Representing a popular or trend or influence, particularly regarding personal styles.

Inaudible—*All’s Well That Ends Well*, Act V, Scene III

“Let’s take the instant by the forward top; for we are old, and on our quick’st decrees the inaudible and noiseless foot of Time steals ere we can effect them.”—King of France

Manager—*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Act V, Scene I

Multitudinous—*Macbeth*, Act II, Scene II

Sanctimonious

Scuffle—*Antony and Cleopatra*, Act I, Scene I

Swagger—*Henry V*, Act II, Scene IV & *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Act II, Scene I

Uncomfortable—*Romeo and Juliet*, Act IV, Scene V



Inside an Elizabethan theatre

The Art of the Shakespearean Insult



The exterior of the Globe Theatre

When we think of Shakespeare, we usually think of plays and poetry. However, Shakespeare has also penned some of the most amazing insults. Far more interesting and colorful than the curse words we usually hear in modern conversation, the witty and acerbic Shakespearean insult is truly an art form. So next time you feel some added color is required in your conversation, try reaching for something Shakespearean! Go ahead! "Thou art a boil, a plague sore, an embossed carbuncle in my corrupted blood." Below are a few choice insulting options taken from *King Lear*.

Brazen-faced varlet	Beggar
Lily-livered	Thou art a boil, a plague sore
Glass-gazing	Shallow
Super-serviceable finical rogue	Epileptic visage
Unbolted villain	Barber-monger
Wagtail	Three-suited
Blasts and fogs upon thee	Worsted-stocking knave
Toad-spotted traitor	One-trunk-inheriting slave
Fen-suck'd fogs	Detested kite
Wolfish visage	Eater of broken meats
Cowardly rasca	

Make Your Own Insult

Combine one word from each of the three columns below, prefaced with "Thou" to create your own Shakespearean Insult

Column 1

Artless
Bawdy
Bootless
Churlish
Clouted
Craven
Currish
Dankish
Dissembling
Droning
Errant
Fawning
Fobbing
Forward
Frothy
Gleeking
Goatish
Gorbellied
Infectious
Jarring
Loggerheaded
Lumpish
Mammering
Mangled
Mewling
Paunchy
Pribbling
Puking
Puny
Qualling
Rank
Reeky
Roguish
Ruttiesh
Saucy
Spleeny
Spongy
Surly
Tottering
Unmuzzled
Vain
Venomed
Villainous
Warped
Wayward

Column 2

Base-court
Bat-fowling
Beef-witted
Beetle-headed
Boil-brained
Clapper-clawed
Clay-brained
Common-kissing
Crook-pated
Dismal-dreaming
Dizzy-eyed
Doghearted
Dread-bolted
Earth-vexing
Fat-kidneyed
Fen-sucked
Flap-mouthed
Fly-bitten
Folly-fallen
Fool-born
Full-gorged
Guts-gripping
Half-faced
Hasty-witted
Hedge-born
Hell-hated
Idle-headed
Ill-breeding
Ill-nurtured
Knotty-pated
Milk-livered
Motley-minded
Onion-eyed
Pottle-deep
Pox-marked
Reeling-ripe
Rough-hewn
Rude-growing
Shard-borne
Sheep-biting
Spur-galled
Swag-bellied
Tardy-gaited
Tickle-brained
Toad-spotted
Urchin-snouted

Column 3

Apple-john
Baggage
Barnacle
Bladder
Boar-pig
Bugbear
Bum-bailey
Canker-blossom
Clack-dish
Clotpole
Coxcomb
Codpiece
Death-token
Dewberry
Flap-dragon
Flax-wench
Flirt-gill
Foot-licker
Fustilarian
Giglet
Gudgeon
Haggard
Harpy
Hedge-pic
Horn-beast
Hugger-mugger
Lewdster
Lout
Maggot-pie
Malt-worm
Mammet
Measle
Minnow
Miscreant
Moldwarp
Mumble-news
Nut-hook
Pigeon-egg
Pignut
Puttock
Pumpion
Ratsbane
Scut
Skainsmate
Vassal
Whey-face

Essay Questions and Activities

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

- 1) Reconciliation is a major theme throughout *King Lear*. Cordelia, King Lear's most beloved daughter, refuses to pay false homage to him in exchange for land in the kingdom as her sisters, Goneril and Regan do. Feeling deeply betrayed, Lear exiles Cordelia, but she remains true to her love for him. When the two encounter one another in Act IV, Lear assumes Cordelia hates him as much as her sisters do, but instead, she forgives him. Why does Cordelia choose to forgive her father? What does reconciliation mean to you?
- 2) Cordelia describing her sisters in Act V of the play:

For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey,
And her mouth is smoother than oil;
But in the end she's more bitter than wormwood,
sharper than a two edged sword. (5.3-5)

This passage in particular highlights the stereotypes associated with women at this time. A woman could be considered "immoral" for any number of reasons, many of which were based in deeply rooted and

damaging stereotypes that had little to nothing to do with reality. Women's conduct was highly monitored and restricted. It should be noted that Goneril and Regan's way with words, their verbal dexterity was not so much of a problem for Lear when they were singing his false praises, only when they went against what was expected of them as daughters and women. How do Cordelia, Regan, and Goneril fit the stereotypes we associate with what it means to be a woman in today's society? How do they subvert these same stereotypes?

- 3) Discuss the role of The Fool in the play. Why are his words and actions accepted by Lear while Cordelia is disavowed and Kent is banished, both for speaking their minds?
- 4) Some scholars believe that Cordelia and the Fool would have been played by the same actor, and so the Fool had to disappear from the play as soon as Cordelia returned. If you chose to perform *King Lear* today, would you perhaps have the same actor portray both characters?

ACTIVITIES:

1. THE STORM

The natural world plays a huge role in *King Lear*. In Act 3, scene 4, Lear rushes out into a raging thunderstorm after having had a particularly brutal fight with his daughters, Goneril and Regan. This storm is an outward/physical representation of Lear's inner turmoil. This activity will allow students to create a storm using their bodies/voices.

- Have the students think about physically and vocally embodying different parts of the storm, i.e. rain and wind, as well as other aspects of the physical environment that Lear finds himself in. This can be done through a series of snaps, stomps, whistles, lighting changes, etc. See what the experience is when starting the storm off quietly, and then gradually getting louder as the storm's intensity increases. Discuss how this can be related to our emotions and what can make us lose control or finally choose to speak out.
- This exercise can then be taken to another level by having a few students volunteer to speak a few lines of text, while the rest of the class continues with the storm.
- The class can choose to have the storm change with

how the reader portrays the emotions in the text or they can give the challenge of keeping the storm loud and have the reader try to get their words out through this disruption. Whatever the class chooses, discuss the experience of each variation together. For example, ask the students how it felt to read Lear's lines aloud as the storm was raging all around them.

2. CORNERS

This activity gives students the opportunity to think about how they would respond were they in a similar situation to characters in *King Lear*.

- Choose four corners in the room. Decide on which corner will represent agree, strongly agree, disagree, and strongly disagree.
- Create a list of questions/statements to ask the class on the themes of the play-questions/statements that do not necessarily have a right/wrong answer, but rather ask students to think about their own positions on things such as aging, reconciliation, death, love, family, etc.
- When asked one of the questions, students will move to one of the four corners based on if they

Activities Continued...

agree, disagree, or are unsure. Then move if they're response changes for the next question.

- Try not to have discussions during the activity. If possible, the only sound should be the questions being asked and then the students moving around.
 - Afterwards, have the students come together and discuss how doing this activity was for them. Were they ever alone in a corner? How did that feel? Were they ever surprised by how many people responded the same way to a question? Did they ever go to the "unsure" corner? Why?

3. BLIND DRAWINGS

When taking a close look at Shakespeare's writing, you can see that he commonly repeats words. These words are used to illustrate the ideas that he is exploring throughout the play. In *King Lear* the words "see", "sight", "blind" and "eyes" are used multiple times. The words are both used in literal and metaphorical ways. Lear is surrounded by faithfulness and honor but his inability to recognize it is what brings him into madness. This activity will give the students a way of exploring the use of words in a way similar to Shakespeare.

- Break off into partners and sit back to back.
- Partner "A" draws a picture of anything they wish (must be appropriate of course)
- Encourage partners to use many colors and details
- When player "A" is finished drawing, their task is to describe to "B" exactly how to draw what they drew without turning around to show them.
 - "A" can use any description they please to communicate how to have "B" succeed in recreating their drawing from the other side. However, make sure they don't turn around at any point!
- When "B" feels they are done, both "A" and "B" turn around to compare drawings.

Discuss—Did the partners have any misunderstandings? What was the reaction to not being able to see what you were trying to draw? What were ways that communication was important? Did "A" think they were communicating better than they were?

Source: California Shakespeare Theater www.calshakes.org



The Crown of Margaret of York, c. 1300

4. MALEVOLENT OR BENEVOLENT?

By studying the major speeches and soliloquies of Edgar and Edmund, students might begin to see things in a way that possibly changes their initial assumption or perspective of these characters.

Prep needed: copies of speeches and/or soliloquies for both Edmund and Edgar that track the characters from the beginning to the end (example, Edmund monologue from Act I, scene 2)

- Divide the class into two teams. With a flip of a coin, one of the teams will be assigned Edmund and the other will get Edgar. Distribute the appropriate handouts to each team.
- Each team will be responsible for analyzing the various speeches and soliloquies of their assigned character.
- Have the students read the speeches/soliloquies several times for clarity and understanding. Underline any words that may be unfamiliar and then look up their various meanings.
- Have students create a tableaux (or frozen picture) that represents their specific character.
- Compare the two images and discuss.
- **Post-Activity Discussion:** After seeing the development of these two characters can you label one as benevolent and the other as malevolent? Why or why not?

Edited from: Stratford Festival Activities

Resources and Suggestions for Further Reading

ARTICLES

"King Lear" Wikipedia

Article Link: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Lear

Truskinovsky, Alexander M. "Literary Psychiatric Observation and Diagnosis Through the Ages: King Lear Revisited" (South Med J. 2002;95(3))

Staveley, Brian. "King Lear: The Syntax and Scansion of Insanity"

Article Link: <http://www.tor.com/2015/04/13/king-lear-the-syntax-and-scansion-of-insanity/>

Bonnet, N. (2012). "Shakespeare's King Lear: The Promised End ." Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse, 4(09).

Article Link: <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=690>

Plunkett, Adam. "Keats and King Lear"

Article Link: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/features/articles/detail/70201>



London in Shakespeare's time

Maclean, Norman. "Episode, Scene, Speech, and Word: The Madness of Lear" *Critics and Criticism: Ancient and Modern*, 1952, edited by R.S. Crane.

"'Allows itself to anything:' Poor Tom Familiarizing and Enacting Chaos in King Lear." Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse, 1(10).

Article Link: <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=20>

BOOKS

The Year of Lear by James Shapiro. 2015.

Performing King Lear: Gielgud to Russell Beale by Jonathan Croall. 2015.

Everybody's Shakespeare: Reflections Chiefly on the Tragedies by Maynard Mack. 1994.

WEB VIDEOS

Harvard Lecture (Engl E-129) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgRH2vpTZUU>

King Lear (Shakespeare)—Thug Notes Summary & Analysis - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g17ziHN59tg>

Talking Lear: Simon Russell Beale on King Lear - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgXM0b6PaHw>

www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgXM0b6PaHw

Ian McKellen: Understanding King Lear, the Character - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahFtoCq6CHw>

Insults by Shakespeare - April Gudenrath - <http://ed.ted.com/lessons/insults-by-shakespeare>

About Theatre Arts

KEY THEATRICAL TERMS

Today, movies and television take audiences away from what was once the number one form of amusement: going to the theatre. But attending a live theatrical performance is still one of the most thrilling and active forms of entertainment.

In a theatre, observers are catapulted into the action, especially at an intimate venue like *A Noise Within*, whose thrust stage reaches out into the audience and whose actors can see, hear, and feel the response of the crowd.

Although playhouses in the past could sometimes be rowdy, participating in the performance by giving respect and attention to the actors is the most appropriate behavior at a theatrical performance today. Shouting out (or even whispering) can be heard throughout the auditorium, as can rustling paper or ringing phones.

After *A Noise Within's* performance of *The Maids*, you will have the opportunity to discuss the play's content and style with the performing artists and directors. You may wish to remind students to observe the performance carefully or to compile questions ahead of time so they are prepared to participate in the discussion.

blocking: The instructions a director gives his actors that tell them how and where to move in relation to each other or to the set in a particular scene.

character: The personality or part portrayed by an actor on stage.

conflict: The opposition of people or forces which causes the play's rising action.

dramatic irony: A dramatic technique used by a writer in which a character is unaware of something the audience knows.

genre: Literally, "kind" or "type." In literary terms, genre refers to the main types of literary form, principally comedy and tragedy. It can also refer to forms that are more specific to a given historical era, such as the revenge tragedy, or to more specific sub-genres of tragedy and comedy such as the comedy of manners, farce or social drama.

motivation: The situation or mood which initiates an action. Actors often look for their "motivation" when they try to dissect how a character thinks or acts.

props: Items carried on stage by an actor to represent objects mentioned in or implied by the script. Sometimes the props are actual, sometimes they are manufactured in the theatre shop.

proscenium stage: There is usually a front curtain on a proscenium stage. The audience views the play from the front through a "frame" called the proscenium arch. In this scenario, all audience

members have the same view of the actors.

set: The physical world created on stage in which the action of the play takes place.

setting: The environment in which a play takes place. It may include the historical period as well as the physical space.

stage areas: The stage is divided into areas to help the director to note where action will take place. Upstage is the area furthest from the audience. Downstage is the area closest to the audience. Center stage defines the middle of the playing space. Stage left is the actor's left as he faces the audience. Stage right is the actor's right as he faces the audience.

theme: The overarching message or main idea of a literary or dramatic work. A recurring idea in a play or story.

thrust stage: A stage that juts out into the audience seating area so that patrons are seated on three sides. In this scenario, audience members see the play from varying viewpoints. *A Noise Within* features a thrust stage.

About A Noise Within

A NOISE WITHIN A Noise Within produces classic theatre as an essential means to enrich our community by embracing universal human experiences, expanding personal awareness, and challenging individual perspectives. Our company of resident and guest artists performing in rotating repertory immerses student and general audiences in timeless, epic stories in an intimate setting.

Our most successful art asks our community to question beliefs, focus on relationships, and develop self-awareness. Southern California audiences of all ages and backgrounds build community together while engaging with this most visceral and primal of storytelling techniques. ANW's production of classic theatre includes all plays we believe will be part of our cultural legacy. We interpret these stories through the work of a professional resident company—a group of artists whose work is critical to their community—based on the belief that trust among artists and between artists and audience can only be built through an honest and continuing dialogue. Our plays will be performed in rotating repertory, sometimes simultaneously in multiple spaces, and buttressed by meaningful supporting programs to create a symphonic theatrical experience for artists and audience.

In its 25 year history, A Noise Within has garnered over 500 awards and commendations, including the Los Angeles Drama Critics' Circle's revered Polly Warfield Award for Excellence and the coveted Margaret Hartford Award for Sustained Excellence.

More than 40,000 individuals attend productions at a Noise Within annually. In addition, the theatre draws over 15,000 student participants to its arts education program, *Classics Live!* Students benefit from in-classroom workshops, conservatory training, subsidized tickets to matinee and evening performances, post-performance discussions with artists, and free standards-based study guides. ♦

Study Guides

A Noise Within creates study guides in alignment with core reading, listening, speaking, and performing arts standards to help educators prepare their students for their visit to our theatre. Study guides are available at no extra cost to download through our website: www.anoisewithin.org. The information and activities outlined in these guides are designed to work in compliance with the California VAPA standards, The Common Core, and 21st Century Learning Skills.

Study guides include background information on the plays and playwrights, historical context, textual analysis, in-depth discussion of A Noise Within's artistic interpretation of the work, statements from directors and designers, as well as discussion points and suggested classroom activities. Guides from past seasons are also available to download from the website.

Study Guide Credits

Alicia Green	Education Director and Editor
Leah Artenian	Education Associate
Craig Schwartz	Production Photography
Teresa English	Graphic Design
Anna Rodil	Contributor
Kimberly Kehoe	Education Intern and Contributor



CELEBRATE

25

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Geoff Elliott & Julia Rodriguez-Elliott
Producing Artistic Directors

ADDRESS 3352 E Foothill Blvd
Pasadena, CA 91107

TEL 626.356.3100

FAX 626.356.3120

EMAIL info@anoisewithin.org

WEB anoisewithin.org