

King Lear Act 2 Study Guide

Act 2, Scene 1 (2.1)

1. What news does Curran give Edmund?
2. How does Edmund use this information to further his plan against Edgar?
3. Why does Edmund advise Edgar to draw and pretend to fight with him?
4. What does Edmund do to further convince Gloucester of Edgar's evil intentions?
5. What is the judgment that Gloucester pronounces on Edgar after Edmund's explanation of the preceding events?
6. What does Gloucester promise Edmund?
7. What is Cornwall and Regan's reaction to Gloucester's plight? What do they promise him? What do they promise Edmund?
8. What are Cornwall and Regan's purposes in coming to visit Gloucester?

2.2

1. Why does Kent pick a fight with Oswald?
2. How does Oswald react to Kent's insults? How does he change when Cornwall and Regan are present?
3. How does Kent real rank affect his action in this scene?
4. How does Kent offend Cornwall and Regan? Why?
5. Why is punishing Kent in the stocks an insult to Lear?
6. What does this action show us about the attitudes of Cornwall and Regan toward Lear?
7. Why does Shakespeare show us these attitudes before Lear knows anything about them?
8. How does Gloucester react to the idea of the stocks? Why doesn't he demand that Kent be freed?
9. Before Kent sleeps, what does he read? How is this dramatically important to the plot?

2.3

1. What disguise does Edgar take to prevent being discovered?
2. How do the disguises of Kent and Edgar work to reinforce the theme of the play?

2.4

1. How does Lear react to finding Kent in stocks?
2. What does the fool indicate has happened to most of the king's gentlemen?
3. What is Cornwall and Regan's first response to being summoned to Lear? How does Lear react to their response?
4. How does Lear first greet Regan?
5. Why does he at first ignore the question of Kent and the punishment in the stocks?
6. What gesture does Regan make to show Lear where her sympathies lie?
7. Why is Regan's denial of Lear even worse than Goneril's?
8. What do Lear's words "I gave you all" tell us about him?
9. What does Lear's attempt to fall back on Goneril's offer tell us about him? What dramatic effect does this have? (How does it manipulate the audience?)
10. Reread the Lear's famous protest which begins "O, reason not the need!" What idea does Shakespeare stress in this speech? What is man's *true* need?
11. How is Lear's pride so agonizingly embarrassed in lines 305-320?
12. How does Shakespeare portray the heartlessness of Lear's daughters effectively at the end of this scene?
13. Recall Lear's words from 1.1, "Nothing will come of nothing." How do these words relate to this scene?
14. What is the dramatic significance of the impending storm in the background at the end of this scene?
15. How is the dramatic timing of the appearance of the storm in nature effective?