

King Lear Act 4 Study Guide

Act 4, Scene 1 (4.1)

1. What philosophy is Edgar espousing when we first see him?
2. How does this philosophy change when he beholds his blinded father?
3. Explain Gloucester's words, "As flies to wanton boys are we to gods./ They kill us for their sport."

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4.4

1. What order does Cordelia give? What does she fear?
2. According to Cordelia, what is France's purpose for being in England? Why does she make this point?

4.5

1. What do we learn from the conversation between Regan and Oswald concerning Edmund? Gloucester? Regan herself?

4.6

1. Why has Edgar changed his disguise?
2. How does Edgar trick Gloucester? Why does he go through this elaborate hoax?
3. How does Edgar describe the beggar who led to him Dover (Edgar himself) to Gloucester? Why is this convincing to Gloucester?
4. In Lear's madness, he continues his growth as a character. What does he finally admit to himself that indicates this growth?
5. Why does Lear rave against women?
6. Explain Lear's words, "Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality" when Gloucester wants to kiss his hand.
7. What is the thematic significance of the dialogue between blind Gloucester and mad Lear?
8. How does Lear now view the concept of justice in the world of men? How would this have made him a better king?
9. Explain Lear's words beginning, "We came crying hither...."

10. What news does the gentleman (messenger from Cordelia) give to Edgar?

11. How does Oswald die? Why is it an appropriate death for him?

12. What is the content of the letter Oswald was carrying to Edmund?

4.7

1. Why does Kent prefer to remain in disguise?

2. How does Cordelia engage our sympathy for the exhausted Lear?

3. What does Lear first think when he sees Cordelia?

4. What is Lear's condition at this point in the play?

5. How does Lear's return to sanity relate symbolically to the theme?