



SOUTHERN SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

King Lear Read-Along Activities

These activities were developed by SSC as part of a social media “Community Read-Along” series designed to engage the community in a fashion similar to that of an online book club. Each week 3-4 scenes were “assigned” and SSC’s Facebook Page facilitated a dialogue around the text – providing thought points, discussion questions, and activities for theatre students.

King Lear

ACT 2, SCENES 1-2

In the first of these two scenes we once again meet Edmund, the base-born son of Gloucester, who we watch trick his brother Edgar into fleeing and the further manipulate his father into believing Edgar is plotting patricide. In the second of these two scenes we are witness to another quarrel between the disguised Kent (in service to Lear) and the rebellious Oswald in (service to Goneril).



Kent being placed in stocks at the end of Act 2, Scene 2 – 1962 production of King Lear

Discussion Questions:

- The character of Edmund is an example of a classic character type, the Machiavel – named after Niccolo Machiavelli. The Machiavel uses his cunning to manipulate others and ensure that he gets what he wants, being driven entirely by self-interest. Another example of a Machiavel character is Iago from Othello! Can you think of any non-Shakespearean examples of a Machiavel character type?
- In Act 2, Scene 1 we see the illegitimate son of Gloucester, Edmund, use his intelligence to outwit both his father and his brother. In Shakespeare’s time, illegitimacy was considered a sign of degeneracy and corruption with these children often being labeled as “bastard” or “base” - however, in today’s society we have largely moved past this mindset and understand that all children are loved by their parents and family equally, regardless of their parents’ marital status. Can you think of any other social customs or beliefs from Elizabethan England that we have abolished today?
- The character of Oswald, Goneril’s servant, is depicted as a self-serving, cowardly social climber who functions as a parallel (or foil) to Kent’s honest and plain-speaking version of a servant. In literature, a foil is a character that contrasts with another character, with the two characters highlighting each other’s qualities through comparison. Can you think of two characters from a popular movie or TV show who could be considered “foils” for one another?

#sscREADALONG

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King Lear Read-Along Activities - Act 2, Scenes 1-2

Student Activities

At the top of Act 2, Scene 2 we witness Kent and Oswald arrive at Gloucester's castle, both with messages for Regan. Kent immediately launches into a verbal and nearly physical attack on Oswald that is only broken up by the arrival of Gloucester, Regan, and Cornwall. Some notable gems from the verbal blitzkrieg unleashed upon Oswald include "glassgazing, super-serviceable finical rogue", "unbolted villain", and "zed- thou un-necessary letter"!

Choose one word from each of the columns below to fill in the blanks and create your own Shakespearean insult!

"Thou _____"

Shakespeare Insult Kit

Combine one word from each of the three columns below, prefaced with "Thou":

Column 1

artless
bawdy
beslubbering
bootless
churlish
cockered
clouted
craven
currish
dankish
dissembling
droning
errant
fawning
fobbing
froward
frothy
gleeking
goatish
gorbellied
impertinent
infectious
jarring
loggerheaded
lumpish
mammering
mangled
mewling
paunchy
pribbling
puking
puny
qualling
rank
reeky
roguish
ruttish
saucy
spleeny
spongy
surly
tottering
unmuzzled
vain
venomed
villainous
warped
wayward
weedy
yeasty

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
elf-skinned
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
plume-plucked
pottle-deep
pox-marked
reeling-ripe
rough-hewn
rude-growing
rump-fed
shard-borne
sheep-biting
spur-galled
swag-bellied
tardy-gaited
tickle-brained
toad-spotted
unchin-snouted
weather-bitten

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-pig
horn-beast
hugger-mugger
joithead
lewdster
lout
maggot-pie
malt-worm
mammet
measle
minnow
miscreant
moldwarp
mumble-news
nut-hook
pigeon-egg
pignut
puttock
pumpion
ratsbane
scut
skainsmate
strumpet
varlot
vassal
whey-face
wagtail