

THE TRAGEDY OF KING LEAR

Act 1 • Scene 1

Shakespeare

Close Reading Sample

This scene is an example of the ISC Readers' Editions of the plays that are designed for reading out loud—with friends! Just jump in with a fellow reader or two.

Synopsis: King Lear, who is in his eighties, decides to divide his kingdom between his three daughters, claiming he will divvy out their portions dependent on how much they say they love him. The youngest daughter, Cordelia, rebels against this process, and Lear disinherits her. The two older sisters, Goneril and Regan, are to care for Lear and his retinue, but they default on their obligations and Lear ends up in a field during a storm. Meanwhile, the Earl of Gloucester, whom we meet in the first scene, is duped by his bastard son, Edmund, into abandoning his legitimate son, Edgar, and is a victim in one of the most horrific scenes in all of Shakespeare.

The two married daughters go to battle to each take the whole kingdom for themselves, and both fight over Edmund the Bastard as well. Cordelia comes back to France to help her father, but alas, everyone learns their profound lessons much too late.

The original King Leir, whose story Shakespeare has adapted, reigned in Britain in 800 BCE.



edited, design, and produced by

Robin Williams

The Tragedy of King Lear, Shakespeare

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The text in this book is from the First Folio, the first collected works of Shakespeare, printed in 1623, seven years after Shakespeare died, with additions as appropriate from the first Quarto. With a few minor exceptions, this edition uses the punctuation found in the First Folio; it also maintains the original spellings of words such as *my self* and *to day*. Explanations of words reflect the meanings they had at the time they were written, using the Oxford English Dictionary (OED).

Notes on this sample

We always suggest a slow and close read, where you pause at any moment to clarify what you just read and talk about it. We made up a **Beep** system, where anyone can say *Beep!* to stop the reading for a quick clarification or discussion.

The **sidebar comments** are sometimes clarification and oftentimes talking points. Of course, you can ignore them completely.

The **small dot** (•) after a word indicates there is a **gloss**, or definition, to the right of that line. I call it a *substitution gloss* because you can substitute that word while you're reading (or just in your head) to help make sense of the sentence.

An **apostrophe**, unless the word is possessive, indicates that a letter has been left out, as in *weigh'd*—this is Shakespeare's technique to ensure that you don't say the word as two syllables, as *weigh-ed*.

An **accent mark**, as in *deceivèd*, indicates that you *do* say that syllable, so *deceived* becomes three syllables: *de-ceiv-ed*. Occasionally the accent mark indicates that the accent is on that particular syllable, where you might not naturally put it, as in *revènue*.

It is always helpful to have someone read the **stage directions** so everyone stays in the same place. The **stage directions in bold** are in the original texts; the light text face is editorial to clarify what is going on.

The **First Folio** is the collected works of Shakespeare, a large and heavy volume, printed in 1623; the **quartos** are small paperback versions. *King Lear* has two quartos in print and the large Folio, so there are many discrepancies between the two. I call out some of these, as on page 9, line 186.

Have fun!

THE TRAGEDY OF KING LEAR

In this first scene, Shakespeare sets up parallel stories of family dynamics that will unfold throughout the play.

They enter in the middle of a conversation, called in medias res. What impression does that create?

So Gloucester knows a **division** is imminent, indicating both his close relationship with King Lear and potential trouble brewing.

He is embarrassed about his own son?

Note he mentions that **she** had a son, not himself. What are the realities of the situation for this unwed mother?

Proper means Edmund seems well-mannered, respectable, and handsome.

Act 1 • Scene 1: In Lear's castle (347 lines)

[Enter the Earl of **Kent**, the Earl of **Gloucester**, and Gloucester's illegitimate son called **Edmund** the Bastard.]

KENT

1 I thought the King had more affected[•] favored
2 the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.

GLOUCESTER

3 It did always seem so to us,
4 but now in the division of the kingdom,
5 it appears not which of the Dukes he values most,
6 for qualities[•] are so weigh'd[•] their qualities; balanced
7 that curiosity[•] in neither scrupulous attention
8 can make choice of either's moiety.[•] portion

[Kent notices Edmund.]

KENT

9 Is not this your son, my Lord?

GLOUCESTER

10 His breeding,[•] Sir, hath been at my charge. care & education
11 I have so often blush'd to acknowledge him
12 that now I am braz'd[•] to 't. hardened (as brass)

KENT

13 I cannot conceive[•] you. understand

GLOUCESTER

14 Sir, this young fellow's mother could,[•] could conceive of me
15 whereupon she grew round-womb'd
16 and had indeed, Sir, a son for her cradle
17 ere[•] she had a husband for her bed. before
18 Do you smell a fault?

KENT

19 I cannot wish the fault undone,
20 the issue[•] of it being so proper. offspring

	GLOUCESTER	
<i>Now he says "I" have a son. Do the math—at what point was Gloucester cheating on his wife?</i>	21 But I have a son, Sir, by order of law, 22 some year elder than this, 23 who yet is no dearer in my account. 24 Though this knave came something saucily to the world 25 before he was sent for, yet was his mother fair, 26 there was good sport at his making, 27 and the whoreson must be acknowledg'd. 28 [<i>to Edmund</i>] Do you know this noble gentleman, Edmund?	<i>legitimacy about a (Edmund) pretty</i>
<i>Both knave and whoreson can be used affectionately, but they still feel derogatory.</i>	EDMUND THE BASTARD	
	29 No, my Lord.	
	GLOUCESTER [<i>to Edmund</i>]	
	30 My Lord of Kent: 31 remember him hereafter as my honorable friend.	
	EDMUND THE BASTARD [<i>to Kent</i>]	
	32 My services to your Lordship.	
	KENT	
	33 I must love you, 34 and sue to know you better.	<i>have a duty to beg</i>
	EDMUND THE BASTARD	
	35 Sir, I shall study deserving.	<i>strive to be</i>
	GLOUCESTER [<i>to Kent</i>]	
<i>What does Gloucester mean by this?</i>	36 He hath been out nine years, 37 and away he shall again.	<i>boarded elsewhere</i>
	<i>[Sennet, a horn announcement.]</i>	
	38 The King is coming.	

This first part of the scene should not be overlooked. Shakespeare sets up tension in the looming **division** of the kingdom, **favoritism**, **family dynamics**, the appearance of Edmund who *seems* to be a **proper** young man, a bit of **Gloucester's character** as well as **Kent's**—all preparation for the next family and courtiers we meet.

We now also realize we need to watch for **lechery**: indulgence of lust, lewdness of living. Why might this be a theme? Is it a form of madness? It can, as you know, interrupt the world order, destroy boundaries, wreak havoc among families.

In this grand entrance, picture the tableau of a Royal Lear, dressed and crowned; he probably sits on a throne, surrounded by his three daughters. Later, compare this with the final scene.

Enter King Lear, who is more than eighty years old; then his sons-in-law, the Dukes of Albany and Cornwall; next, Lear's eldest daughter, Goneril, married to Albany; Lear's middle daughter, Regan, married to Cornwall; Lear's youngest daughter Cordelia, as yet unmarried; with followers, one bearing a coronet, a small crown designed for someone below the rank of King.]

LEAR *[to Gloucester]*

39 Attend the Lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester.

GLOUCESTER

40 I shall, my Lord.

[Exit Gloucester.]

It's important to note and remember that Gloucester does not witness the following scene.

LEAR

Lear speaks in the royal we.

41 Mean time we shall express our darker purpose.

concealed

42 Give me the map there.

[A map of Britain is displayed.]

Note the three reasons why Lear wants to relinquish his throne.

43 Know we have divided

44 In three our kingdom, and 'tis our fast intent

fixed

45 To shake all cares and business from our age,

46 Conferring them on younger strengths, while we,

47 Unburden'd, crawl toward death. Our son of Cornwall,

son-in-law

48 And you, our no less loving son of Albany,

son-in-law

49 We have this hour a constant will to publish

resolute

It becomes quite ironic that Lear hopes to prevent future strife by this act.

50 Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife

separate

51 May be prevented now.

52 The princes, France and Burgundy,

53 Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,

What might we infer from the wooers having been long in our court?

54 Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,

55 And here are to be answer'd. Tell me, my daughters

56 (Since now we will divest us both of rule,

57 Interest of territory, cares of state)

58 Which of you shall we say doth love us most,

Note that the prize is the largest bounty.

59 That we our largest bounty may extend

grant

60 Where Nature doth with Merit challenge. Goneril,

lay claim as due

61 Our eldest born, speak first.

Nature is a significant theme. It shows up in the sense of the innate affection of the heart and mind; as significant of family relationships; in the physical and moral constitution of man; as personal character; as human life, vitality; as well as in senses of natural philosophy, the power or force which is fundamental to the physical and mental functioning of a human being, and more. Watch for it.

	62	GONERIL	
	63	Sir, I love you more than word can wield [•] the matter;	<i>express</i>
<i>Eye-sight, eyes, seeing, are a critical motif in this play; later, it is Goneril who suggests plucking out someone's eyes.</i>	64	Dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty,	
	65	Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare,	
	66	No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honor:	
	67	As much as child e'er lov'd or father found [•] ;	<i>found himself loved</i>
	68	A love that makes breath [•] poor, and speech unable [•] ;	<i>words; inadequate</i>
<i>What think you of Goneril's speech?</i>	69	Beyond all manner of so much I love you.	
		CORDELIA [<i>aside to the audience</i>]	
<i>Cordelia speaks her own name.</i>	70	What shall Cordelia speak? Love and be silent.	
		[<i>Lear indicates a portion of the map.</i>]	
		LEAR	
	71	Of all these bounds even from this line, to this,	
<i>Champaign is pronounced CHAMP ain, with ch as in cheese.</i>	72	With shadowy forests, and with champaigns [•] rich'd	<i>open country</i>
	73	With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads, [•]	<i>meadows</i>
<i>Now we know Goneril is young enough to bear children.</i>	74	We make thee Lady. To thine and Albany's issues [•]	<i>children</i>
	75	Be this perpetual. [<i>to Regan</i>] What says our second daughter,	
		Our dearest Regan, wife of Cornwall?	
		REGAN	
	76	I am made of that self-mettle as my sister,	
	77	And prize me at her worth. [•] In my true heart	<i>equal value</i>
	78	I find she names my very deed of love—	
<i>Watch Regan throughout the play as she constantly tries to out-do her sister.</i>	79	Only she comes too short—that [•] I profess	<i>in that</i>
	80	My self an enemy to all other joys	
	81	Which the most precious square [•] of sense professes,	<i>guide</i>
	82	And find I am alone felicitate [•]	<i>made happy</i>
<i>What think you of Regan's speech?</i>	83	In your dear Highness' love.	
		CORDELIA [<i>aside to the audience</i>]	
<i>Cordelia again speaks her name straight to the audience, endearing us to her.</i>	84	Then poor Cordelia—	
	85	And yet not so, since I am sure my love's	
	86	More ponderous [•] than my tongue.	<i>profound</i>
		[<i>Lear indicates a large portion of the map.</i>]	
		LEAR	
<i>So Regan is also of childbearing age.</i>	87	To thee, and thine hereditary [•] ever,	<i>heirs</i>
	88	Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom,	
	89	No less in space, validity, and pleasure	
<i>Regan's portion is equal to Goneril's.</i>	90	Than that conferr'd on Goneril.	
	91	[<i>to Cordelia</i>] Now our joy,	
<i>He addresses his other daughters in the familiar form, thee, but Cordelia in the more respectful form, you.</i>	92	Although our last and least, to whose young love	
	93	The vines of France and milk of Burgundy	
<i>Note also that Lear has already decided Cordelia's third is to be more opulent.</i>	94	Strive to be interest'd, [•] what can you say	<i>legally affiliated</i>
	95	To draw [•] a third more opulent than your sisters'?	<i>win</i>
	96	Speak.	

	CORDELIA	
	97 Nothing, my Lord.	
	LEAR	
<i>Nothing is a critical word to watch throughout the play.</i>	98 Nothing?	
	CORDELIA	
	99 Nothing.	
	LEAR	
	100 Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.	
	CORDELIA	
	101 Unhappy [*] that I am, I cannot heave	<i>ill-fated & miserable</i>
	102 My heart into my mouth: I love your Majesty	
<i>Consider the various meanings of bond.</i>	103 According to my bond, no more nor less.	
	LEAR	
	104 How, how, Cordelia? Mend your speech a little,	
	105 Lest you may mar your fortunes.	
	CORDELIA	
	106 Good my Lord,	
	107 You have begot me, bred [*] me, lov'd me. I	<i>raised & educated</i>
	108 Return those duties back as are right fit—	
<i>She claims to obey her Father, but is she obeying him right now?</i>	109 Obey you, love you, and most honor you.	
	110 Why have my sisters husbands, if they say	
	111 They love you all? Haply, [*] when I shall wed,	<i>fortunately</i>
<i>Plight can mean both engagement or unfortunate situation.</i>	112 That Lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry	
	113 Half my love with him, half my care and duty.	
	114 Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,	
	115 To love my Father all. [*]	<i>exclusively</i>
	LEAR	
<i>Now he addresses her with thy.</i>	116 But goes thy heart with this?	
	CORDELIA	
	117 Ay, my good Lord.	
	LEAR	
	118 So young, and so untender?	
	CORDELIA	
<i>Cordelia "speaks truth to power," as only a licensed Fool is allowed to do in the royal court.</i>	119 So young, my Lord, and true.	

		LEAR	
	120	Let it be so: thy truth then be thy dower—	
	121	For by the sacred radiance of the Sun,	
<i>Hecate is the glorious and powerful triple Goddess. Lear calls on the ancient powers in a prayer of sorts.</i>	122	The mysteries of Hecate and the Night,	
	123	By all the operation ^o of the orbs, ^o	<i>influence; planets</i>
	124	From whom ^o we do exist, and cease to be,	<i>under whose control</i>
	125	Here I disclaim all my paternal care,	
	126	Propinquity, ^o and property ^o of blood,	<i>kinship; rights</i>
	127	And as a stranger to my heart and me,	
<i>What is this?</i>	128	Hold thee—from this—for ever. The barbarous Scythian,	
<i>The ancient Scythians in central Eurasia were famous for their savagery.</i>	129	Or he that makes his generation ^o messes ^o	<i>children; into meals</i>
	130	To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom	
	131	Be as well neighbor'd, piti'd, and reliev'd ^o	<i>comforted</i>
	132	As thou, my sometime ^o daughter.	<i>former</i>
		KENT	
<i>Kent addresses Lear using one of the highest forms of address, my Liege.</i>	133	Good my Liege—	
		LEAR	
	134	Peace, Kent!	
	135	Come not between the Dragon and his wrath.	
<i>Could this favoritism be a source of problems?</i>	136	I lov'd her most, and thought to set my rest ^o	<i>restful old age</i>
	137	On her kind nursery.	
	138	[to Cordelia] Hence ^o and avoid my sight—	<i>away from here</i>
	139	[to the others] So be my grave my peace, as here I give	
<i>If he has to ask Who stirs?, perhaps everyone is too shocked to move.</i>	140	Her father's heart from ^o her. Call France. Who stirs?	<i>away from</i>
	141	Call Burgundy.	
<i>Remember, the King of France and Duke of Burgundy are hoping to marry Cordelia.</i>		[Exit an attendant.]	
	142	Cornwall and Albany,	
	143	With my two daughters' dowers, digest ^o the third.	<i>absorb</i>
<i>Cornwall and Albany are the husbands of Regan and Goneril.</i>	144	Let pride, which she calls plainness, ^o marry her.	<i>honest speaking</i>
	145	I do invest you jointly with my power,	
	146	Preeminence, and all the large effects ^o	<i>outward shows</i>
	147	That troop with Majesty. Our self by monthly course,	
	148	With reservation ^o of a hundred knights	<i>reserving for myself</i>
<i>Make sure you understand what Lear demands.</i>	149	By you to be sustain'd, ^o shall our abode	<i>fed & housed</i>
	150	Make with you ^o by due turn; only we ^o shall retain	<i>each of you; I</i>
<i>Note everything goes to the sons-in-law, not the daughters. Do the women react to this?</i>	151	The name, and all th' addition ^o to a King.	<i>honors</i>
	152	The sway, ^o revènuè, execution of the rest,	<i>authority</i>
	153	Belovèd sons, ^o be yours, which to confirm,	<i>sons-in-law</i>
<i>How does he give them the coronet? How will they part one coronet between them?</i>	154	This coronet part between you.	
		KENT	
<i>Kent lowers his address from Liege to Royal.</i>	155	Royal Lear,	
	156	Whom I have ever honor'd as my King,	
	157	Lov'd as my Father, as my Master follow'd,	
	158	As my great Patron thought on in my prayers—	

LEAR

159 The bow is bent and drawn; make[•] from the shaft.[•] *move away; arrow*

KENT

160 Let it fall rather,[•] *all the more quickly*

161 though the fork[•] invade *barbed arrowhead*

162 The region of my heart. Be Kent unmannerly

Astonishingly, Kent now calls the King mad and addresses him with thou and old man in a formal court setting. What does this indicate?

163 When Lear is mad: What wouldst thou do, old man?

164 Think'st thou that duty shall have dread[•] to speak *great fear*

165 When power to flattery bows?

166 To plainness[•] honor 's bound *plain honest speaking*

Honor and loyalty are bound to speak plainly.

167 When Majesty falls to folly. Reserve[•] thy state, *retain*

Re plainness, consider the parallels between Kent and Cordelia; see line 144.

168 And in thy best consideration, check[•] *put a halt to*

169 This hideous rashness. Answer my life my[•] judgment: *for my*

170 Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least,

171 Nor are those empty-hearted whose low[•] sounds *soft-spoken*

172 Reverb no hollowness.[•] *insincerity*

LEAR

173 Kent, on thy life, no more.

KENT

174 My life I never held but as a pawn

175 To wage against thine enemies, nor fear to lose it,[•] *my life*

176 Thy safety being the[•] motive. *my*

LEAR

177 Out of my sight!

KENT

This play is all about learning to see better.

178 See better, Lear, and let me still[•] remain *always*

179 The true blank[•] of thine eye. *focal point to aim at*

LEAR

Apollo, an archer, son of Zeus, is a prophetic God of the sun, of truth, and of healing, but is also a bringer of diseases and death with his arrows.

180 Now by Apollo—

KENT

181 Now, by Apollo, King,

182 thou swear'st thy Gods in vain.

[Lear apparently draws his sword and threatens Kent.]

LEAR

183 O vassal! Miscreant![•] *slave/heretic*

ALBANY and CORNWALL

Do they do something?

184 Dear Sir, forbear!

KENT

What does Kent mean?

185 Kill thy physician, and thy fee bestow

The quarto version has "Revoke thy doom" instead of Revoke thy gift. Which do you prefer?

186 Upon the foul disease. Revoke thy gift,

187 Or whilst I can vent clamor from my throat,

188 I'll tell thee thou dost evil.

LEAR

189 Hear me, recreant, on thine allegiance hear me: *unfaithful coward*
Remember, he speaks 190 That thou hast sought to make us break our vows, *because*
with the royal we. 191 Which we durst never yet, and with strain'd pride *dared to; forced*
192 To come betwixt our sentences and our power, *decisions*
193 Which nor our nature nor our place can bear, *neither; position as King*
194 Our potency made good, take thy reward: *authority; effectual*
195 Five days we do allot thee for provision
196 To shield thee from disasters of the world,
197 And on the sixth to turn thy hated back
Lear still assumes it is his kingdom. 198 Upon our kingdom; if on the next day following,
199 Thy banish'd trunk be found in our dominions,
Jupiter (aka Zeus) is the King of Gods. 200 The moment is thy death. Away! By Jupiter,
201 This shall not be revok'd.

KENT

202 Fare thee well, King; sith thus thou wilt appear, *since*
This is one of the many 203 Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here. *elsewhere*
references to an inversion 204 *[to Cordelia]* The Gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid,
of the natural order. 205 That justly think'st, and hast most rightly said. *who*
Words versus deeds. 206 *[to Goneril and Regan]* And your large speeches, *extravagant*
207 may your deeds approve, *prove true*
208 That good effects may spring from words of love.
209 *[to the courtiers]* Thus Kent, O princes, bids you all adieu;
Kent's rhyming couplets seem to 210 He'll shape his old course in a country new.
calm things down—for a moment.

[Exit Kent.]

[Flourish of horns. Enter the Earl of Gloucester with the King of France and Duke of Burgundy, and attendants.]

GLOUCESTER

211 Here's France and Burgundy, my noble Lord.

LEAR

212 My Lord of Burgundy,
213 We first address toward you, who with this King *King of France*
214 Hath rival'd for our daughter. What in the least
215 Will you require in present dower with her, *immediate*
216 Or cease your quest of love?

BURGUNDY

217 Most royal Majesty,
218 I crave no more than hath your Highness offer'd,
219 Nor will you tender less? *offer*

	LEAR	
	220 Right noble Burgundy,	
	221 When she was dear to us, we did hold her so,	dear
	222 But now her price [•] is fallen: Sir, there she stands.	honor & value
<i>How is she a little-seeming substance? Seem usually implies pretense or a deceptive appearance.</i>	223 If aught [•] within that little-seeming substance,	anything
	224 Or all of it, with our displeasure piec'd,	added
	225 And nothing more, may fitly like your Grace,	
	226 She's there, and she is yours.	
		BURGUNDY
	227 I know no answer.	
	LEAR	
	228 Will you, with those infirmities she owes [•] —	possesses
	229 Unfriended, new-adopted to our hate,	
	230 Dower'd with our curse, and stranger'd with our oath—	
	231 Take her, or leave her?	
	BURGUNDY	
	232 Pardon me, royal Sir,	
	233 Election [•] makes not up in such conditions.	a choice
	LEAR	
<i>What is the power that made him?</i>	234 Then leave her, Sir, for by the power that made me,	
	235 I tell you all her wealth. [to France] For you, great King,	
	236 I would not from your love make such a stray [•]	deviation
	237 To match you where I hate; therefore, beseech [•] you	I beg you
	238 T' avert your liking a [•] more worthier way	to a
<i>Lear believes the natural thing is for a daughter to obey her father unconditionally.</i>	239 Than on a wretch whom Nature is asham'd	
	240 Almost t' acknowledge hers.	
	FRANCE	
	241 This is most strange,	
	242 That she who e'en but now was your best òbject,	person of admiration
	243 The argument [•] of your praise, balm of your age,	theme
	244 The best, the dear'st, should in this trice [•] of time	instant
	245 Commit a thing so monstrous to dismantle [•]	unravel
	246 So many folds of favor: sure [•] her òffense	certainly
<i>Again, the idea is that it is unnatural, even monstrous, for a daughter to behave this way.</i>	247 Must be of such unnatural degree	
	248 That monsters it, or your fore-vouch'd [•] affection	former
	249 Fall into taint, [•] which to believe of her	discredit
	250 Must be a faith that reason—without miracle—	
	251 Should never plant in me.	

	CORDELIA	
	252 I yet beseech your Majesty—	
	253 If for I want that glib and oily art	<i>because; lack</i>
<i>Words versus deeds.</i>	254 To speak and purpose not, since what I will intend	
<i>The words of her sisters are promises</i>	255 I'll do 't before I speak—that you make known	
<i>they won't fulfill in deeds, whereas</i>	256 It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,	<i>immoral</i>
<i>Cordelia will act before she puts her</i>	257 No unchaste action or dishonor'd step	
<i>intentions into words.</i>	258 That hath depriv'd me of your grace and favor,	
	259 But even for want of that for which I am richer:	<i>merely; lack</i>
	260 A still-soliciting eye, and such a tongue	<i>always-begging</i>
	261 That I am glad I have not, though not to have it	
	262 Hath lost me in your liking.	
	LEAR	
	263 Better thou	
	264 Hadst not been born than not t' have pleased me better.	
	FRANCE	
	265 Is it but this? A tardiness in Nature	<i>hesitation</i>
<i>Words versus deeds.</i>	266 Which often leaves the history unspoke	<i>tale</i>
	267 That it intends to do? <i>[to Burgundy]</i> My Lord of Burgundy,	
	268 What say you to the Lady? Love's not love	
	269 When it is mingled with regards that stands	<i>considerations</i>
	270 Aloof from th' entire point. Will you have her?	<i>at a distance; essential</i>
	271 She is herself a dowry.	
	BURGUNDY <i>[to Lear]</i>	
	272 Royal King,	
<i>In performance, often</i>	273 Give but that portion which your self propos'd,	<i>merely</i>
<i>Burgundy takes Cordelia by</i>	274 And here I take Cordelia by the hand,	
<i>the hand, only to be shook</i>	275 Duchess of Burgundy.	
<i>off at line 281. It can be an</i>		
<i>important visual shock.</i>		
	LEAR	
	276 Nothing. I have sworn, I am firm.	
	BURGUNDY <i>[to Cordelia]</i>	
	277 I am sorry, then, you have so lost a Father,	
	278 That you must lose a husband.	
	CORDELIA	
	279 Peace be with Burgundy:	
<i>Realistically, this kind of</i>	280 Since that respect and fortunes are his love,	<i>position; wealth</i>
<i>marriage is political, and if</i>	281 I shall not be his wife.	
<i>Burgundy returned with a</i>		
<i>dowerless wife, his countrymen</i>		
<i>would be angry, as Shakespeare</i>		
<i>shows us in several of the</i>		
<i>English history plays.</i>		
	FRANCE	
	282 Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich, being poor;	<i>who</i>
	283 Most choice, forsaken; and most lov'd, despis'd:	<i>being forsaken</i>
	284 Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon,	
<i>France probably seizes</i>	285 Be it lawful I take up what's cast away.	
<i>Cordelia's hand here.</i>		
	<i>[France takes Cordelia's hand.]</i>	

The emotion heightens into rhyme. 286 Gods, Gods! 'Tis strange, that from their cold'st neglect
 287 My love should kindle to inflam'd respect.
 288 [*to Lear*] Thy dowerless daughter, King, thrown to my chance, *fortune*
 289 Is Queen of us, of ours, and our fair France.
 290 Not all the Dukes of wat'rish Burgundy
 291 Can buy this unpriz'd' precious maid of me. *unvalued/priceless*
 292 [*to Cordelia*] Bid them farewell, Cordelia,
 293 though unkind'; *they are unnatural*
 294 Thou lovest here, a better where to find.

LEAR

295 Thou hast her, France, let her be thine, for we
 296 Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see
 297 That face of hers again, therefore be gone,
 298 Without our grace, our love, our benison. *blessing*
 299 Come, noble Burgundy.

[Flourish of horns. Exeunt Lear, Burgundy, and others, as ceremoniously as they entered. Manent Goneril, Regan, Cordelia, and the King of France.]

FRANCE [*to Cordelia*]

300 Bid farewell to your sisters.

CORDELIA [*to Goneril and Regan*]

Her eyes, washed with tears, can see her sisters clearly. 301 The jewels of our Father, with wash'd eyes
 302 Cordelia leaves you. I know you what you are,
 303 And like a sister am most loath' to call *reluctant*
 304 Your faults, as they are nam'd. Love well our Father. *notorious*
 305 To your professèd bosoms I commit him;
 306 But yet, alas, stood I within his grace,
 307 I would prefer him to a better place.
 308 So farewell to you both.

What might she believe is a better place?

[Cordelia, with France, starts to leave.]

REGAN

309 Prescribe not us our duty. *dictate*

GONERIL

310 Let your study *endeavor*
 311 Be to content your Lord, who hath receiv'd you
 312 At Fortune's alms. You have obedience scant, *charity*
 313 And well are worth' the want' *deserving of; same lack of affection*
 314 that you have wanted. *shown your Father*

Does Goneril have a point? Did Cordelia scant her obedience?

CORDELIA

315 Time shall unfold what plighted' cunning hides; *pleated*
 316 Who' covers faults, at last with shame derides. *whoever*
 317 Well may you prosper.

You may cover your faults, but in the end your deeds will be uncovered and you will be mocked with shame.

FRANCE

318 Come, my fair Cordelia.

[Exeunt France and Cordelia.]

GONERIL

The sisters immediately shift the language to prose. Why?

319 Sister, it is not little I have to say
320 of what most nearly appertains to us both.
321 I think our Father will hence to-night.

leave here

REGAN

322 That's most certain, and with you;
323 next month with us.

to stay with

GONERIL

324 You see how full of changes his age is;
325 the observation we have made of it hath not been little.
326 He always loved our sister most,
327 and with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off
328 appears too grossly.

inconstancy

obviously

REGAN

What does it mean, to slenderly know oneself?

329 'Tis the infirmity of his age,
330 yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself.

only

GONERIL

331 The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash;
332 then must we look from his age,
333 to receive not alone the imperfections
334 of long-ingraff'd condition,
335 but therewithal the unruly way-wardness
336 that infirm and choleric years bring with them.

expect

only

implanted; habits

in addition

cranky

REGAN

337 Such unconstant starts are we like to have from him,
338 as this of Kent's banishment.

outbursts

GONERIL

339 There is further complement of leave-taking
340 between France and him.
341 Pray you, let us hit together.
342 If our Father carry authority
343 with such disposition as he bears,
344 this last surrender of his
345 will but offend us.

fulfillment

agree

continue to insist on

temperament

recent; abdication

be problematic for us

REGAN

346 We shall further think of it.

GONERIL

*Again, words and **thinking*** 347 We must do something, and i' th' heat.

*versus deeds and **doing**.*

[Exeunt.]

Lear gives away one **coronet** for the two Dukes to part between them. Who has the crown?

Although the Fool doesn't appear until Act 1.4, he seems to know everything that happens in this scene. Consider how that might impact a performance.

Regarding the speeches of Goneril and Regan to Lear: are they hypocritical or realistic per their places in the world and what is expected of them?

Cordelia, being now of marriageable age, is probably a young teenager. Consider her reaction to her father in that light—how might a (probably spoiled) fifteen-year-old react differently to Lear's request than someone older?

NOTES