

Act Three



The Storm

The storm reaches its crescendo in this act. Other than the stage directions, we rely on the characters dialogue to inform us of the nature of the storm. At the same time, Lear connects himself and his state of mind to the storm directly, using the word ‘tempest’.

- Locate three quotes in this act that demonstrate the power of the storm.
- Lear hopes that the storm will do something to the world. What is his wish? Why is this a significant moment of the play? How does it help us to understand his position at that point.
- Lear states that “*The tempest in my mind Doth from my senses take all feeling else Save what beats there.*” What does he mean by this? From these lines, what do we come to understand about Lear’s state of mind.
- Discuss how the storm is a symbol of not only Lear’s state of mind but of the state of the country at this point of the play. Be very specific about the action unfolding behind the dialouge,

Lear's Dialogue

Lear's speech begins to really shift in this act. Look back at Act One and note the long eloquent sentences he was speaking in. Comment on the following aspects of Lear's dialogue in this act and connect it to his current position (literal and symbolic):

- Sentence length
- Verse and Prose
- Word Choices
- Use of figurative devices
- Overall sense

Some of Lear's Highlights

"Here I stand your slave, A poor infirm, weak and despised old man."

"No, I will be the pattern of patience; I will say nothing."

"I am a man more sinned against than sinning."

"The tempest in my mind Doth from my senses take all feeling else Save what beats there."

"O, that way madness lies; let me shun that!"

"Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are, that bide the pelting of this pitiless storm...O, I have ta'en too little care of this! Take physic, pomp; Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel..."

"Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool and the cat no perfume..."

"Is there any cause in nature that make these hard hearts?"

The Greek Allusions

Throughout this act, the Greek allusions seems to be increasing in their inclusions.

- Do some research into Shakespeare's education (not just his early years but the suspected Classical education he received later in life). Comment on his knowledge of the Roman and Greek myths and scripts and reflect on **how and why** he may have used them as allusions in his plays.
- Thinking about this act, find three moments where Shakespeare uses a Greek or Roman allusion to add depth to an event or character. Explain the allusion.

The Clothing Symbolism

The clothing symbolism is developed again in this act.

- Reflect on its progression and how it advances Lear's status as a tragic hero. The following quote may be of use to you:

*“unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor bare forked animal as thou art. Off, off you lendings!
Come, unbutton here.”*

The Court Scene

Justice is served...in a small farmhouse during one of the worst storms ever seen in living memory. There is a sad social commentary in this scene about the notion of justice in our world.

- Comment on the state of the ‘justice system’ in this play, given that the only justice Lear can seek is in the farm house and during an imaginary court scene.
- The INjustice of the play is developed when Cornwall states “*Though well we may not pass upon his life/Without the form of justice, yet our power/Shall do a court’sy to our wrath, which men/May blame but not control.*” Explain what Cornwall is talking about here and comment on how it develops a the reality of justice that is presented in the play.

The Tension Builds

Shakespeare expertly uses irony of all kinds in this play to hammer home his key points. To refresh yourself on the three types of irony, [check out this short video.](#)

- Comment on how the tension is building via Shakespeare's use of dramatic irony in this act.
- Shakespeare is using situational irony to develop his sight imagery. Discuss the major event at the end of this act which utilizes irony to reinforce his message behind this imagery.
- This major event is violent and although the 'vile jelly' removal is not described in detail, the whole class cringed when it arose in the script. There have been no acts of violence until this point- why start with it now? What does it signal? Why?