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King Lear
BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



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Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading

Meter

Objective: Understanding and writing in iambic pentameter

Activity

Most of *King Lear* is written in blank verse—that is, verse that does not rhyme. The songs of the Fool, which always rhyme, are one major exception. In addition, the verse of *King Lear* is mainly written in **iambic pentameter**.

A line of **iambic pentameter** is made up of five “feet” (*penta* means “five”), each of which contains an **iamb**. An iamb is made up of two syllables, the first unstressed and the second stressed: daDUM. Examples of iambic words include intense (inTENSE), bizarre, contempt, and Michelle.

When we read it aloud, a line of iambic pentameter has the following rhythm:

daDUM daDUM daDUM daDUM daDUM.

Read the below lines, from the first scene of *King Lear*, aloud, and listen to the rhythm.

Come not between the dragon and his wrath. (Lear, Act I, Scene I)

I find she names my very deed of love. (Regan, Act I, Scene I)

Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least. (Kent, Act I, Scene I)

Complete the chart on the following page by deciding whether the listed words are iambs. If it helps, write each word out twice, each time putting a different syllable in capital letters:

pretZEL

PRETzel

Read each version of the word aloud. Which sounds more like the correct pronunciation? In this case, PRETzel is correct. Our conclusion? “Pretzel” is *not* an iamb, because the first, not the second, syllable is stressed.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Acts I – V**Characterization**

Objective: Keeping a character log on King Lear

Activity

As *King Lear* progresses, we learn more and more about Lear. We learn from other characters' observations, Lear's actions, and Lear's own words. As you read, keep a character log on Lear. In the left column, note down any significant or interesting actions or speeches of Lear's, as well as any insightful observations others make about Lear. In the right column, comment on what each entry in the left one tells you about Lear's character. If you quote directly from the book, remember to record act and scene numbers along with your quotations.

You must make a minimum of three log entries per act. One sample log entry (from Act I, Scene I) is provided for you below.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Acts I & II**Apostrophe**

Objective: Recognizing apostrophe

Activity

Shakespeare uses apostrophe extensively in *King Lear*. Complete the chart by recording at least six examples of apostrophe from Acts I and II. Make sure to fill in the act and scene numbers for each. An example is provided for you. After your chart is complete, answer the question that follows.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act IV**Metaphor and Simile****Objective:** Understanding metaphor and simile**Activity**

Act IV contains many instances of simile and metaphor. To complete the following chart, find and quote at least six examples. In the second column, record the number of the scene in which you find each example; in the third, explain the metaphor or simile, including a mention of the tone it sets. One is done for you as an example.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act IV, Scene I**Scene Recreation**

Objective: Recreating a scene from a play from a different perspective

Activity

Gloucester is deeply distressed; he thinks death is the only way to save himself from the pain he is experiencing in life. It is Edgar who assists Gloucester to the edge of the cliffs. Why does Edgar never reveal himself to his father? If Edgar had revealed himself, do you think Gloucester would have rethought reverting to suicide?

Recreate this scene. Gloucester is still considering suicide, but this time, Edgar identifies himself. Write the scene as a play, using the best Shakespearean language you can, describing the events as they unfold. You may include stage direction, but this is not necessary.

- Is Gloucester happy that Edgar reveals himself, forgetting suicide?
- Is the emotional distress Gloucester is experiencing too overwhelming to cope with?
- What is Gloucester's reaction to the information Edgar gives?
- Is he angry with Edgar for not identifying himself sooner?
- Does Gloucester go through with the suicide?