

***King Lear* by William Shakespeare (Published by Signet Classics)**

Approved for use in Advanced Placement Communication Arts IV

Summary and Connection to the Curriculum

This classic Shakespearean play manifests a three-fold approach to the essential Advanced Placement Literature curriculum, including critical-thinking of themes and meanings through the study of a classic; Shakespearean tragedies and tragic heroes; and literary techniques, especially the use of language, style, syntax, tone, and diction. In *Lear*, the sense of compassion that exists in many of Shakespeare's other plays is exhausted. Lear's fall from power and glory is a fall from the highest elevation into the deepest abyss of misery, where humanity is stripped of all external and internal advantages, and he is given up to helplessness. Lear's threefold dignity of a king, an old man, and a father is dishonored by the cruel ingratitude of his two daughters; the old king, who out of a foolish tenderness, has given away everything, is driven out into the world a homeless beggar; the childish imbecility to which he was fast advancing changes into the wildest insanity, and when he is rescued from the destitution to which he was abandoned, it is too late. Shakespeare combines the two main parts of the plot, Lear's demise and Edmund's plot. The pity felt by Gloucester for the fate of Lear becomes the means whereby his son Edmund effects his complete destruction and affords the outcast Edgar an opportunity of being the savior of his father. Cordelia, with her heavenly beauty of soul, reminds the reader of Antigone. Few lines are assigned to her; yet, throughout the five acts, the reader can never forget her. At the close, she lingers in the reader's recollection as if the reader had seen some being more beautiful and purer than a thing of earth. In tragic pathos, in dramatic force, in grandeur of sentiment and diction, Lear has no superior in all the wide range of the world's drama. The language is sublime, and this Shakespearean tragedy has the advantage of dealing with human beings, human passions, and human frailties, especially those of the continuing complexities of the family, sibling rivalries, greed, aging, power, and love. Repeatedly listed in the open-ended novel question in the Advanced Placement Literature test, *King Lear* continues the study of the classic tragedy with added themes of aging and complex family structures that apply to students in today's society more than ever. The study of close readings, themes, language, style, and structures supports the study of this play in the context of the course objectives in AP IV.

Standards

Course Objectives (Benchmarks)

Reading: 1.2- The students read fluently. 1.3- The students expand vocabulary. 1.4- The students comprehend a variety of texts.

Literature: 2.1-The students use literary concepts to interpret and respond to text.

Writing: 3- The students write effectively for a variety of audiences, purposes, and contexts.

Possible Skills Taught (Indicators)

Reading:

1.4.7- The student identifies characteristics of narrative texts.

1.4.9- The student uses prior knowledge, content, and text type features to make, revise, and confirm predictions.

1.4.10- The student generates and responds logically to literal, inferential, evaluative, and critical thinking questions before, during and after reading the text.

1.4.17- The student analyzes and evaluates how an author's style and use of literary devices works together to achieve his or her purpose for writing text.

Literature:

2.1.1- The student identifies and describes different types of characters and analyzes the development of characters.

2.1.2- The student analyzes the historical, social, and cultural contextual aspects of the setting and their influence on characters and events in the story or literary text.

2.1.5- The student identifies, analyzes, and evaluates the use of literary devices in a text.

A Note on the Text: (The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

This play tackles the topics of sibling rivalry, deception, and death. These are all handled in the context of a Shakespearean tragedy.

AP Connections

For Advanced Placement Literature (APIV), the play provides a link to the canon of drama classics essential not only for the AP IV test that incorporates questions based upon many world and British classics, but also essential for the college-bound reader.

Additional Unit Design Connections

Coming soon