

Essay Questions

1. "Shakespeare's *King Lear* is a play of redemption in which the King moves from moral blindness to a clearer vision of what really matters." Discuss and illustrate.
2. "*King Lear* is not only a tragedy of parents and children, of pride and ingratitude; it is also a tragedy of kingship." Discuss with reference to power relations in *King Lear*.
3. 'King Lear might start like a fairy-tale, but most of it is like a nightmare.' Discuss.
4. 'The ending of King Lear is unbearable.' Discuss.
5. "As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods;
i. They kill us for their sport."
Discuss with reference to both the *King Lear* main plot and the Gloucester sub-plot.
6. "Cordelia is admirable, but not entirely." Discuss.
7. "Gloucester's physical blindness is a mirror image of Lear's spiritual blindness". Discuss the ways in which the sub-plot in Shakespeare's *King Lear* is a reflection of the main one.
8. "*King Lear* is a play about the corrupting and destructive effects of power." Discuss.
9. "*King Lear* is a play dominated by the contrast between wisdom and foolishness." Discuss.
10. "*King Lear* is a play in which madness is the key to the realization of the truth". Discuss.
11. "Lear is a contemptible figure at the beginning of the play, but he deserves some admiration by the end of it." Discuss.
12. "Lear's fool is a jester by profession, but the effect he creates is not one of professional control and expertise, but of jokes pulled out of agony and frustration." Discuss the role of the fool in *King Lear* and his function in the unfolding of the plot.
13. "Some good I mean to do,
i. Despite of mine own nature."
Discuss the complex relations between character and circumstance in *King Lear*.
14. "The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
i. Make instruments to plague us."
Discuss the complex relations between vice and justice in *King Lear*.

15. “The individuals in *King Lear* always move across landscapes of the widest extent, criss-crossed by innumerable simultaneous purposes.” Relate this statement to the parallelism between the main and the sub-plots in Shakespeare’s play.
16. Assess the importance of the theme of loyalty in *King Lear*.
17. Critically examine Lear’s changing relationship with Cordelia.
18. Discuss the importance of the characters of Edmund and Edgar in *King Lear*.
19. Discuss the importance of the storm scenes in *King Lear*.
20. Discuss the theme of suffering in *King Lear*.
21. Fully discuss and illustrate the themes of Hypocrisy and Division in Shakespeare’s *King Lear*.
22. Fully discuss public and private concerns in Shakespeare’s *King Lear*.
23. There are many kinds of suffering in *King Lear*, and little consolation.” Discuss.
24. Unlike other dramatists, who used ‘mad scenes’ for comic effect, Shakespeare seems intent on a serious portrayal of madness in *King Lear*.” Discuss the different types of madness in the play.