

“Easy Reading Old World Literature”

# King Lear

**LEVEL 5**

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## About the Author

William Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-on-Avon, a city in England. His mother's name was Mary Arden. His father, John, was a wealthy businessman. There is very little known about William Shakespeare's early life. It is believed that he attended a local grammar school where the students learned Latin, public speaking, and religion. Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway in 1582. They had three children. Susanna was first, followed by twins Hamnet, and Judith. In 1584, Shakespeare left Stratford and went to London.

By 1592, Shakespeare was a well-known actor and playwright. In 1599, Shakespeare, along with others, opened the Globe Theatre. In the early 1600's Shakespeare's company worked under King James I and became known as the King's Men. In 1608, the King's Men acquired the Blackfriars Theatre, which became their winter home. In 1613, the Globe was destroyed by fire and was rebuilt a year later. However, by that time, Shakespeare had retired from writing. Shakespeare died in his hometown of Stratford on April 23, 1616.

## Interdisciplinary Teaching Suggestions

### *Language Arts:*

**Create a Diary based on Shakespeare's Characters:** Students must choose a character from the story. After reading each chapter, students should write a diary entry on their character's feelings based on the events in the story.

**Interview Shakespeare's Characters:** Break students up into pairs. Each student must choose a character from the story. Ask each student to write down five interview questions and interview each other.

### *Math:*

**Compare Prices:** What was the average cost of food, shelter, and clothing in Shakespeare's day? How were goods and services paid for? How were goods distributed?

**Create a Pie Chart:** Research the population of London and the distribution of wealth during Shakespeare's time. Create a pie chart.

### *Social Studies:*

**Mental Health Issues during Shakespeare's Time:** Lear, now old in years, grows angry that he is not in control of his life. He is full of self-pity, lacks common sense, and he seems to lose his mind. Research to find out what provisions, if any, were made for those who suffered mental illness in Shakespeare's day.

**Research other Monarchs:** Lear wanted to retire, so he divided his kingdom. But this division led to much disunity within his family. Since Lear had no sons, how should he have distributed his kingdom to avoid the disunity that took place? Research other monarchs who left no male heirs. Who took title of the throne after their deaths?

### *Geography:*

**Create a Map:** Research Europe in Shakespeare's day and compare it with Europe as we know it today. Create a map of each.

### *General:*

**Create a Classroom Bulletin Board:** Divide students into small groups. Make each group responsible for an area of the bulletin board that pertains to the story. Create a story cluster describing literary elements from the story. For example: setting, characters, and plot.

## WORDS USED

**Story 21**                      **Story 22**                      **Story 23**                      **Story 24**                      **Story 25**

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### KEY WORDS

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barter	aware	accompany	concern	apologize
bewilder	disguise	decrease	decree	cooperate
choice	forge	entertain	flee	knelt
demonstrate	intelligent	indignant	reasonable	liberty
division	kindness	pluck	stocks	numb
vanity	title	repay	traitor	quality

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### NECESSARY WORDS

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authority	abuse	counsel	guilty	beggar
banish	decision	curse	inherit	charity
devotion	monster		insult	decay
disown	noble			naked
flatter	steward			sympathy
legal	suspicion			
	villain			

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**Story 26**                      **Story 27**                      **Story 28**                      **Story 29**                      **Story 30**

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### KEY WORDS

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aid	confide	foreign	angel	helmet
neglect	hardship	prey	captive	instructions
philosopher	haunt	regret	cheat	loss
poverty	outwit	sickness	describe	public
squint	peasant	sorrow	garment	seethe
torch	trial	widow	miracle	underneath

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### NECESSARY WORDS

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betray	misery	despise	deceive	herald
fiend	revenge	rival	despair	sacrifice
forbid		vile	torture	
nobleman				
suicide				

# Nothing Comes from Nothing

## PREPARATION

### Key Words

<b>barter</b>	(bär´ tər)	trade by exchanging goods without using money <i>At lunchtime, Martin always tried to <u>barter</u> his sandwich for someone's dessert.</i>
<b>bewilder</b>	(bi wil´ dər)	confuse completely; puzzle <i>If the directions <u>bewilder</u> you, ask someone for help.</i>
<b>choice</b>	(chois)	the act of choosing or deciding <i>His mother said he looked handsome, but John wasn't sure his <u>choice</u> of the purple shirt was a good one.</i>
<b>demonstrate</b>	(dem´ ən strāt)	show clearly; prove <i>Martin planned to <u>demonstrate</u> a quick way to paint a room.</i>
<b>division</b>	(də vizh´ ən)	the act of dividing into parts <i>The <u>division</u> of one's property after death sometimes divides a family.</i>
<b>vanity</b>	(van´ ə tē)	great pride in one's looks, ability, etc. <i>To everyone's dismay, <u>Elsie's vanity</u> became greater after she won the singing contest.</i>

# Nothing Comes from Nothing

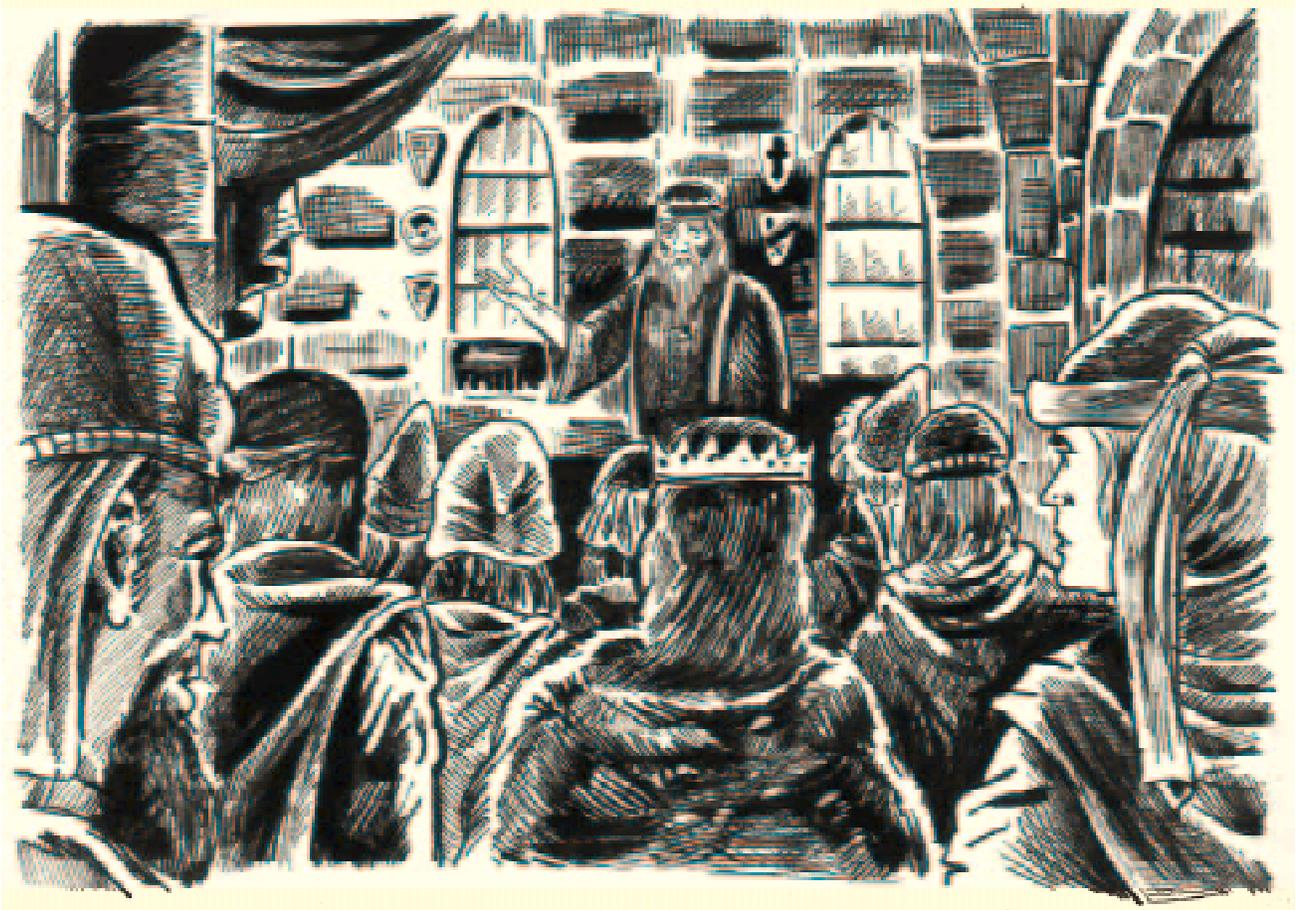
## Necessary Words

<b>authority</b>	(ə thôr' ə tē)	power to decide actions or thoughts <i>The coach has the <u>authority</u> to keep me out of the game.</i>
<b>banish</b>	(ban' ish)	forced to leave by a country's ruler <i>The king threatened to <u>banish</u> the knight when he refused to defend his country.</i>
<b>devotion</b>	(di vō' shən)	a deep, steady affection <i>Carrie proved her <u>devotion</u> to her father by taking care of him during his illness.</i>
<b>disown</b>	(dis ōn')	to claim someone no longer belongs; cast off <i>Loving parents would never <u>disown</u> their child because of a single, simple mistake.</i>
<b>flatter</b>	(flat' ər)	to praise beyond the truth <i>When Sam tried to <u>flatter</u> her, Mrs. Rich suspected he had smelled the freshly baked cookies.</i>
<b>legal</b>	(lē' gl)	lawful <i>The workers had the <u>legal</u> right to protest in front of the factory.</i>

## People

<b>Duke of Albany</b>	is married to Goneril. He rules an area of Lear's kingdom.
<b>Duke of Burgundy</b>	rules an area that is part of France
<b>Duke of Cornwall</b>	is married to Regan. He rules an area of Lear's kingdom.
<b>Earl of Gloucester</b>	rules a small area of Lear's kingdom. He doesn't have as much power as Albany or Cornwall.
<b>Earl of Kent</b>	rules a small area of Lear's kingdom.
<b>Edmund</b>	is Gloucester's younger son. He doesn't have full rights under the law because Gloucester didn't marry Edmund's mother.
<b>King Lear</b>	a legendary ruler of ancient Britain sometime before King Arthur

# Nothing Comes from Nothing



*“The daughter with the greatest love will be rewarded with the richest share of my kingdom,” said King Lear.*

- Preview:**
1. Read the name of the story.
  2. Look at the picture.
  3. Read the sentence under the picture.
  4. Read the first six paragraphs of the story.
  5. Then answer the following question.

You learned from your preview that King Lear

- a. was an old man.
- b. was too young to give up control of his kingdom.
- c. did not want to divide his kingdom.
- d. did not love his daughters.

*Turn to the Comprehension Check on page 10 for the right answer.*

**Now read the story.**

Read to find out what happens to Cordelia.

# Nothing Comes from Nothing

Three men waited to see King Lear, ruler of Britain. The first had white hair, the second had gray, and the third man was young and handsome.

"Albany seems more worthy than Cornwall, yet the King's division of his kingdom proves he measures them as equals," Gloucester said, stroking his white beard.

The gray-haired Earl of Kent nodded to the handsome man next to Gloucester. "Is this your son?"

"Yes, he is. And I'm not ashamed to admit it," Gloucester said. "Everyone knew I was already married with a son when I met his mother. But after Edmund's birth, I came to love him as dearly as my legal son, Edgar."

The sound of trumpets echoed through the palace. King Lear and his youngest daughter Cordelia entered the room. Cordelia's sisters, Goneril and Regan, and their husbands followed.

The King was now old in years. He wanted to spend his last years in quiet. "I wish to divide the rest of my kingdom *now* to avoid arguing in the *future*," Lear said. "Also, both the Duke of Burgundy and the King of France have asked to marry Cordelia. I'll make my choice today. But first, which of my daughters can I say loves me the most? The daughter with the greatest love will be rewarded with the richest share of my kingdom."

Goneril, the wife of the Duke of Albany, wanted her words to demonstrate the greatest love possible. "I love you more than my eyes, my freedom, and my life. My love is beyond any words I could speak."

Goneril knew how to flatter the King's vanity, yet she didn't earn the richest share. King Lear pointed to the map spread over the table. "These forests, plains, and rivers belong to you."

Regan, the wife of Cornwall, also believed that the King's vanity was more important than her honesty. "My love for you is beyond that of my sister's. I am an enemy to all joys other than your love."

Lear's happiness on hearing those words began to bewilder

young Cordelia. *Love should be more important than words*, she thought.

Regan earned a share equal to Goneril's. Lear had planned to let Cordelia win all along. "What will you say to earn the richest share?" The King smiled as he waited for Cordelia's words of devotion.

Cordelia hesitated. "Nothing," she whispered.

The King looked bewildered. "Saying 'Nothing' will *earn* you nothing. Speak again!" Lear demanded.

Cordelia thought it was wrong to barter words for her share of the kingdom. "You've raised me and loved me. I've paid you back with love and honor," said Cordelia. "Besides, why do my sisters have husbands if they only love *you*? I would never marry if I had to love my father only."

"You're too young to be so hard-hearted," Lear said angrily.

"I'm young and honest," replied Cordelia.

"Then honesty will be your only share," said Lear. "As of this day, you are a stranger to me. I disown you." He turned to Cornwall and Albany. "There will be a new division of the kingdom. Divide Cordelia's share between you. I'll take turns living with each of you for a month. But I will keep my title of King. And I keep my legal right to travel with one hundred knights."

"Just because Cordelia refuses to flatter you doesn't mean she should be disowned," insisted Kent. "And it's a mistake to give up your authority."

"I'll demonstrate my authority for *you* right *now*!" Lear said, angrily. "I banish you! You'll be killed the minute you're found within my kingdom!"

"Make your actions live up to your flattering words," Kent said to Goneril and Regan as he left, banished from the kingdom.

Burgundy and the King of France entered the room. Lear had promised great gifts to whoever married Cordelia. But now he began to barter with Burgundy. "What is the lowest price you'll ac-

cept for my daughter?"

"I don't ask for any more than you've already offered," answered Burgundy, "and I'll accept no less."

"Well, her price has fallen," said Lear. "I'll give you nothing but my disgust for her."

Now, Burgundy refused to marry Cordelia.

The King of France was bewildered. "How did your favorite daughter become *nothing* in a moment? Did she do something wicked? Or was the strength of *your* love at fault?"

Cordelia begged Lear. "Tell him I didn't do anything to harm your honor. Tell him I lost your love because I can't speak words I don't mean," she cried.

"Is this her only fault? Love doesn't let itself be controlled by other matters," the King of France said. He turned to Cordelia. "The less Lear offers for you, the more I prize you. The worse he treats you, the more I respect you. It's legal for me to take up what others have refused. You'll be my queen."

"You've made your choice then," said Lear, leaving the room.

"I hope you'll live up to your claims of devotion," Cordelia said to her sisters.

"Don't worry about us," said Goneril. "Just worry about your new husband. I hope he treats you as poorly as you've treated Father."

When they were alone, Regan said to Goneril, "Father will leave with you tonight. He'll stay with me next month."

Lear had always had trouble controlling his temper. But the two sisters believed his age made it harder to guess what he might do next.

"Father will speak again with the King of France before he and Cordelia leave," said Goneril. "We must make certain Father doesn't change his mind about Cordelia."

Regan hesitated. "I will think about that."

Goneril took her sister's arm. "We must act now, before anything harms our position."

# Nothing Comes from Nothing

## COMPREHENSION CHECK

Choose the best answer.

**Preview Answer:**

a. was an old man.

1. King Lear felt he was getting too old to
  - a. run the kingdom.
  - b. have more children.
  - c. receive guests.
  - d. live alone.
2. Edmund
  - a. loved his father dearly.
  - b. was ashamed of his father.
  - c. was born outside of marriage.
  - d. did not get along with his mother.
3. King Lear
  - a. admired his sons-in-law.
  - b. was cruel to his sons-in-law.
  - c. was tired of supporting his sons-in-law.
  - d. treated his sons-in-law as equals.
4. Goneril and Regan
  - a. flattered their father to get what they wanted.
  - b. had great respect for their father.
  - c. were very devoted to their father.
  - d. disowned their father.
5. Of all his daughters, King Lear loved \_\_\_\_\_ the most.
  - a. Goneril
  - b. Cordelia
  - c. Regan
  - d. Amelia
6. When Cordelia angered her father, he gave Cordelia's share of the kingdom to
  - a. the Earl of Kent.
  - b. Gloucester.
  - c. Cornwall and Albany.
  - d. the King of France.
7. First, Cordelia angered her father because she would not flatter him with words. Then, King Lear disowned her. Next,
  - a. Kent was banished from the Kingdom.
  - b. Kent defended Cordelia before her father.
  - c. the King offered his daughter in marriage.
  - d. Cordelia married the King of France.
8. Goneril and Regan were going to make sure that
  - a. Cordelia would never receive her share of the kingdom.
  - b. their father learned how to control his temper.
  - c. Cordelia returned to France with her new husband.
  - d. their husbands remained devoted to them.
9. Another name for this story could be
  - a. "The King's Vanity."
  - b. "Cordelia Gets Married."
  - c. "A Broken Promise."
  - d. "Cordelia's Honesty Gets Her Disowned."
10. This story is mainly about
  - a. an aging king who decides to divide his kingdom among his daughters.
  - b. a hard-hearted king who has no use for his daughters.
  - c. why Burgundy refuses to marry Cordelia.
  - d. Cordelia's devotion to her father.

Check your answers with the Key on page 67.

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# Nothing Comes from Nothing

## VOCABULARY CHECK

barter	bewilder	choice	demonstrate	division	vanity
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### I. Sentences to Finish

Fill in the blank in each sentence with the correct key word from the box above.

1. Mitch tried to \_\_\_\_\_ with his friend Jack. He would help Jack paint, if Jack helped him with the yard work.
2. The girls all laughed at Stella's new haircut. This wounded Stella's \_\_\_\_\_.
3. At the fair on Saturday, Larry will \_\_\_\_\_ how he does his magic tricks.
4. Who was it who made a \_\_\_\_\_ of the day into hours, minutes, and seconds?
5. The judge made a \_\_\_\_\_ to send the prisoner to jail.
6. If the girl seems to \_\_\_\_\_ you, don't take her out any more.

### II. Using the Words

On the lines below, write six of your own sentences using the key words from the box above. Use each word once, drawing a circle around the key word.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

Check your answers with the Key on page 69.

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