

William Shakespeare's  
**King Lear**  
Level 5





# 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.



# A Dark Night at Gloucester's Castle

Edmund stood outside in the dark, looking up to the window of his room. Edgar was still hiding there. He heard his father's messenger coming across the courtyard. "Cornwall and Regan will arrive tonight," the messenger told Gloucester. "I've heard murmurs of a growing division between Cornwall and Albany."

After the messenger left, Edmund called to his brother. Anxiously glancing around, Edgar came down.

Edmund spoke as if he were Gloucester's only son now. "My father knows where you are. You must flee while night protects you. Have you been spreading tales about Cornwall? He's on his way here."

"I haven't said or done anything to anyone," said Edgar.

"I hear my father," said Edmund, taking out his sword. "Pretend to defend yourself." Edgar didn't understand. But he was so trusting, that he followed his brother's directions. Their swords struck against each other. "Now pretend to surrender. See how close he is! Flee!"

After Edgar ran away, Edmund scratched his sword against his own arm. "A little blood will make me look better. 'Father, help!' he cried.

Gloucester couldn't bring himself to say Edgar's name. "Where is the little villain?" he demanded.

"He stood here muttering wicked spells and holding his sword against me," said Edmund. "See the blood on my sleeve?"

Gloucester, showing concern for Edmund's wound, shouted, "I'll kill him! Cornwall will decree that anyone who helps this villain will be punished," he said fiercely. "That no-good son of mine will be found and killed!"

"He wanted to kill you," Edmund continued. "When I told him that killing a parent goes against the laws of nature, he attacked me. It was only the noise of my shouts that made him flee.

"I asked him to be reasonable. He said you'd believe your legal son, not me. He said he'd accuse

me of forging that letter, and persuade you that I was guilty of planning your death."

The sound of trumpets interrupted Edmund. "Cornwall is coming," said Gloucester. "I'll ask him to use his authority to close all escape routes. Then I'll decree that you are legally free to inherit my title."

"We've just heard of your son's plan against you," said Cornwall, as he and Regan approached them.

"Edgar was special to my father," Regan narrowed her eyes as if this helped prove Edgar was guilty. "Wasn't he friendly with those rough knights who accompany my father?"

"I'm certain he was part of their group," Edmund said.

"My sister warned me about those knights," said Regan. "She told me to avoid being at home if they came to stay with us."

After he heard how Edmund had been wounded, Cornwall decreed that Gloucester now had the authority to capture Edgar any way he wished. "Edmund is with us," said Cornwall. "This is good. We can use a man like him."

"You must counsel us on these letters from my father and sister," Regan said to Gloucester. "They've both written about quarrels between them. We brought their messengers."

Meanwhile, Kent waited a short distance away. He was still disguised as Caius. Oswald thought he was one of Gloucester's servants. He asked Caius where he could shelter his horses.

"Let them sink into the mud." Kent knew Oswald didn't recognize him. He continued, "You're a lowly servant in fancy hand-me-down clothes. You're a lying villain who helps his wicked masters. You're a traitor when paid the least sum of money. And you're a coward. These are the only titles you'll ever deserve."

"You're a monster to abuse the character of someone you've never met before," Oswald said indignantly.

"I beat you up two days ago." Caius took out his sword. "Now

I'll poke so many holes in you that the moon will shine through! Only a traitor would carry letters against the King!"

"He'll kill me!" Oswald screeched.

Some men came running to help him. Oswald pretended that his concern over Caius' age had stopped him from fighting. "I couldn't hurt an old man."

Cornwall glanced at Caius' ragged clothes. "You should respect those better than yourself," Cornwall said.

Caius scowled at Oswald. "He's like a rat who chews apart the customs that tie us all together. He flatters his masters and encourages their cruelest ideas."

"The King struck me over a simple mistake," Oswald explained. He turned to Cornwall. "This servant tripped me so he could win his master's praise. He threatened me after I had surrendered."

"Bring the stocks!" called Cornwall. "We'll teach you a lesson."

"You'll insult the King if you put his servant into the stocks," said Caius.

"You'll sit there through tomorrow night," ordered Regan.

Gloucester asked Regan to be more reasonable. "Common thieves are punished with the stocks, not royal messengers. You must think about how the King will act if he's insulted like this!"

"My sister would be more insulted if we let this servant abuse her steward," said Regan.

After locking Caius' legs into the stocks, the men returned to the castle. "Friend," Gloucester said, before he followed the others, "I'll ask Cornwall to forgive you."

"Don't worry," said Caius. "I've traveled two days without sleep. This gives me time to rest."

Alone under the bright moon, Kent pulled out a letter. Cordelia had written to him from France. Kent read her promises of help. Then he closed his eyes and fell asleep.

# A King Without a Home

## COMPREHENSION CHECK

### Preview Answer:

d. all night.

Choose the best answer:

1. Edgar hid all night
  - ☐ a. in a pear tree.
  - ☐ b. in an old oak tree.
  - ☐ c. in a hollow, ancient tree.
  - ☐ d. in a decayed apple tree.
2. Edgar dressed as a beggar
  - ☐ a. because he was mad.
  - ☐ b. to preserve his liberty.
  - ☐ c. so the villagers would take care of him.
  - ☐ d. to look more like his brother.
3. First, Lear had gone to Regan's. Finding no one at home, he went to Gloucester's. Next, Lear
  - ☐ a. found Caius in stocks.
  - ☐ b. went looking for Cornwall and Regan.
  - ☐ c. ordered his men to get Caius out of the stocks.
  - ☐ d. left Gloucester's as a storm approached.
4. Goneril and Regan
  - ☐ a. cared more for themselves than for their father.
  - ☐ b. tried to do what was best for their father.
  - ☐ c. were ashamed of their father.
  - ☐ d. were devoted to their father.
5. Caius had been put into the stocks for
  - ☐ a. disguising himself as the King's messenger.
  - ☐ b. behaving like a fool.
  - ☐ c. wearing stockings.
  - ☐ d. threatening Goneril's servant.
6. Lear was angry that his daughters
  - ☐ a. were lovers of money.
  - ☐ b. had no common sense.
  - ☐ c. tried to control him.
  - ☐ d. were always complaining.
7. Lear would rather live in the wilderness than live
  - ☐ a. with ten thousand knights.
  - ☐ b. with his selfish daughters.
  - ☐ c. without his title.
  - ☐ d. with his disappointment.
8. Gloucester worried
  - ☐ a. that Lear would not find shelter in the storm.
  - ☐ b. that Lear would ask to live with him.
  - ☐ c. that Lear's knights were dangerous.
  - ☐ d. that no one had sympathy for Lear.
9. Another name for this story could be
  - ☐ a. "A King Gone Mad."
  - ☐ b. "Begging For Charity."
  - ☐ c. "Gray Skies."
  - ☐ d. "Into the Storm."
10. This story is mainly about
  - ☐ a. a king with a broken heart.
  - ☐ b. why Edgar became a beggar.
  - ☐ c. a king who had given up his power and who now gets no respect from those around him.
  - ☐ d. a king with no common sense.

Check your answers with the key on page 67.

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