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❁ ACT 2 ❁

PRE-GRAMMAR | Preparation

Prepare the student for understanding the Central One Idea by drawing upon his or her prior knowledge or experience.

1. Imagine being on the run, entirely destitute, without any possessions, and only the clothes of a beggar. Where would you go? How would you survive? What would you discover about yourself in your suffering?

GRAMMAR | Presentation

The student is presented with and discovers essential facts, elements, and features of the play.

READING NOTES

Scene 1

1. **Pray you** (2.1.10) – please; I implore you
2. **roused** (2.1.56) – provoked

Scene 2

1. **pander** (2.2.21) – a lewd man who solicits in brothels
2. **varlet** (2.2.28) – a subordinate in a lowly, menial position; alternatively, a deceitful scoundrel
3. **shanks** (2.2.39) – the part of the legs from the knees to the ankles
4. **ruffian** (2.2.63) – a violent brute; a thug
5. **beguiled** (2.2.113) – deceptively charmed; deceptively captivated
6. **stocks** (2.2.127) – devices used to punish criminals; constructed of a wooden frame that locks, binding the feet, hands, and neck

Scene 3

1. **sheepcotes** (2.3.18) – enclosures for sheep; pens
2. **Bedlam beggars** (2.3.14) – In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Tom o' Bedlam was a name given for a wandering beggar who had been released from the Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlem, a London insane asylum.

Scene 4

1. **durst** (2.4.21) – *archaic*; past tense for *dare*
2. **trespass** (2.4.43) – crime; wrongdoing
3. **raiment** (2.4.155) – clothing
4. **dotage** (2.4.196) – old age
5. **chide** (2.4.224) – scold; reprimand
6. **kleos (glory) and timê (honor)** – In thinking about King Lear and his dwindling retinue of knights, it can be helpful to recognize a similarity to the Homeric warrior, who fought solely for *kleos* (glory) and *timê* (honor). *Kleos* (glory) was what other men say about the warrior, both while he was alive and after he was dead. *Timê* (honor) meant the *tangible, physical expression of honor* in the form of booty, gifts, or prizes (*geras*) acquired from those conquered. If the Homeric warrior's honor (possessions of booty, slaves, prizes, etc.) was stripped away from him, then his glory would also be stripped away, because his glory came as a consequent of his honor (which was marked by physical possessions). Thus, if a warrior's honor and glory were stripped away, then his entire personhood, his entire value and worth, were stripped away with it. Both he (and his surrounding people) would see him as nothing.

WORDS TO BE DEFINED

Definitions Bank

advises	patiently refrain from; abstain from
bitterness; hostility	perhaps; possibly
harmony; friendly relations	persuaded against; diverted
hatred; aversion	petition; appeal for
malevolence; spite; ill will	plaster
model; example	possessions; money
multiple; many	unhealthy; sick
obtain; acquire	

1. Spoke with how **manifold** and strong a bond, *adj.* (2.1.49)
2. When I **dissuaded** him from his intent, *v.* (2.1.66)
3. To have th' expense and waste of his **revenues**. *n.* (2.1.102)
4. I will tread this/unbolted villain into mortar and **daub** the wall of a jakes with him. *v.* (2.2.66-67)
5. No contraries hold more **antipathy**/Than I and such a knave. *n.* (2.2.89-90)
6. You shall do small respect, show too bold **malice**, *n.* (2.2.132)
7. Will not be rubbed nor stopped. I'll **entreat** for thee. *v.* (2.2.157)
8. The country gives me proof and **precedent**, *n.* (2.3.13)
9. To suffer with the body. I'll **forbear**; *v.* (2.4.107)
10. To take the **indisposed** and sickly fit, *adj.* (2.4.109)
11. If, sir, **perchance**/She have restrained the riots of your followers, *adv.* (2.4.141-142)
12. To wage against the **enmity** o' th' air,/To be a comrade with the wolf and owl, *n.* (2.4.208-209)
13. Hold **amity**? 'Tis hard, almost impossible. *n.* (2.4.241)
14. The injuries that they themselves **procure**, *v.* (2.4.302)
15. My Regan **counsels** well. Come out o' th' storm. *v.* (2.4.308)

WORDS TO BE DEFINED

1. multiple; many
2. persuaded against; diverted
3. possessions; money
4. plaster
5. hatred; aversion
6. malevolence; spite; ill will
7. petition; appeal for
8. model; example
9. patiently refrain from; abstain from
10. unhealthy; sick
11. perhaps; possibly
12. bitterness; hostility
13. harmony; friendly relations
14. obtain; acquire
15. advises

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. The setting is Gloucester's castle. Rumors are afoot about a possible war between the Duke of Cornwall and the Duke of Albany. Cornwall and his wife, Regan, are set to arrive there that night.
2. Edmund is thrilled with things because he can use them to his advantage. He lies to Edgar again, saying that his father knows where he is hiding, and that Cornwall suspects him of traitorous behavior with Albany. Thus, he convinces him to hasten away. The dramatic crisis happens when, as Gloucester approaches, Edmund forces Edgar to draw his sword and to pretend to fight—Edmund acts like he's trying to prevent Edgar from escaping. After Edgar gets away, Edmund wounds himself, and when Gloucester arrives, he believes even more that Edgar is a villain.
3. He declares that Edgar is an outlaw, renounces him as his son, and prepares to give Edmund Edgar's inheritance. "O strange and fastened villain! ... All ports I'll bar; the villain shall not 'scape;/The Duke must grant me that. Besides, his picture I'll send far and near, that all the kingdom/May have due note of him; and of my land,/Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means/To make thee capable." (2.1.79-87)
4. They have come to seek Gloucester's counsel regarding the fight between Goneril and Lear.
5. Cornwall's flattery of Edmund, his "virtue and obedience," and Edmund agreeing to serve him join these two evil characters together. This foreshadows that more evil and vice will be enacted by them.
6. Kent becomes enraged when he sees Oswald. He remembers how much Oswald had disrespected King Lear. And he says, "You come with letters against the King, and take Vanity the puppet's part against the royalty of her father" (2.2.36-38). Kent excoriates him with many derogatory names, demands that he draw his sword and fight, and then beats him.
7. Regan knows that Oswald is a messenger from Goneril, and Kent is a messenger from Lear. Cornwall demands an explanation. After hearing Kent's explanation, he sides with Oswald and commands Kent to be put in the stocks.
8. A letter from Cordelia; she has heard about Kent's brave and loyal service to Lear.
9. He must disguise himself as a mad Bedlam beggar.
10. Lear is outraged to see Kent in the stocks. He says, "They durst not do't;/They could not, would not do't. 'Tis worse than murder/To do upon respect such violent outrage" (2.4.21-23). He demands that Regan and Cornwall be summoned to him immediately.
11. She urges Lear to have patience, declaring that Goneril cannot be in the wrong. She suggests that Lear go back and apologize to Goneril.
12. Lear scoffs at the idea, using ironic sarcasm to make his point: "Ask her forgiveness?/Do you but



Read Act 2, marking the text in key places according to the method taught in "How to Mark a Book."

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the **setting** at the opening of Act 2. What is taking place? Who is set to arrive there later that night?
2. How does Edmund feel about these events? What does he urge Edgar to do? What **dramatic crisis** takes place?
3. What does Gloucester conclude after this dramatic scene? Include a quotation.
4. Why have Regan and Cornwall come there?
5. Read 2.1.113-119, starting at "Cornwall. ... For you, Edmund,/Whose virtue and obedience doth this instant" What stands out to you? Is there any foreshadowing present?
6. At the beginning of scene 2, why is Kent so upset with Oswald? What does Kent say and do to him? Include a quotation.
7. When Regan, Cornwall, Gloucester, and the servants arrive, what happens?
8. What important object does Kent use to help bring himself solace in the stocks?
9. In scene 3, what does Edgar decide he must do?
10. In scene 4, when Lear, the Fool, and a Gentleman arrive, what transpires? Include a quotation.
11. When Regan, Cornwall, and Gloucester return, Lear speaks to Regan about Goneril, expressing his disapproval of her unkindness. How does Regan respond?
12. How does Lear feel about Regan's suggestion that he return to Goneril to apologize? How does he use **irony** in his reply? Is the Elizabethan World Order present here? Include a quotation.
13. When Goneril arrives, how does Lear feel?
14. When Regan suggests that Lear return to Goneril's residence with a smaller retinue, what is his response? Include a quotation.

mark how this becomes the house:/Dear daughter, I confess that I am old. [Kneeling.] Age is unnecessary. On my knees I beg/That you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed, and food'" (2.4.151-155). With Lear's entrenched belief in the hierarchy of the cosmos, it is inconceivable and offensive to him that he, a king and father, would kneel to his daughter.

13. Lear begins to see that they are all in collusion against him. He had been pressing Regan and company about who put Kent in the stocks, and when Cornwall finally answers that it was he who placed Kent in the stocks, it only adds more fuel to the fire of Lear's suspicion and rage.
14. Lear strongly resists: "Return to her, and fifty men dismissed?/No, rather I abjure all roofs, and choose/To wage against the enmity o' th' air;/To be a comrade with the wolf and owl,/Necessity's sharp pinch. Return with her?/Why, the hot-blooded France, that dowerless took/Our youngest born, I could as well be brought/

- When Lear concludes that he should go with his 100 knights to live with Regan, what is Goneril and Regan's reply?
- Read 2.4.277-282, starting at "Lear. ... No, you unnatural hags!/I will have such revenges on you both" How does the act conclude? What **imagery** stands out to you? Briefly summarize the closing action.

LOGIC | Dialectic

The student reasons with the facts, elements, and features of the play; sorts, arranges, compares, and connects ideas – and begins to uncover and determine the Central One Idea.

SOCRATIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

May be verbally discussed or answered in written form in your Literature Notebook.

- How are the main plot and the Gloucester subplot beginning to be joined in Act 2, scene 1? How does the arrival of Regan and Cornwall amplify Gloucester's **moral dilemma**?
- Why is placing Kent in the stocks such an offensive act, one that bothers Gloucester so much? What does this action **symbolize**? By referring, on more than one occasion, to Kent's age, does Kent represent anything? Include a quotation.
- Read 2.3.1-21, starting at "Edgar. *I heard myself proclaimed; And by the happy hollow of a tree*" What is significant or **symbolic** about Edgar's transformation into a Bedlam beggar? Does it **foreshadow** anything?
- It may be difficult in our day to understand why Lear needs a full retinue of servant knights, and why he is so offended when they are being stripped away, but it was very common and reasonable for those in his position in ancient times. Compare Lear's situation with the rage of Achilles, caused by Agamemnon's affront to Achilles' glory (*kleos*) and honor (*timê*). How does this comparison shed light on why Lear's retinue is so important to him? Include a quotation.
- How does Lear's inner world reflect or relate to what is taking place in the outer world?

To knee his throne, and, squirelike, pension beg/To keep base life afoot. Return with her?" (2.4.206-214)

- Neither really accepts his proposition. Goneril even questions why he needs any retinue at all, saying that Lear could "receive attendance/From those that she calls servants, or from mine?" (2.4.242-243) Regan suggests that he might get by with twenty-five.
- Lear pronounces both of his daughters "unnatural hags" whom he will enact great revenge upon. Lear leaves in a rage, accompanied by the Fool, Gloucester, and Kent. The imagery of the raging wild tempest can be seen to represent Lear's rage, as well as indicating the disruption in the ordered cosmos.

SOCRATIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Cornwall and Regan have arrived at the castle seeking advice; thus, Edmund and Gloucester begin to get involved in their scheming against Lear. As well, Goneril and Regan begin to get interested in what is going on with Edmund.

The arrival of Regan and Cornwall means that Gloucester will have to choose between helping Lear or obeying Regan and Cornwall.

- Answers will vary. Kent says, "Call not your stocks for me, I serve the King,/On whose employment I was sent to you./You shall do small respect, show too bold malice/Against the grace and person of my master,/ Stocking his messenger" (2.2.130-134). Putting Kent in the stocks is highly offensive because it represents the dethronement of Lear. It is a symbolic act of humiliation and rebellion against him. By emphasizing Kent's old age, it makes him, even more so, a representation or embodiment of Lear himself. It is as if they put Lear in the stocks.
- This passage contains some important ideas. The motif of disguises is present here. Kent disguised himself as Caius to serve Lear; now Edgar has disguised himself and will serve his father. Moreover, Edgar has been unjustly usurped, and now he is nothing, a mere shadow of his former self. His transformation also foreshadows Lear's similar transformation into the complete loss of self and identity.
- Answers will vary. As the Reading Notes explain, the Homeric warrior fought solely for *kleos* (glory)—what other men say about him, both while he is alive and after he is dead—and *timê* (honor), which to them meant the *tangible*, physical expression of honor in the form of booty, gifts, or prizes (*geras*). If the Homeric warrior's honor (possessions of booty, slaves, prizes, etc.) was stripped away from him, then his glory would also be stripped away, because his glory came as a consequent of his honor (which again, is marked by physical possessions). Thus, if his honor and his glory were stripped away, then his entire personhood, his entire value and worth, was stripped away. Both he and his surrounding people would see him as nothing. Similarly, Lear's worth and validity as a person and king have a tangible expression: his retinue. When Lear's daughters try to take away his retinue, they are taking away his self-worth, authority, and personhood—cutting it in half, by three-fourths, or in entirety. This also sheds some light on why Lear replies that it is man's possessions which exceed his bare necessities that separate or distinguish him from the beasts. "O reason not the need! Our basest beggars/Are in the poorest thing superfluous./Allow not nature more than nature needs,/Man's life is cheap as beast's." (2.4.263-266)
- Because of his pain and suffering, Lear's inner world is thrust into turmoil; similarly, the outer world has erupted into chaos on a social, political, and national level, and in the natural world with the storms and wild weather.