

EDMUND'S SPEECHES AND SOLILOQUIES

Divide your group into five sub-groups and each group will work on a section (Part 1-5). Analyse the text. Read it several times, underline words you do not know and look them up. Once you have the meaning, move around the room act it out and try delivering the lines as a choral piece, using tableaux or stylized movement.

PART 1 / Act I, sc. 2

Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law
My services are bound. Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
Lag of a brother? Why bastard? wherefore base?
When my dimensions are as well compact,
My mind as generous, and my shape as true,
As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us
With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base?
Who, in the lusty stealth of nature, take
More composition and fierce quality
Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,
Go to th' creating a whole tribe of fops
Got 'tween asleep and wake? Well then,
Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land.
Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund
As to th' legitimate. Fine word- 'legitimate'!
Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,
And my invention thrive, Edmund the base
Shall top th' legitimate. I grow; I prosper.
Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

PART 2 / Act I, sc. 2

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are
sick in fortune, often the surfeit of our own behaviour, we make
guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars; as if
we were villains on necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion;
knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical pre-dominance;
drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of
planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine
thrusting on. An admirable evasion of whore-master man, to lay
his goatish disposition to the charge of a star! My father
compounded with my mother under the Dragon's Tail, and my
nativity was under Ursa Major, so that it follows I am rough and
lecherous. Fut! I should have been that I am, had the
maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing.
Edgar-

[Enter Edgar.]

and pat! he comes, like the catastrophe of the old comedy. My
cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o' Bedlam.
O, these eclipses do portend these divisions! Fa, sol, la, mi.

PART 3 / Act II, sc. 1

Persuade me to the murder of your lordship;
But that I told him the revenging gods
'Gainst parricides did all their thunders bend;
Spoke with how manifold and strong a bond
The child was bound to th' father- sir, in fine,
Seeing how loathly opposite I stood
To his unnatural purpose, in fell motion
With his prepared sword he charges home
My unprovided body, lanch'd mine arm;
But when he saw my best alarm'd spirits,
Bold in the quarrel's right, rous'd to th' encounter,
Or whether gasted by the noise I made,
Full suddenly he fled.

PART 3 / Act II, sc. 1

When I dissuaded him from his intent
And found him pight to do it, with curst speech
I threaten'd to discover him. He replied,
'Thou unpossessing bastard, dost thou think,
If I would stand against thee, would the reposal
Of any trust, virtue, or worth in thee
Make thy words faith'd? No. What I should deny
(As this I would; ay, though thou didst produce
My very character), I'd turn it all
To thy suggestion, plot, and damned practice;
And thou must make a dullard of the world,
If they not thought the profits of my death
Were very pregnant and potential spurs
To make thee seek it.'

PART 4 / Act V, sc. 1

To both these sisters have I sworn my love;
Each jealous of the other, as the stung
Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?
Both? one? or neither? Neither can be enjoy'd,
If both remain alive. To take the widow
Exasperates, makes mad her sister Goneril;
And hardly shall I carry out my side,
Her husband being alive. Now then, we'll use
His countenance for the battle, which being done,
Let her who would be rid of him devise
His speedy taking off. As for the mercy
Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia-
The battle done, and they within our power,
Shall never see his pardon; for my state
Stands on me to defend, not to debate.

PART 4 / Act V, sc. 3

Sir, I thought it fit
To send the old and miserable King
To some retention and appointed guard;
Whose age has charms in it, whose title more,
To pluck the common bosom on his side
And turn our impress'd lances in our eyes
Which do command them. With him I sent the Queen,
My reason all the same; and they are ready
To-morrow, or at further space, t' appear
Where you shall hold your session. At this time
We sweat and bleed: the friend hath lost his friend;
And the best quarrels, in the heat, are curs'd
By those that feel their sharpness.
The question of Cordelia and her father
Requires a fitter place.

PART 5 / Act V, sc. 3

In wisdom I should ask thy name;
But since thy outside looks so fair and warlike,
And that thy tongue some say of breeding breathes,
What safe and nicely I might well delay
By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn.
Back do I toss those treasons to thy head;
With the hell-hated lie o'erwhelm thy heart;
Which- for they yet glance by and scarcely bruise-
This sword of mine shall give them instant way
Where they shall rest for ever. Trumpets, speak!

PART 5 / Act V, sc. 3

What, you have charg'd me with, that have I done,
And more, much more. The time will bring it out.
'Tis past, and so am I.- But what art thou
That hast this fortune on me? If thou'rt noble,
I do forgive thee.

PART 5 / Act V, sc. 3

I pant for life. Some good I mean to do,
Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send
(Be brief in't) to the castle; for my writ
Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia.
Nay, send in time.

PART 5 / Act V, sc. 3

He hath commission from thy wife and me
To hang Cordelia in the prison and
To lay the blame upon her own despair
That she fordid herself.