

Imaginative Ways to Approach the Text

KING LEAR - CUT TO...

Lesson Overview:

In this lesson, the students will gain an understanding of character development by synthesizing the text and getting to the essence of its meaning.

Grade Level(s)	9-12
Subject Area(s)	English, Drama
Curriculum Expectations & Learning Outcomes	<p>By the end of the lesson students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analyse text, focusing on ways it communicates information and emotions and influences the listener’s/viewer’s response;<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ English<ul style="list-style-type: none">⇒ (Oral Communication): 1.7⇒ (Reading & Literature Studies): 1.3, 2.3⇒ (Writing): 1.4□ Drama: A2.1, B1.1, C1.1• Make and explain inferences about the text and what it indirectly or implicitly reveals about the character;<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ English<ul style="list-style-type: none">⇒ (Oral Communication): 2.1⇒ (Reading & Literature Studies): 1.4⇒ (Writing): 1.3□ Drama: B1.3• Explain how dramatic exploration helps develop awareness of a character’s emotional state.<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ English<ul style="list-style-type: none">⇒ (Oral Communication): 1.1, 1.3⇒ (Reading & Literature Studies): 3.2⇒ (Writing): 1.4, 2.4□ Drama: B2.2
Time Needed	1 class period
Space	Desks in groups, then open spaces for exploring the text
Materials	Attached “Now Try This”

The Activity:

- Divide the students into groups of four and assign each group one of the speeches or soliloquies listed in the attached section “Now Try This” (Edmund, Edgar, or Lear).
- Have groups read through the speech for understanding.
- Next have the students cut the speech down to what they feel are the five most important lines while still preserving the essential meaning of the speech. (See attached example as a guide.)
- The group now takes their five lines and reduces it to three lines, while still trying to maintain the principal thought.

- Now the group will cut from three lines to five words (while still trying to maintain the principal thought).
- Now cut from five words to three words (while still trying to maintain the principal thought).
- And finally, they will cut to one word, the word that they feel best represents the speech.
- Choose one person from each group to read and explain to the rest of the class why they made the choices they did in each step.

Post Activity:

- After the activity, have the class discuss the following:
 - Where there any groups who used similar tactics?
 - What does this tell you about the character and his state of mind?

Optional:

- Each group will write a journal response on what they discovered/felt while doing the exercise.

Extension # 1:

- Once the above activity is completed – rather than presenting to the rest of the class, have each group make a copy of their five line version and pass their version to another group to complete the next section (cut to three lines).
- Pass the paper again for a new group to complete the next section (cut to five words).
- Pass once more to another group to complete the next two sections (cut to three words and to one word).
- The paper then makes its way back to its original group.
- Have groups compare their original to the version that the class has collectively cut.
 - Are the choices different?

Extension # 2:

- Using the same four groups, have groups one and two work together and groups three and four work together.
- Each group will divide into three sections and represent and analyse one of the characters in the excerpted scene of Act II, scene 4: Regan, Lear, and Goneril. Pare down the essence of what each character is saying to five crucial lines each, then three, then five words, down to three and finally one word.
- Have a trio of volunteers from each group (each representing one of the characters) read their version aloud to the rest of the class then switch groups. How are the versions different or similar?

EXAMPLE (from *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, scene 2) :

JULIET

- 1.O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?
 - 2.Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
 - 3.Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
 - 4.And I'll no longer be a Capulet.
 - 5.'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;
 - 6.Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
 - 7.What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot,
 - 8.Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
 - 9.Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
 - 10.What's in a name? that which we call a rose
 - 11.By any other name would smell as sweet;
 - 12.So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
 - 13.Retain that dear perfection which he owes
 - 14.Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
 - 15.And for that name which is no part of thee
- Take all myself.

Cut to five lines

- 1.Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
 - 2.Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
 - 3.And I'll no longer be a Capulet.
 - 4.Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
 - 5.And for that name which is no part of thee
- Take all myself.

Cut to three lines

- 1.Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
 - 2.And I'll no longer be a Capulet.
 - 3.And for that name which is no part of thee
- Take all myself.

Cut to five words

Deny father name take myself

Cut to three words

Deny take myself

Cut to one word

Myself

NOW TRY THESE:

King Lear - Act I, scene 2

EDMUND

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 moon-shines
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 the 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 the legitimate: fine word,—legitimate!
Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,
And my invention thrive, Edmund the base
Shall top the legitimate. I grow; I prosper:
Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

King Lear - Act II, scene 3

EDGAR

I heard myself proclaimed;
And by the happy hollow of a tree
Escaped the hunt. No port is free; no place,
That guard, and most unusual vigilance,
Does not attend my taking. Whiles I may 'scape,
I will preserve myself: and am bethought
To take the basest and most poorest shape
That ever penury, in contempt of man,
Brought near to beast: my face I'll grime with filth;
Blanket my loins: elf all my hair in knots;
And with presented nakedness out-face
The winds and persecutions of the sky.
The country gives me proof and precedent
Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices,
Strike in their numbed and mortified bare arms
Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;
And with this horrible object, from low farms,
Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes, and mills,
Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,
Enforce their charity. Poor Turlygod! Poor Tom!
That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am.

King Lear - Act II, scene 4

KING LEAR

O, reason not the need: our basest beggars
Are in the poorest thing superfluous:
Allow not nature more than nature needs,
Man's life's as cheap as beast's: thou art a lady;
If only to go warm were gorgeous,
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,
Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But, for true need,—
You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need!
You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,
As full of grief as age; wretched in both!
If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts
Against their father, fool me not so much
To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger,
And let not women's weapons, water-drops,
Stain my man's cheeks! No, you unnatural hags,
I will have such revenges on you both,
That all the world shall—I will do such things,—
What they are, yet I know not: but they shall be
The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep
No, I'll not weep:
I have full cause of weeping; but this heart
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,
Or ere I'll weep. O fool, I shall go mad!

King Lear – Act III, scene 2

KING LEAR

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow!
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!
You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head; And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Strike flat the thick rotundity o' th' world!
Crack nature's moulds, an germens spill at once,
That make ingrateful man.
Rumble thy bellyful; spit, fire; spout, rain!
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters.
I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness.
I never gave you kingdom, called you children.
You owe me no subscription. Then let fall
Your horrible pleasure. Here I stand your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man;
But yet I call you servile ministers,
That have with two pernicious daughters join
Your high engendered battles 'gainst a head
So old and white as this. O, ho! 'tis foul.

Excerpt Scene – Act II, scene 4

REGAN

I pray you, father, being weak, seem so.
If, till the expiration of your month,
You will return and sojourn with my sister,
Dismissing half your train, come then to me:
I am now from home, and out of that provision
Which shall be needful for your entertainment.

KING LEAR

Return to her, and fifty men dismissed?
No, rather I abjure all roofs, and choose
To wage against the enmity o' the 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
To knee his throne, and, squire-like; pension beg
To keep base life afoot. Return with her?
Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter
To this detested groom.

Pointing at OSWALD

GONERIL

At your choice, sir.

KING LEAR

I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad:
I will not trouble thee, my child; farewell:
We'll no more meet, no more see one another:
But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter;
Or rather a disease that's in my flesh,
Which I must needs call mine: thou art a boil,
A plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle,
In my corrupted blood. But I'll not chide thee;
Let shame come when it will, I do not call it:
I do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot,
Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove:
Mend when thou canst; be better at thy leisure:
I can be patient; I can stay with Regan,
I and my hundred knights.

REGAN

Not altogether so:

I looked not for you yet, nor am provided
For your fit welcome. Give ear, sir, to my sister;
For those that mingle reason with your passion
Must be content to think you old, and so--
But she knows what she does.

KING LEAR

Is this well spoken?

REGAN

I dare avouch it, sir: what, fifty followers?
Is it not well? What should you need of more?
Yea, or so many, sith that both charge and danger
Speak 'gainst so great a number? How, in one house,
Should many people, under two commands,
Hold amity? 'Tis hard; almost impossible.

GONERIL

Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance
From those that she calls servants or from mine?

REGAN

Why not, my lord? If then they chanced to slack you,
We could control them. If you will come to me,--
For now I spy a danger,--I entreat you
To bring but five and twenty: to no more
Will I give place or notice.

KING LEAR

I gave you all--

REGAN

And in good time you gave it.

KING LEAR

Made you my guardians, my depositaries;
But kept a reservation to be followed
With such a number. What, must I come to you
With five and twenty, Regan? said you so?

REGAN

And speak't again, my lord; no more with me.

KING LEAR

Those wicked creatures yet do look well-favoured,
When others are more wicked: not being the worst
Stands in some rank of praise.

To GONERIL

I'll go with thee:
Thy fifty yet doth double five and twenty,
And thou art twice her love.

GONERIL

Hear me, my lord;
What need you five and twenty, ten, or five,
To follow in a house where twice so many
Have a command to tend you?

REGAN

What need one?