



SOUTHERN SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

## King Lear *Read-Along Activities*

*These activities were developed by SSC as part of a social media “Community Read-Along” series designed to engage the community in a fashion similar to that of an online book club. Each week 3-4 scenes were “assigned” and SSC’s Facebook Page facilitated a dialogue around the text – providing thought points, discussion questions, and activities for theatre students.*

### **King Lear – ACT 3, SCENES 6-7**

We are powering through and finishing Act 3 of *King Lear* with Scenes 6 and 7 this week! This puts us past the halfway point of the play and well into the meat of the drama!

<http://shakespeare.mit.edu/lear/>

As you complete your study of this Act, pay close attention to the “mock trial” scene and the interrogation of Gloucester – both highly talked-about scenes from this play.

The version of *King Lear* found in the First Folio omits the mock trial scene as well as the conversation between the servants found at the end of Scene 7. Professor Kenneth Muir believes Shakespeare might have cut this scene because during early company performances, the audience laughed at it’s absurdity.

For more information on Shakespeare’s First Folio, check out this episode of “The Secret Life of Books”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOg0WffxE0s>



*Gloucester is led to Dover by his son Edgar disguised as Poor Tom  
Illustration by Oliver Cuthbertson*



## King Lear Read-Along Activities - Act 3, Scenes 6-7

### Discussion Questions:

- Shakespeare use heaps of biblical imagery throughout Scene 6, describing the torture of Lear's daughters using images which would have been familiar to audiences of the time from religious sermons and artwork depicting Hell in the local churches:

*"To have a thousand with red burning spits Come hissing in upon 'em!"*

*"The foul fiend haunts Poor Tom in the voice of a nightingale. Hoppedance cries in Tom's belly for two white herring. Croak not, black angel. I have no food for thee." Etc.*

1. What advantages does Shakespeare have by using imagery that his audience is familiar with? Why was it important for him to conjure images using words only?

- This Act ends with one of Shakespeare's most powerful and gruesome scenes, the torture and blinding of Gloucester. Cornwall and Regan show the extent of their evilness by blinding Gloucester and further tormenting him by revealing the true nature of his traitorous son Edmund. Gloucester is then turned out of his home but taken pity on by his own former servants.

2. What message from Shakespeare can we uncover by comparing the behavior of the nobility and the behavior of the servants in this scene?