

Lear

Rough draft due: **2/11** (in class! The purpose of having a draft is the ability to engage in revision, editing processes that occur as frequently as writing. Revising IS writing and it must happen constantly. Thus, if you do not have a draft to work with in class, you will not get credit regardless of whether or not you show me a draft at a later time)
 Final draft due: **2/14** (this draft should be printed, stapled, paper clipped, etc. PRIOR to your arrival in C201)

Carefully read and reread the given prompts. Begin to synthesize these with the use of your notes, marked up text, quizzes and handouts. Let these ideas and questions simmer cognitive unrest before you select a prompt and begin brainstorming. **Thesis statements due 2/7.** You will have drafting time in the computer lab on **2/7 and/or 2/10 depending on snow.** Structure your time and schedules accordingly. If you are having difficulty, please stay after school. I can only offer 5-10 min. help in class but if you need more time, you must take the initiative to set up extra help.

Some starter ideas: for those of you who dislike prompts

1. Character foils
2. Character Beliefs/ approaches to life- fortune, astrology vs. free will
3. Suffering/ loss vs. hope/ renewal
4. The two justice scenes at the end of Act 3
5. The two reunion scenes at the end of Act 4
6. Types of madness
7. Authority and Order vs. Chaos and Disorder
8. C/C facets of the poems we used in class: "Storm Warnings" and "Do Not Go Gentle"
9. Use of the motif 'nothing' and the nakedness/clothes references throughout the play
10. There are so many possibilities- think of your own and talk to me about it!

Structured Questions: for those of you who like prompts

1. *Tragedy and comedy share the same structural elements of calms and tempest, merely in a different order. Heywood's distinction (a lit critic) between tragedy and comedy isn't about mood or content, but about sequence. To use his own meteorological metaphor (interesting given the prevalence of storms, literal and metaphorical, in Shakespeare's plays): if the clouds are clearing, it's a comedy; if they're gathering, it's a tragedy (Smith, 2004). **How do inverted structural and stylistic uses of imagery compare and contrast in Lear?***
2. ***King Lear** is a play whose explicit references to a malevolent pantheon seem to attempt to ally it with ancient tragedy. When Gloucester famously observes "as flies to wanton boys are we to the gods/They kill us for their sport" (4.1), he seems to articulate a vision of a universe in which people are impotent, robbed of the power to act by the machinations of higher and controlling forces. It is important to remember that this isn't necessarily a view being put forward by Shakespeare, but of a particular character within his play, and a character who is elsewhere in the play shown to be superstitious and credulous. Gloucester tries to find a meaning in the random and cruel events into which he is thrust, and settles on a vision of the gods playing with their earthly underlings (Smith, 2004). **In what ways do the characters attempt to find universal order amid chaotic turmoil? And how can we compare and contrast these approaches to order and disorder?***

3. *At the heart of King **Lear**, I am going to argue, is less the spectacle of the king's madness (tempting though it is to play it this way in an individualistic society) than the communitarian enactment of group 'holding' or 'containment' of that madness. Shakespeare's **Lear**, in short, is about group dynamics in extremis -- gathering the limbs of Osiris, or putting Humpty Dumpty together again. But the group members can only do this by partially sharing the darkness into which their erstwhile leader has been plunged (Brown, 2001). In what ways does the communal group (servants, fool, Poor Tom and members of the kingdom) play a part in sharing the "darkness" into which their leader has been thrust and how do these roles compare and contrast?*

4. *From Adam to **Oedipus**, from Moses to **Lear**, patriarchy and authority in Western culture have been synonymous. Kings, popes, heads of state, and male heads of families have been invested with authority based on either a divine premise or a natural one (...) Authority passed from one king, pope, or father to the next, sometimes peaceably, sometimes violently, but the enshrined legitimacy of the patriarchy as the foundation of authority remained intact until the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. Then, beneath the weight of revolutionary movements in industry, science, and politics, the patriarchal Humpty Dumpty fell off the wall (White, 2000). It seems that patriarchy and authority go hand in hand with misjudgments and miscalculations. In what ways does authority (on a macro political level or on a micro familial level) function or dysfunction as a result of missteps, age, or gender and how might these functions compare on contrast with other age or gender shifts?*

5. *Disease, decay and corruption function as motifs and ongoing patterns of imagery in **Lear**. How might other images or motifs serve as parallels to these central patterns? For instance, how might blood imagery compare and or contrast with the verbal grotesque imagery from Poor Tom? Likewise, how might animal imagery compare or contrast with astrological images?*

6. *There is really no free will or choice, because in a way, the characters' choices are fated to lead them, in the end, to exactly what they think they are avoiding. No one can judge correctly unless he has all the information and even Lear laments: "who is it that can tell me who I am?" (1.4.222). How does questioning/reflecting/ and circumventing fate lead characters toward ironic twists of fortune? What does it mean for characters to "know themselves"? Compare and contrast notions of fortune and existential 'nothingness' to arrive at a thoughtful conclusion.*