

King Lear

Questions and Marking Schemes

Question: from Leaving Certificate ordinary level past paper with the host posing the question.
How does Cordelia upset her father at the beginning of the play?

Marking scheme:

- Cordelia's opinion that the love test is a 'charade' and will not 'heave her heart into her mouth'
- She hurts Lear's pride in public
- She speaks truth to power
- She says that half her love would be for her husband

Question: more challenging question. *"In King Lear the villainous characters hold more fascination for the audience than the virtuous ones."*

And we are asked (by the Leaving Cert in 2008) to discuss this with reference to the text,

Marking Scheme: Discussion will focus on;

- The intriguing interaction between villainous and virtuous characters
- How charismatic Edmund is more engaging than self-righteous Edgar
- How the steadfast loyalty of good/virtuous characters is appealing
- If Goneril, Regan and Cornwall are more/less credible than Cordelia and Kent
- The affecting/moving transformation from villainy to virtue
- The fascinating duality of some good/evil characters

Question:

"In the play, King Lear, the stories of Lear and Gloucester mirror one another in interesting ways."
We have to write a response to this view of the play, supporting our answers by reference to the text.' We then return to the marking scheme for a selection of questions and possible approaches,

Marking Scheme

The similarities/differences in both stories

- How Lear's blind folly is matched by Gloucester's credulous nature
- That both Lear and Gloucester develop morally through suffering
- How the double plot generates dramatic moments
- How the main themes of the sub-plot complement those of the main plot
- How the sub-plot heightens the sense of tragedy in the main plot
- Does the sub-plot simply repeat the theme/s of the main story?
- How Lear chooses his fate while Gloucester is a victim of forces beyond his control
- How Lear achieves the status of a tragic hero but Gloucester is less impressive