

King Lear (extract)

The extract is from Act III Scene 2 in one of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies. The main character, King Lear, abdicates and divides the kingdom among his three daughters, Goneril, Regan and Cordelia. The ensuing tragic events lead to the death of all three daughters and Lear himself. The extract is from the famous scene on the moor in which Lear loses his mind and rants like a madman.

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage! Blow!
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!
You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Smite flat the thick rotundity o' the 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 will with two pernicious daughters join
Your high-engendered battles 'gainst a head
So old and white as this. O! O! 'tis foul!