



King Lear Setting

At the very end of Act 2, Cornwall warns, "Lock the doors, my lord. It's a wild night. . . . Come in out of the storm." And then, in Act 3, scene 1, Lear runs out into the raging tempest on a heath where he is "One minded like the weather, most unquietly," and "Contending with the fretful elements." (No Fear: 3.1.4–5) This setting is one of the most famous in all of Shakespeare's plays.

Use this worksheet to record specific descriptive details about the time and place in Act 3, considering both the literal and the figurative meanings of words and phrases. Examples have been provided for you to use as a model. Be sure to cite your examples. Then, use the evidence you have recorded to answer the questions. Use at least three quotations in your responses.

Detail:

This night—wherein the cub-drawn bear would couch, / The lion and the belly-pinched wolf / Keep their fur dry—unbonneted he runs, And bids what will take all. (No Fear: 3.1.11–15)

Meaning:

The weather is crazy and so is Lear, and he doesn't even have the sense to shield himself like the wild animals do.

Detail:

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow! / Your cataracts and hurricanoes, spout / Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks! (No Fear: 3.2. 1–3)

Meaning:

Lear is beginning to lose his sanity as he identifies with the raging storm. He's encouraging the external storm as he welcomes his internal one, unable to stop the onslaught of madness and chaos in his mind.

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Questions:

1. How does Shakespeare use the setting in Act 3 to reflect the mood, meaning, characters, and plot of the entire play?
2. How do writers use weather to reflect emotions in literature? What are some other supporting examples from this play or other pieces of literature?

RL.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RL.11-12.3 Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

W.11-12.9 Draw evidence from literary or informative texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.