KING LEAR

KING LEAR
By William Shakespeare
Directed by Kimberley Rampersad

GRADE RECOMMENDATION
8+

CONTENT ADVISORY
Please see the show page for a detailed audience advisory.

SYNOPSIS
The issue of succession is not confined to kings and queens. Every parent wishes to pass on some kind of legacy to their children, be it a business, a beloved home or even a family keepsake. How can our domestic kingdoms, no matter how modest, be divided amongst our children without showing favouritism or alienating a sibling? It is the same with love: how can we parcel out our deepest affection and loyalties without causing pain? In King Lear, Shakespeare elevates this domestic drama into grand tragedy, gifting us with one of world literature’s greatest and most flawed characters, a ruler and a father “more sinned against than sinning.”

Utterly exhausted by his decades-long reign over a quarrelsome kingdom, the elderly Lear announces his intention to divide his kingdom between his three daughters. The sisters’ inheritance will be determined by their love for their father, which Lear commands them to express in the noblest phrases. Daughters Goneril and Regan flatter their father’s wishes, but Cordelia, unable to express her deep filial love, remains silent. For her reticence, Cordelia is banished. Hardly has the crown left Lear’s head when his imperious daughters humiliate him before the court that once bade him allegiance. Soon the conniving sisters fall prey to a master schemer: Edmund, the bastard son of Gloucester, who will stop at nothing to seize the power denied to him by his illegitimacy.

Within this dual crisis of loyalty and succession—Gloucester has made an even more disastrous pledge to a deceitful offspring—Shakespeare artfully poses several metaphysical questions: Are cruelty and the lust for power simply expressions of Nature, or are they unique to humanity? Why are we so inclined to choose illusion over what we know in our hearts is true? And, are suffering and bitter experience the only paths to wisdom? The play’s multi-layered language, vivid dramatic turns and broad cast of memorable characters offer multiple answers and interpretations for every human heart and every family.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS
• Global Competencies:
  • Citizenship, Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Metacognition, Self-Awareness
• Grade 8
  • The Arts (Drama, Music, Visual Arts)
    • Language
  • Grade 9-12
    • The Arts (Drama, Music, Visual Arts)
    • English
• Grades 11-12
  • The Arts (Drama, Music, Visual Arts)
    • English
    • Social Sciences and Humanities

THEMES
• Aging and Ageism
• Belonging
• Children and Parents
• Death and the Meaning of Life
• Deception and Disguise
• Exclusion and Inclusion
• The “Great Chain of Being”
• Family Relationships
• The Fragility and Importance of Memory
• Inheritance and Legacy
• Madness and Reason
• Power and Leadership
• Redemption and Forgiveness
• Wisdom and Ignorance
• Worthiness
DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

• What makes a family? How have power dynamics in families changed over the last many generations?
• Do you believe that Elders are valued in our society? Why or why not?
• Have you ever changed your words or actions in order to appease someone? If so, how did that feel?
• What does legacy mean to you? Do you think this will change as you grow older? Explain your thinking.

STUDY GUIDES

2023 Shorts and Study Guides and those from previous seasons are available free of charge online at https://www.stratfordfestival.ca/Learn/Teachers/ResourcesPD

BOOKING INFORMATION: TICKETS, WORKSHOPS & CHATS

STUDENT MATINÉES

You may book any available date, but selected student matinée performances for this show are at 2 p.m. on the following dates:

• Thursday, April 27th
• Tuesday, May 2nd
• Wednesday, May 10th
• Monday, May 15th
• Wednesday, May 24th
• Thursday, June 8th
• Wednesday, June 14th
• Tuesday, June 20th
• Thursday, September 7th
• Wednesday, September 13th
• Thursday, September 21st
• Wednesday, September 27th
• Tuesday, October 3rd
• Thursday, October 12th
• Thursday, October 19th
• Wednesday, October 25th
• Friday, October 27th

WORKSHOPS & CHATS

Pre or Post-Show Workshops and Post-Show Chats (virtual, onsite or at your school/centre) can be booked by calling the Box Office at 1.800.567.1600.

SOCIAL MEDIA

TOOLS FOR TEACHERS SPONSORED BY

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Production support is generously provided by Catherine & David Wilkes.