



**AP<sup>®</sup> English Lit  
2004 Sample Student Responses  
Form B**

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The final concluding scene of King Lear, in which Lear dies while clutching ~~the star~~ his youngest daughter, Cordelia, the lifeless body of his ~~de daughter~~ youngest daughter, Cordelia, serves to illuminate the greater meaning of the work as a whole. Lear had previously banished Cordelia, the only daughter who truly loved him, from his kingdom. It is not until this final scene when Lear realizes ~~the~~ Cordelia's love after the treachery of his other daughters, Regan and Goneril, and overcomes his earlier blindness. Lear's conflict is finally and tragically resolved, and with it all of his preceding torment.

In the beginning of the play, Lear is struggling to better know himself. After living eighty years, his daughter Regan comments "Yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself" (1:1). Indeed, Lear himself poses the question "Who is it that can tell me who I am? (1:4)" Though he has had the foresight to abdicate "that future strife may be prevented now (1:1)," he does not understand himself as an individual or ~~his daughters~~ the feelings of his daughters. The extent of his blindness proves so great that the only way in which it can be overcome is experiencing the consequences of his actions, ultimately ending in his ~~and~~ Cordelia's death.

Upon first realizing the treachery of Regan and Goneril, Lear lapses into madness. He is banished out onto the heath, during a raging storm. In an apt use of pathetic fallacy, Lear's temperament is mirrored by the storm: "This tempest in my mind

Doth from my senses take all feeling else  
save what beats there - filial ingratitude" (2:4).

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Engulfed in the physical tempest of the storm, Lear arrives at a mental epiphany. He is still, however, helpless and outcast on the heath. When he meets Edgar, he reaches another epiphany: "Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art (3:4)." Stripped of his crown and shelter, Lear begins to understand what it is to be human. The concluding death scene is harrowing proof of mortality, and his tempestuous epiphanies tragically arrive too late to save Cordelia.

While madness, blindness, and injustice, key themes in King Lear, are all recalled in the final death scene, the most directly applicable is the relationship between man and god. Throughout the play, characters classically refer to "gods" as well as god. The blinded Gloucester aptly summarizes a key theme: "As flies to wanton boys, we we to the gods they kill us for their sport (4:1)."

The ultimate meaning of human existence comes into question; throughout the play there is great suffering. Indeed, the death of Cordelia was ~~also~~ caused by a lack of speed in communication; there was not enough time to repeal Edmund's initial order to have Lear and Cordelia executed. That her death was so meaningless, and that Lear was saved, suggests a cruel fate and suffering in the world, in addition to the obvious injustice.

Lear, eighty years old, is so affected that he kills Cordelia's executioner. Before Cordelia's death, Lear and Cordelia had reconciled; through the actions of Regan and Goneril, Lear saw where his true sentiments lay. Nevertheless, just as was the order to rescind their execution, Lear's

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realization comes too late to save Cordelia. In Cordelia's death, Lear is physically reminded of his previous blindness, a central theme in the greater meaning of the work. He ~~also is able to~~ is overwhelmed by the extent of the injustice: "Howl! Howl! O you are men of stones (Act V)."

ff ~~Cordelia~~

Cordelia is dead only because she returned to save her father, ~~from test~~ reminding the audience of the significance of parent-child relationships despite the initial ~~impressions~~ ~~as~~ ~~negative~~ ~~destructive~~ abuses of trust manipulated by Regan and Goneril. Kent, too, is present at Lear's death as he mourns Cordelia, reinforcing the dominant theme of loyalty (Kent remained loyal despite his banishment, as did Cordelia). Ultimately, it is not until this final scene that the ~~key themes of the play are~~ the discussion of the play's key themes is resolved. The tragic consequences of Lear's blindness and his daughters' treachery make his and Cordelia's death inescapable. The tragic conclusion provides a foundation for serious reflection on the major themes introduced in the work, centrally blindness, injustice, loyalty, parent-child relationships, the relationship between man and god, or the human condition. The converging of all these key themes in the death of Lear as he clutches the lifeless Cordelia reinforces the meaning of the play and ultimately illuminates the

Quote Notation = (1:4) means Act I Scene iv

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A person's moral beliefs have often taken him to take drastic measures, throughout history. As North and South Vietnam began to fight, Buddhist monks set themselves on fire as a protest to these violent acts. Their deaths helped to alert the world to a growing crisis. Similarly, Aldous Huxley explores <sup>this</sup> idea in his book novel Brave New World. As the protagonist, John, realizes that he has compromised his values, he kills himself in the hope of being a catalyst for change.

After his conversation with Mustapha Mond, John resigns himself to an abandoned lighthouse in the hopes of purifying himself and living his view of a moral life. Any feelings or thoughts he has causes him to throw himself into thorn bushes to cleanse himself of impure thoughts. If this does not work, he begins to whip himself. These self-mutilation sessions cause him to pass out and lie outside for days as he begins to recover his strength. ~~to~~ This

behavior is in complete contrast to everything that the brave new world stands for. This society is based off of instant self-gratification, so the spectacle of someone self-mutilating.

~~themselves~~ himself causes a crowd to grow around John's lighthouse, and sets the stage for the death scene,

chanting "we want the whip," the observers send John into a frenzy as he beats himself, trying to ~~clear~~ be cleansed of the society's impure nature.

This only serves to goad the crowd on in their chanting. A tearful Lenina breaks through the crowd of onlookers to stop John's display of violence.

She is ~~having~~ experiencing feelings which she has never felt before, and knows that they are connected to John. She tries to tell him this, but it John turns on her when she approaches. He

begins to yell "strumpet" and quote from Othello as he beats her. In trying

to "purify" her, he causes the

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crowd to rush together and sweep him Overseas <sup>3B</sup> up in ~~a~~ their mass arousal. John wakes up ~~once~~ ~~ag~~ the next day, only to realize that he has comprimised his morals once again. He hangs himself in the ultimate act of self-purification, which, despite his intentions, goes unnoticed by the brave new world.

Brave New World ~~was~~ <sup>is</sup> meant as a warning against what society may become. Although there may be some who still cling to their moral beliefs, the rest of society will shun them. The death scene of John shows this in that not only did he kill himself over an issue he feels strongly in, which shows the ultimate devotion, ~~the~~ his symbolic death went unnoticed in a world where unpleasantness does not exist. This helps to prove Huxely's belief that ~~only a complete lack of morality can allow for perfect happiness~~ ~~morality~~ a "perfect" world is not worth the sacrifices it demands.

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3 Overseas 3C

Someone once said that in Death, all is revealed. This is no less true in ~~life~~ literature as in life. Many times, at the death of a character, you find out more about them, the plot and the theme than you did in the whole novel. Nowhere, in my opinion, is this more beautifully portrayed than in The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne. One of my favorite pieces of Romantic fiction, The Scarlet Letter is about being true to ~~one~~ oneself, which is a lesson sorely needed ~~in~~ these days.

At the very end of the novel, the Rev. Dimmesdale dies, but not before revealing that he is the man who committed adultery with Hester Prynne, and he is the father of her baby, Pearl. The reason this is such an excellent example of truth revealed in death is because he died, ~~because~~ basically, from the strain of having to hide the truth for so long. He had been beloved by everyone and thought to be the very model of a Godly man. The knowledge that he had committed this horrible sin ate away at him ~~and~~ until finally ~~overwhelmed~~ finally forcing him to "come clean."



The theme of The Scarlet Letter is, as I said, to be true to oneself. Also, the implication is that when you are not, not only are you slowly "killing" yourself, but eventually the truth will have to come out, sometimes with dire consequences. While we may not all die, many other things can - relationships, friendships, marriages - these things can and will suffer or die when you conceal things. In order ~~to cement~~ to cement his point into our minds, Hawthorne has Dimmesdale die so that we could fully understand how serious he thought it was to be dishonest with the world.

Another implication is that after you are true to yourself and honest with others, you will have peace. Although Dimmesdale is dying, he is finally at peace with himself and with the world because he confessed. He dies happily and, we assume, goes to heaven where he is at eternal peace. We also feel that weight being lifted when ~~we~~<sup>we</sup> are honest. After doing something wrong, one always feels happier, more at ease, after confessing. Hiding away your "sins" can only

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bring you heartache.

(Overseas 3C)

While you saw a measure of the consequences of dishonesty throughout the book with different characters, nowhere is it more simply and effectively revealed than in the death of Dimmesdale. Had he lived and not confessed, or had he run away with Hester as he suggested, not only would the ~~the~~ reader probably be disappointed, but the theme would never be truly revealed. It wouldn't even have made much sense. The only way to truly understand was, ~~so~~ as in many books, through a death. While sad, it has been and probably always will be, an effective way to get your point across.

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