



'King Lear' in Context

The Cultural Background

Keith Linley

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Bringing to life the historical, cultural, social and moral background of Shakespeare's most disturbing tragedy

"King Lear in Context" provides a comprehensive but lively and accessible guide to the literary, political and intellectual contexts of the play, including much useful material on ideas of kingship, nature and the family. Students' experience of the play will be enriched by Linley's commendable emphasis on evidence from primary sources.' —Martin Garrett, writer and senior A-level examiner

"Those wishing to develop an insight into the contextual background from which the themes in the play developed need look no further. Although scholarly in approach, the guide avoids dry and confusing language, using an easy and informative style that will easily engage a range of readers. This guide will help students of Shakespeare manipulate themes and take a contextual overview, and will quickly become a resource for revision and essay practice. Whetting the appetite for further reading, it uses cross reference to other plays to develop an appreciation of Shakespeare's other works and mind-set. This dynamic, contextual guide will surely become an essential study companion for students and teachers alike.' —Jill Leese, secondary English teacher and team leader with leading UK examinations board

This engaging book provides in-depth discussion of the various influences that an audience in 1606 would have brought to interpreting 'King Lear'. How did people think about the world, about God, about sin, about kings, about civilized conduct? Learn about the social hierarchy, gender relationships, parenting and family dynamics, court corruption, class tensions, the literary profile of the time, the concept of tragedy – and all the subversions, transgressions, and oppositions that made the play an unsettling picture of a disintegrating world in free fall.

Readership

Targeted at high-achieving A-level, International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement pupils, first-year undergraduates and an intellectually curious audience.

Contents

Introduction; Prologue; 1. The Historical Context; 2. The Elizabethan World Order: From Divinity to Dust; 3. Sin, Death and the Prince of Darkness; 4. The Seven Cardinal Virtues; 5. Kingship; 6. Patriarchy, Family and Gender Relationships; 7. Man in His Place; 8. Images of Disorder: The Religious Context; 9. The Contemporary Political Context; 10. The Literary Context; 11. The Context of Tragedy; 12. The Family Context; 13. Sins, Transgressions, Subversions and Reversals; Notes; Bibliography; Index

About the Author(s) / Editor(s)

Dr Keith Linley is an academic, educator and experienced A-level examiner. He has taught English at both secondary and post-secondary levels.

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