

# YORK NOTES for **A LEVEL**

## STUDY GUIDE



# KING LEAR

William Shakespeare



YORK NOTES

## PART ONE: INTRODUCING KING LEAR

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| How to study <i>King Lear</i> ..... | 5 |
| <i>King Lear</i> : A snapshot ..... | 6 |

## PART TWO: STUDYING KING LEAR

|                                     |    |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Synopsis .....                      | 8  |
| Act I .....                         | 10 |
| Act II .....                        | 15 |
| Extract analysis: II.4.216–85 ..... | 22 |
| Act III .....                       | 24 |
| Extract analysis: III.2.1–73 .....  | 26 |
| Act IV .....                        | 35 |
| Extract analysis: IV.7.30–84 .....  | 42 |
| Act V .....                         | 44 |
| Progress check .....                | 47 |

## PART THREE: CHARACTERS AND THEMES

|                                |    |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Characters .....               | 49 |
| King Lear .....                | 50 |
| Goneril and Regan .....        | 52 |
| Cordelia .....                 | 54 |
| Gloucester .....               | 56 |
| Edgar .....                    | 58 |
| Edmund .....                   | 60 |
| The Fool .....                 | 62 |
| Kent .....                     | 64 |
| Albany and Cornwall .....      | 65 |
| Oswald .....                   | 66 |
| Themes .....                   | 67 |
| Nothing .....                  | 67 |
| Appearance and reality .....   | 67 |
| Sight and blindness .....      | 68 |
| Madness .....                  | 69 |
| Suffering .....                | 69 |
| Natural and unnatural .....    | 70 |
| Justice .....                  | 71 |
| Religion .....                 | 72 |
| The family and feudalism ..... | 73 |
| Progress check .....           | 74 |

## PART FOUR: GENRE, STRUCTURE AND LANGUAGE

|                      |    |
|----------------------|----|
| Genre .....          | 75 |
| Structure .....      | 76 |
| Language .....       | 77 |
| Progress check ..... | 80 |

## PART FIVE: CONTEXTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

|                                |    |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Contexts .....                 | 81 |
| Historical context .....       | 81 |
| Shakespeare's theatre .....    | 82 |
| Settings .....                 | 84 |
| Literary context .....         | 85 |
| Critical interpretations ..... | 86 |
| Critical history .....         | 86 |
| Contemporary approaches .....  | 87 |
| Progress check .....           | 89 |

## PART SIX: PROGRESS BOOSTER

|                                                           |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Assessment focus .....                                    | 90  |
| How to write high-quality responses .....                 | 92  |
| Questions about a specific extract .....                  | 94  |
| General questions about the whole text .....              | 96  |
| Questions with statements, quotations or viewpoints ..... | 98  |
| Using critical interpretations and perspectives .....     | 100 |
| Annotated sample answers .....                            | 102 |
| Candidate 1 .....                                         | 102 |
| Candidate 2 .....                                         | 104 |
| Candidate 3 .....                                         | 106 |
| Practice task .....                                       | 108 |

## PART SEVEN: FURTHER STUDY AND ANSWERS

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Further reading .....        | 109 |
| Literary terms .....         | 110 |
| Revision task answers .....  | 111 |
| Progress check answers ..... | 113 |
| Mark scheme .....            | 120 |