

Analysing the introduction of king lear's character in act 1 of 'king lear'

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King Lear's character is introduced as the foolhardy tragic hero doomed by his own irrationality. He is consistently portrayed as short-sighted and immature, bound by his own shortfalls as he intertwines himself in superficial love triangles. The play commences in King Lear's palace where two chief characters are discussing Lear dividing out his kingdom amongst his most favoured son-in-law. This hints Lear's nature yet we are not exposed to his character until Kent and Gloucester have finished conversing.

This arouses reader curiosity and interest. Lear arrives soon after and we discover how he has no qualms about operating using the royal 'we' as he launches straight into talk of sharing his kingdom. He appears as blunt and informal in terms of his attitude. He prolongs this manner as he expresses to his daughters how he wishes to "Unburdened crawl toward death". This indicates Lear's immature wish to revert to babyhood by the employment of the word "crawl" after his transition, while discarding his adult responsibilities and vexations.

Already the reader can observe his attitude of no obligation to his country or anyone after he shifts power. Furthermore, Lear's sermon makes explicit his shallow countenance. He demonstrates materialism as he requests: Which of you...

love us most...our largest bounty may extendHe desires his daughters to display to him their love, as it will grant them a higher share. This portrays Lear's rash and insecure mentality.

It establishes to the reader how he revels in sycophantic behaviour whether it be accurate or deceitful, as he is none the wiser since he appears
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encompassed in a personal ego promotion. He exhibits vulnerability as he offers incredible wealth to his offspring in return for honesty yet he is naïve of human nature. This supports the view of his lack of foresight and immaturity. After, Lear requires his youngest daughter, Cordelia to speak in the quest for her share as he offers perhaps "A third more opulent than your sisters..."

". This illustrates Lear's possible greater affection and partiality towards her. However, through his obstructed views, when she declines with "nothing, my lord" he continues to inquire "nothing?" -again exhibiting his favouritism granting more occasion to speak- resulting in "Nothing will come of nothing..."

". This contradicts his principles, as he is the prime motivator of disorder since he states how in her lack of attempt to please him she will ruin her prospects by her rejecting feelings. It could be argued that something did come of nothing as he suddenly became irrational and disinherited her, which would signify his persona. Consequently, he further divided the share between his two other daughters in a hasty fashion after Cordelia's dismissal. Furthermore, Lear resorts to cursing Cordelia into having foul or no children. It heightens our knowledge of him as he uses "The mysteries of Hecate and the night" indicating witchcraft and superstition as we hear the force of his rage.

This could prompt us to believe him to live in an ideal, imaginary world - to non-believers - which could be granted a personal utopia as things which incense him from blunt reality can be taken care of with aid. Lear continues

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to emit enraged declarations and when interrupted by Kent proclaims to him, "Come not between the dragon and his wrath" speaking of his regard to Cordelia using bestial imagery while using a fictitious creature, synonymous for power and might. Therefore explicitly voicing his fury without being disillusioned, continually presenting his petulance. Later when exciting his materialism, and effectively auctioning Cordelia off, he states how" ..

. Her price is fallen" testimony to his measurement in terms of wealth and goods. A caesura subdivides the sentence as so signify his mercenary behaviour. However, Lear is eventually presented as foolish now through the characters. France is in shock belief at the treatment towards his proposed wife with the use of "she herself is a dowry".

He communicates through Lear's own language turning it back on him in bemusement. Consequently, he tells Cordelia "My love should kindle to inflamed respect" This imagery matches Lear's impetuosity and vehemence as France speaks of the passionate admiration that evolved through Cordelia's mild assertion of herself, cornering Lear's principles clearly demonstrating the error Lear induced. Moreover, Lear's other two daughters speak later amongst themselves, patronising the idea of their father putting it down to "...

The infirmity of his age..." and his "poor judgement" displaying how Lear was duped by his capacity for ideal love from people he believed to be trustworthy, increasing his naivety. They appear to have a firm hold on reality and are able to manipulate their deteriorating father as they have been judging each situation to suit themselves. Furthermore, the paralleled

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subplot of Gloucester and his illegitimate son, expose Lear further as being asinine, when Edmond reads his father Gloucester the forged letter, with the terms: Sons at perfect age.

.. fathers decline...son manage his revenueThis embarrasses Lear's aspiration of " crawling unburdened toward death" as Gloucester goes berserk and becomes relatively inarticulate, mirroring Lear's irrationality as he was enraged by Cordelia refusing the kingdom share whereas Gloucester regards it as unquestionable to even touch it.

This challenges Lear's mental fragility, shedding light on the previous mention about Lear's state of mind made by the daughters, adopting rationality. In addition, it confronts Lear's masculine capabilities as to whether he is vigorous enough. Also, it could fuel the negative light Lear is portrayed in or it could create reader sympathy, as it would support his vulnerability. Furthermore, Edmond prevents his father from making rash decisions which is interpreted as protecting him from looking foolish, however to support Lear's sympathy cause, his two daughters are forcing him to appear foolish. Later, when the courtiers are instructed to be discourteous Lear observes, " Ho, I think the world's asleep" demonstrating his disjointed reality, seeing something the rest cannot, relating to witchcraft and superstitions. The fool soon arrives, speaking the truth in riddles mocking King Lear, shaming him as he indifferently responds.

For example: He that keeps nor crust nor crumb, Weary of all, shall want someThis brings to light Lear's inconsistent behaviour as he sees Lear will regret it in time to come and see the error of his ways by which time it will

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be too late. The Fool speaks of the simplest means with “ crust nor crumb” displaying Lear rejecting the entirety of his wealth away and “ weary of all” implies how Lear will discover the gravity of the situation and will be utterly devastated. Again, Lear’s masculinity is challenged, as Lear proclaims how his “ thankless child” has made him “ ashamed...thou hast power to shake (his) manhood”.

This incorporates Lear into the reality the other characters appear to be living. He is aware his daughters are now in control, altering the patriarchal system he believed would prevail. He has been awoken to the deceit around him as the act ends. It ostentatiously closes with Lear riled up with his somewhat new-found energy and a new perspective which we as a reader are optimistic will be dealt with more critically in the next few acts.