

King lear i.i 138-180



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Pride is perhaps the most recurring theme and character trait in literature dating back to Shakespearean era. Often, Shakespeare has shown the devastating effects of pride and its consequences for both the proud character and their associates. This particular passage is used by Shakespeare to emphasize the characterization of Kent as well as to develop Lear's character using literary devices such as allusions and diction, foreshadow future proceedings of the plot, and most prominently, through use of imagery, the reinforcement of themes including illusion versus reality and sight versus blindness. Through his use of diction and specific allusions, Shakespeare, develops Kent's and Lear's character. The very first address by Kent to Lear established Kent as a loyal and faithful advisor of the king. Initiating his suggestion with the word 'royal' (line 138) reflects the esteem and status which Kent associates with his liege lord. Although within the context, it is clear that Lear has given his authority away to his sons-in-law, Kent still beholds Lear as a royalty and refers to him with the formality otherwise used only for the kings. The repetition of the words 'as my' in the subsequent three lines as well as 'in my' (line 141) all reflect the close relationship which Kent holds with Lear. This asserts not only his connection with Lear but also highlights the level of dedication shown by Kent as the lines 'love'd as my father', 'as my master follow'd', and 'as my great patron thought on in my prayers' all show the obedient and dedicated nature of Kent's character towards the former king. The level of intimacy between Kent and Lear as seen by the constant repetition of the word 'thy' by Kent reflects not only the close relationship they have but the idea can be expanded to reveal Kent's character as just and rational. Even upon the threat of death by Lear in line 153 fails in its attempt to prevent Kent from giving proper advice.

This can be regarded to show not just the persistently dedicated side of Kent but along with it, the fact that Kent will speak the truth regardless of any threats to his life. Thus the shift of tone from words such as 'royal' to 'thy' marks the just nature of Kent's character who would assert the truth even on the pain of death and therefore shows Kent's courage. Another example of this can be seen when Kent says 'thou swear'st thy gods in vain'; an offense which earns him the title 'miscreant' from Lear and thus draws his displeasure. Yet, despite Lear's anger, Kent states that truth and thus established his character as truly courageous. Having characterized Kent as loyal, dedicated, faithful, and courageous, Shakespeare emphasizes the wise nature of Kent in several lines of the passage. Lines 148 to 153 reflect the wisdom which Kent holds and highlight his ability to see beyond the portrayed and make deductions on his own. The revelation of Kent's perspective on the daughters' reactions and his thought process on it show his wise character. Not only can Kent see beyond the 'flattery' (line 147) of the older sisters, he also states the fact that the youngest daughter 'does not love [Lear the] least'. The insight shown by Kent distinguishes him from his royal liege as Lear fails to see past the flattery of Regan and Goneril. These examples from the passage clearly demonstrate how Shakespeare establishes Kent's character as loyal, faithful, dedicated, courageous, and wise. On the other hand, Lear's character is developed even further in terms of the proud nature embedded in Lear. The fact the first six lines spoken by Lear show the commanding as well as demanding nature of Lear. The expectancy for his orders to be carried out and his wishes fulfilled reflects the self-importance and the pride within Lear. 'No more', 'Now, by Apollo-', 'hear me[!]!', and 'hear me!' all show the authority with which Lear associated

himself with and the proud character he really is. In contrast with Kent's reference to him with the word 'thy', Lear uses the exact opposite i. e. 'us' and 'our' to reassert his authority and through this, Shakespeare shows the pride within the former-king. The 'we', 'us', and 'our' used from lines 166-179 show the authority and royal nature which Lear constantly demonstrates. Shakespeare elaborates on Lear's proud character by using the allusions of 'Apollo' and 'Jupiter' which both are the highest of the mythological divine beings. The reference to them by Lear marks the pride within him as he perceives himself of importance enough to draw the gods to help him and swears by their name. Furthermore, the reference to himself as not having broken any 'vow' and the daring of Kent by attempt to change his 'vow' highlights Lear's pride even more. The subsequent line 'nor our nature nor our place can bear' shows the anger Lear feels when Kent tries his utmost to make Lear see the truth. However, Lear, blinded by his pride refuses to listen to Kent's advice and banishes him from the kingdom. This act of banishment also shows the impulsive nature of Lear as he first disowns his most beloved daughter, and then banishes his most loyal advisor from the kingdom. Thus Shakespeare characterizes Lear as an authoritarian, commanding, proud, and impulsive character. There exist various quotes within the passage which foreshadow upcoming events as wells as the fate of the characters involved in the passage. The first four lines of the passage already reflect the dedicated nature of Kent and thus foreshadow that Kent's loyalty will not waiver and he will return to the king in some manner even after he was banished. Kent's language constantly hints at the possibility of his return due to his care for Lear. 'Let me remain the blank of thine eye' shows the intentions Kent to be granted Lear's company so that he may guide and

counsel Lear concerning the king's actions. Lear's actions of acting impulsive at occasions such as at hand also reflects and foreshows the future irrational behavior shown by Lear towards his peers.