

A wise fool in king lear by shakespeare

[Literature](#), [Play](#)



Often in life ones differences can be viewed as crazy or weird and people are less inclined to listen to what odd people have to say. In the play King Lear by Shakespeare, fools are viewed as outsiders who only serve the purpose of ridiculous comedy. The fool being outside of society's circle allows him to act as an advocate for what the audience is really thinking, demonstrating that madness allows ones views on the world to be unbiased and correct. He is able to make fun of the other characters in a comedic manner, he can act as Lear's inner conscience without repercussion and he speaks what he believes to be the truth without consequence.

The fool in King Lear offers a sense of comedic relief throughout the play. He uses verbal irony to create comedy. First of all, he offers his hat as a gift. Normally this would be an amicable gesture. However, in this case since it is his fool's hat, he is saying that Kent as well is a fool. This is ironic because the gift he is offering is actually an insult. " Let me hire him too.-Here's my coxcomb". During this scene the audience knows how much of a fool Kent is being for returning to Lear after he has just banished him. The fool is able to express this without repercussions. He also manages to make several jokes which are funny but also have a deeper meaning. " Why, to put's head in-not to give it away to his daughters/and leave his horns without a case". After asking why a snail carries its house on his back this is his reply. Without knowing the context this is simply a joke. On the other hand, knowing that Lear has just given away his homes it is an ironic joke meaning to insult Lear for how stupid his decision was. This is easy for the audience to perceive seeing as they are aware of the evil sister's plans. This demonstrates that even tho some may think he is mad, his views on the world are accurate,

since in the end, this was a very bad decision. After act three the fool is no longer a part of the play. He is no longer needed because the play from then on takes a serious turn with drama and action. The comic relief is no longer wanted nor needed.

The fool is a symbol of a wiser power that acts as an inner conscience for King Lear. Even though the fool is perceived as ignorant, he is actually a wise character. He begins by stating what a bad idea it was for King Lear to give away his power to his two daughters. “ When thou clovest thy/ crown i’ th’back o’ver the dirt. Thou hadst little wit in thy/bald crown when thou gavest thy golden one away”. When he is making this decision it is easy to perceive that he is making a mistake. That being said, it is impossible for the readers to tell the characters in the play this. Therefore, the fool takes responsibility and informs the king himself, and since the fool is viewed as being mad he cannot be punished for stating his truth. Contrary to other characters like Kent, who also speak their minds and thereafter get banished. Furthermore, the fool tries to be King Lear’s voice of reason while telling him to just apologize to his daughters and take shelter during the horrible storm. “ Good nuncle, in, and ask thy/daughters blessing”. He is the superego of King Lear in this circumstance telling him to swallow his pride and find shelter. Towards the end of the play the fool is no longer part of the play. This is because Cordelia arrives and takes over the job of looking after King Lear and being his voice of reason.

King Lear’s fool helps ease the truth into his life. He first tries to reveal to him his two daughters true intentions. “ The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so

long, /That it's had it's head bit off by it young". The fool, looking at what is happening from the outside in, can see the mistakes Lear is making. The readers are already aware of the sisters plotting, since their plans are mentioned throughout the play. Trying to help Lear, the fool tells him what he knows. However, since he is mad, he is not as well trusted by others and they do not believe him. Thereafter, he references other important men being fools. " No, faith, lords and great men will not let me. If I had a monopoly out, they would have part on't". This is referring to Gloucester with his high status who also in the end is a blind fool. His unbiased views come into play and he tries to warn the others of what is going to happen. In many aspects of the play he is hinting at the truth that others are blind to. However, towards the end of the play everyone who was blind is now able to see the truth. For this reason after act 3 the fool is no longer needed to expose the truth.

In conclusion, being an outcast allows the fool to convey what the audience knows and is really thinking. His deeper knowledge also proves how madness can allow one's views of life to be unbiased and accurate. He uses his ability to make jokes towards others, say what he pleases to the king and speak what he believes to be the truth. His role throughout the play is of great importance and allows the readers to feel as though they are almost able to speak throughout the play as well.