

# King lear act 1

[Literature](#), [William Shakespeare](#)



King Lear Act 1 King Lear is a play written by William Shakespeare in the early 1600's. It is a well known tragedy. Throughout Act 1, there are many mistakes made by the key characters. This essay will introduce a few of these and throughout will demonstrate how poor judgements and jealousies in families can have such detrimental and tragic consequences. A wise ruler that has held a kingdom together for so long is about to create irreversible chaos, either through complete ignorance of his daughters feelings towards him or by going insane. This test of love in all its qualities proves to be an eye opening, heart-wrenching plot for the reader and how Lear, who favoured one daughter, has become out of touch with the other 2, resulting in a tangled web of jealousy, plotting and intrigue in which there are no winners at the end of this sad tale. King Lear is a protagonist and his hamartia is hubris — his pride. The foolish disposing of his estate between his 3 girls, based on flattery, results in tragic consequences. There are many antagonists in the play, Goneril and Regan (his daughters) and Edmund (Gloucester's son). The first scene opens with some of the primary characters and establishes the plot and the subplot, which focuses on the relationships between fathers and their children. Edmund, the bastard son of Gloucester is present with Kent and Gloucester in this opening scene. It is clear that Gloucester loves both his sons but Elizabethan society would not regard the sons as equals. Edmund realises that his future is deemed limited with being a second child and his brother would be the heir of Gloucester's fortune and title. Edmund schemes against his father but not for his inheritance, but for recognition and the love that he was denied from being the illegitimate child. Lear — a monarch tries to separate power and

responsibility. He stages a love test on his 3 daughters, Goneril, Regan and Cordelia. Cordelia had always been his favourite daughter. He wishes them all to tell him how much they love him and he will reward the one who loves him the most with the biggest share of his kingdom. This was a huge mistake. When his daughter Cordelia refuses to take part in the game, he is so angry and banishes her from the kingdom and from his life. When his most loyal friend Kent warns him he is making a terrible mistake, he throws him out too. Lear exiles from the people who love him the most. His 2 eldest daughters take on his kingdom and they resent Lear as he tries to act like he is still in charge. They assert their independence which shocks him. He soon realises his stupidity when his eldest daughters turn their back on him. He lacks the common sense to detect their falseness which leads us to believe he is mad. Madness is one of the themes in the play. Kent is first to suggest that Lear is mad in Act 1 scene 1 " be Kent unmannerly, when Lear is so mad" (l. 146-147) and throughout the play, King Lear begins to worry that he is indeed mad, " O' let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven! Keep me in temper; I would not be mad! " Act 1 Scene 5 (l. 43-44) Lear cannot deal with his actions and does, however, go mad. At the end of the play, Edmund, the villain has a change of heart. He orders for the hanging of Cordelia, which he first ruled, not to go ahead. This brings the audience to catharsis and changes their emotions towards him. Throughout this essay, some of the mistakes made by King Lear and Gloucester show that they are to blame for what happens. It shows poor judgement by rejecting a good child and believing a dishonest child, which led to some disastrous tragedies for their families.