

Love in king lear



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

True love or real love is a central element in the play and is established by Shakespeare in opposition to sexual love or love that can be bought. True love and loyalty and loyalty are opposed by selfish love and treachery. The theme of love enters the play in its early stages when Lear in Act 1 Sc. 1 shows that he doesn't understand the concept of real love. This is indicated by his setting up of verbal love test in the attempt to establish the extent of his daughters love for him. He places himself in the position of an auctioneer who will give most to the highest bidder.

Cordelia, a symbol of true love, cannot take part in this bidding. In the ensuing discussion between Lear, France and Burgundy, love is also the theme and Cordelia is the subject of discussion. Both Lear and Burgundy perceive her as an object to be bargained for. Only France sees her in a different light and defines what he believes love is not, " Love is not love, when it is mingled with regards that stand aloof from the entire point". He goes on to say that her rejection by both Lear and Burgundy has added to his love for her and therefore France realises the true meaning and value of love.

Kent is another character who understands the concept of true love, for Kent's love is mingled with loyalty. Kent proves his love by his willingness to accept banishment rather than to see Lear make a mistake. He confirms his love by staying with Lear in disguise and doing him services " improper for a slave". The totality of Kent's love is exemplified at the end of the play when he is willing to die rather than to live without Lear " I have a journey shortly to go, my master calls me, I must not say no".

Like Lear, Gloucester has a flawed concept of love. His admission of Edmund's existence and the manner in which he relates to his conception, show Gloucester as one who considers sexual love on a par with real love. His willingness to accept Edmund's lies without verification also reflects his flawed concept of love. As with Lear seeks no other proof than verbal, it is the same with Gloucester and Edgar who represents true love in the subplot is rejected like Cordelia and Kent in the main plot.

Similarly his mistreatment by Gloucester doesn't weaken his love for him and he provides the subplot reflection of Kent's loyalty to Lear with his disguised loyalty to Gloucester. True love is therefore represented by three individuals, Cordelia, Kent and Edgar, and each of these suffer banishment, rejection and are forced to either adopt a disguise or leave the realm in order to maintain their love and loyalty. In contrast the notion of anti-love is demonstrated by Goneril, Regan and Edmund. Their concepts of love are primarily of self, associated with lust.