

# Power has many definitions

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Power has many definitions, but in King Lear, power seems to be defined as one's ability or capacity to direct and influence others as well as the current course of events. Power is incredibly corruptive and this is proven many times over by the main characters of the play.

King Lear serves as an excellent commentary on the nature of political power, while also showcasing a brutal portrayal of authority when it goes wrong.

The play does a great deal of reflecting on how the nature of power affects individuals as well as larger groups. The play showcases time It must be noted that both King Lear and Gloucester both consistently turn away or ignore the individuals who have the best intentions for them. They are so afraid of losing their dominance that they both mistrust their most loyal children. Their power has made them increasingly blind to the people they surround themselves with; King Lear's oldest two daughters clearly have no love for him and scheme to take his power, yet the two most trustworthy people in his circle, Cordelia and Kent, are treated with scorn and punished.

Lear has become pompous and shallow in his time as king, and obviously prefers flattery to honesty. This seems to be a common side effect of unchecked power, and this is without a doubt King Lear's undoing. He is unable to understand what really matters and values the fake flattery of his bad daughters over the honesty of his daughters, which ends up causing chaos for himself, his family and the rest of Britain. King Lear's fear of losing relevance and authority ironically creates a self-fulfilling prophecy, and his own actions result in his downfall.

Power is shown many times throughout the play to be incredibly corruptive. Gloucester's title and power are largely responsible for the rift between him and Edmund. He feels the need to distance himself from Edmund because he is a bastard, and he consistently reminds Edmund of that fact. Power makes Gloucester put his power above his family, and this results in tragedy for all. Gloucester was blind to his faults, and because of his blindness he was eventually actually blinded in an ironic, terrible twist of fate. Had Gloucester loved and treated his bastard son the same way he loved and treated his legitimate son Edgar, much of the tragedy that took place in the play could have been avoided.

The play leads us to understand just how much wickedness in people power inspires. Edmund starts out as a character who inspires sympathy, but quickly becomes one of the play's leading villains in his hunt for recognition and authority. Edmund is not a villain at first, but we are clearly shown how easily the hunt for power leads to betrayal, and how easily it can affect one's character. Goneril and Regan's are villains from the start of the play, but their thirst for power transforms them into actual evil beings. The sisters go from simply scheming to steal parts of their father's kingdom to planning war against other countries and actual murder. Goneril murders her own sister in her quest for dominance, and this is probably the harshest example in the play of the wickedness of power.

One of the most important lessons that can be taken from the play is the finality of mistakes. King Lear sets the stage for his demise at the very beginning of the play; he banishes the only daughter that truly loves him,

and gives all his power and his kingdom to his scheming evil daughters.

Gloucester also has a hand in his own untimely end, as his continued alienation of his bastard son causes bitterness in his son, leading Edmund to betray his family.

Even at the end of the play mistakes ring with finality, when Edmund wishes to make up for his wrongdoings and save Cordelia, but the girl has already been put to death. King Lear is a classic example of the corrupting potential of power it's downfalls. The majority of the characters that come into some sort of power meet their ends, often orchestrating their own demises in their attempts to gain authority. King Lear raises many important questions about power and its nature, but one thing is clear: the definition of power is flexible, but the reality of it is not. Power is not a tangible object; it only has the weight that it is given. Power is what you make it and nothing more.