

King lear – tragic flaw

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“ Tragic heroes are so much the highest points in their human landscape that they seem the inevitable conductors of the power about them... great trees more likely to be struck by lightning than a clump of grass. Conductors may of course be instruments as well as victims of the divine lightning. ”

Tragic heroes are characters of notoriety; held in high regard but are struck with misfortune through their own error. The most noble of men can succumb to their own flaws until driven to the brink of insanity, as illustrated in Shakespeare's play, King Lear.

King Lear represents all qualities of a tragic hero and in the end is ruined by his own vice, by driving himself to the point of full-blown insanity as a result of his actions. As all tragic heroes, Lear is a man of nobility. He is the King of England; he has power and is held in high regard. As King, Lear is generally well liked and well respected. As a tragic hero, King Lear has the ability to inflict fear and pity into readers, proving that he is in fact a well-liked character.

He frightens the audience into falling into the same pattern of mistakes, for he is evidence that even the best of men can fall from grace as a result of their own actions. Much like the tallest trees of the forest, Lear stands tall amongst all others in his kingdom. He is the strongest, most powerful tree in the forest; a wealthy, noble, and respectable man. Despite Lear's qualities that identify him as a greater man, he, as all tragic heroes, possess that one flaw that will destroy him. As he ages, King Lear believes it may be best if he passes his kingdom down to his daughters.

He has the land divided into thirds; one piece for each of his daughters. He tells them that whoever proves they love him the most will receive the biggest share. Goneril and Regan, his two oldest daughters, shower Lear with words of false flattery and love solely to receive the biggest piece of land. When it is Cordelia's turn to profess her love for her father, the youngest and favorite of Lear's daughters, she merely says that she loves him as any daughter should; no more, and no less.

Lear is outraged when Cordelia does not lavish him in kind words like he had expected her to and as a result banishes her from the kingdom. This action shows the reader insight to what will be Lear's downfall. What he does not realize just yet is that Cordelia is the only daughter that actually does love her father, but his rash judgment and arrogance blinded him from seeing this. As time passes by, Lear tries to live out the remainder of his life under the care of his two oldest daughters, who are supposed to love him the most.

It is not long until they begin to abuse their "beloved" father and treat him like a piece of trash. They lock him out in the rain, order their servants to be rude to him, and make him reduce his army. It does not take long after that for Lear to realize that he had made an enormous mistake, and Cordelia was the one that truly loved him the most. The lightning had struck when Lear's arrogance led him to believe Cordelia would say more to show her love for him, and his tree had caught fire once his rash judgment resulted in Cordelia's banishment.

Once Lear had recognized the monstrosity of the mistake he had made and bewildered by the betrayal of Goneril and Regan, his madness started to set

in. He flees the home of his evil daughters and is left wandering through a great storm, completely consumed in his insanity. The French army, led by Cordelia, is on its way to Britain to save her father's kingdom from her evil sisters. Battle breaks out, and Lear and Cordelia are both captured. Cordelia is executed in prison, and her father dies shortly after as a result of grief for his lost daughter and the remorse he felt for the mistakes he had made.

Lear is the perfect example of a tragic hero. He is powerful and well liked, but ends up ruining himself. He exhibits the traits as a tragic hero, coming from wealth and nobility. He is arrogant and makes rash judgments, direct causations to him banishing Cordelia, which is the biggest mistake he could have ever made. He recognized the error of his ways, and then drove himself into a state of madness as a direct result. In the end, his tragic flaw led to him losing his power, the one daughter that actually cared about him, and his own life.

The tallest trees are the most vulnerable when lightning strikes; closest to the storm. They act as conductors of the electricity, but are likely to be burnt down themselves. Lear was the tallest tree; the wealthiest and most powerful. When his arrogance and rash judgment kick in, the lightning strikes and his tree catches fire. It is slowly burnt down as Lear ruins himself completely with insanity; until all that remains is the ashes of a once prosperous tree.