

Integrity and corruption in a man for all seasons



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

A Man for All Seasons, written by Robert Bolt, is known for the illustration of opposing ideologies and the subjective views of morality. In 'A Man for All Seasons' integrity and corruption are overarching themes which are involved in the development of the play's characters. The conflict between these two ideas are illustrated as Bolt presents integrity in the form of Thomas More, a lawyer who seeks to preserve his 'soul' while maintaining his invariant opinion of the state concerning the affairs of the royal marriage. While More represents integrity, the society in the form of the other characters in the play are More's foil. The characters being portrayed as the foil of More represent the corruption of the society, being the ones who are opportunistic and expedient in their actions, further providing the conflict with More's integrity in the process.

During the beginning of the play the conflict between integrity and corruption is introduced by More's interaction with Wolsey about the politics of the Marriage of King Henry VIII. The conflict is presented as Wolsey discusses with More how they "might influence His Holiness's answer". Using the euphemism "influence" a connotation of discrete corruption is created emphasizing the idea that even within high authorities, Wolsey being The Lord Chancellor of England, corruption is present. This idea of corruption being exchanged to More, More rebuttals him by stating that "when a statesmen forsake their own private conscience...they lead their country...into chaos", emphasizing the conflict between ideology, creating a mood of opposition between them, developing their characters. Using this interaction of ideological differences the mood, being opposition between integrity and corruption, is enhanced.

The idea of integrity and corruption is further developed in the scene where Richard Rich is compelled to follow in the footsteps of More and seeks employment from him. Asking for employment outside More's Chelsea home More denies his request once again and tells him to "become a teacher," so that he won't be tempted taking bribes. This interaction is key in that it illustrates how More, as he has been commonly encountered offerings of bribes of great value from his clients, realizes that Richard Rich has the potential to be tempted in these offerings. This is key as it shows with great effect how corruption is widespread in More's society. Emphasizing the idea of corruption with bribes More gives Rich a silver cup discussing how such an event occurs often, after which More asks "are you going to sell it?" testing this point further closing the interaction between them as Rich says "yes". This discussion of overcoming corruption is foiled by Rich's later statement in the play where he admits that "every man has his price," showing how corruption is rampant in their society. Using this conflict Bolt continues to explore the ideas of integrity and corruption, especially by what means people present themselves with integrity but truly are governed by expediency; corruption.

Using ideological invariance as a technique in the play Bolt achieves the development of both integrity and corruption. This invariance is taken as the primary cause of the conflict between Thomas More and King Henry VIII when they both speak at More's residence in Chelsea about the King's divorce and remarriage. This clash is demonstrated as More maintains his integrity and advances carefully when he opposes the king, this act being demonstrated clearly as he repeats "your grace" with his opinions, showing

in the process his submission to the higher authority, King Henry VIII.

Creating a rift between integrity and the King, the King shows his expediency, his self-preservation as he adamantly states that he will have “no opposition” trying to sway More into helping him in his cause, being one of persuading the Pope to allow the divorce, and the marriage with Anne Boleyn. Using this idea of undeniable control by the King, Bolt further emphasizes how corruption in the form of machiavellianism was present in the rule of the society’s authority in that era.

Towards the closing of ‘A Man for All Seasons’, being the death of the main character, More expresses the divide between integrity and corruption when speaking to his family. Bolt uses More to achieve this effect in that More states with acknowledgment how the prison cell is “like any other place”, in that it contains people whose influence is suppressed by authority. This idea is further emphasized by the river by which the cell is adjacent to as it represents “one’s self” as More says, emphasizing the idea of how the water is compelled to travel in a certain direction, as a collective representing the people of the society and the water banks as their authority being a metaphor of King Henry VIII, controlling the people’s path in life. Robert Bolt finalizing the play using this water metaphor creates a great atmosphere of the idea social expectation, elaborating on how such expectations begin with the head of state.

It can be noted that Robert Bolt explores many ideas and themes in “A Man for All Seasons” and integrity and corruption is no exception. Exploring integrity and corruption, which are foils to each other prove to be great in developing characters and atmosphere in ‘A Man for All Seasons’. It can also

<https://assignbuster.com/integrity-and-corruption-in-a-man-for-all-seasons/>

be acknowledged that in this exploration of these two themes that although More is presented as the one with the most integrity, keeping his opinions until the end, being 'man for all seasons', he himself displays great expediency in that he is primarily concerned in his self-preservation and his self-salvation of his 'soul' against his own family, who "sits in the dark" as they have "no candles".