

Gloucester is no less
a tragic figure than
his king essay



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Gloucester are similar to an extent of being tragic heroes, because they both experience the traditional features of a classic tragedy.

Both characters go through the features of hubris, hamster and culminates with missionaries. Shakespeare employs the double plot in 'King Lear', the only Shakespearean tragedy to employ two similar plots which function in a parallel manner. In doing so, Shakespeare is able to demonstrate the tragic consequences that result when the natural law is subverted.

Despite both being tragic figures, the causes of their nonfatal are different and thus the culmination of the way both characters are considered to be tragic varies as well. Lear and Gloucester both commit blunders In the opening of the play, calling attention to their own tragic flaw, however the both the cause and Impact varies. There Is an Indication of a power struggle as Renaissance society was patriarchal and gerontocracy, meaning men did not consider retirement nor did they pass on their power when they reached old age.

Lear deciding to give away his power to his daughters, under the intention of 'conferring them on younger strengths, while we unburdened crawl towards death', would have challenged the thinking of an Elizabethan audience who acknowledged the social construct of the 'Great Chain of Being', the existence of a natural social of all beings and animals having their own ordained position. Both figures reject a child who truly loved them- this is their tragic flaw.

Lear's decision to 'disclaim all parental care' from Cordelia, is perhaps the most impacting decision, because Lear had discountenanced the one

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daughter who truly loved him. As a result, Lear's subversion of power 'to shake all cares and business from our age' is perhaps more fatal as a mistake in comparison to Gloucester.

For Gloucester, his mistake is may be his adultery. The way Gloucester describes his son as 'often blushed to acknowledge him' highlights the concern of raising an illegitimate child.

Consequently, Edmund seeks to go against the laws of primogeniture, allowing only the legitimate child to be entitled to land. Gloucester is also suggested to have relaxed morals, justifying the birth of Edmund with his mother as a 'knave came something saucily to the world'. Gloucester's fault is less reckless than Lear's. Gloucester's fault is arguably justifiable as he was lied to by his own son.

However it is his reaction, denying thought and logic which warrants consequences. The impact of both characters' hamsters being equally destructive.

According to Aristotle, he believed horror and pity are the two emotions the audience should feel while watching a tragedy, and Shakespeare's physical suffering Gloucester endures namely, being blinded was thought to be something too gruesome to be displayed as Knight commented on the play being 'purposeless and unreasonable, King Lear is the most fearless artistic facing of ultimate cruelty. The juxtaposition of Gloucester's cries of 'give me help! O cruel!' against Lear's brutal statements 'how now, you dog!

Highlights the ruthlessness and barbarity of Gloucester's circumstance. 19th century criticism was notable for suggesting Gloucester is punished harshly <https://assignbuster.com/gloucester-is-no-less-a-tragic-figure-than-his-king-essay/>

for his misjudgment of characters and will be viewed by most audiences as a character more sinned against than sinning.

However, in comparison to Lear's suffering, the King may be portrayed more so as a tragic figure. Unlike Gloucester, Lear falls into a state of madness and the audience watches Lear's mind deteriorate progressively during the play.

The dismissal of Lear's 'hundred knights' by both Goneril and Regan is powerful because the knights can be considered to be a symbol of Lear's importance. But being denied something which Lear wants and needs he notably comments, 'Man's life is cheap as beast's' as aspects including clothes and property are symbols of civilization. As a result Lear is reduced to having nothing to his name, thus being reduced as G. Wilson Knight said to an 'elemental, instinctive life'.

Near the end of the play, the king is wearing a 'crown of thorns', characterizing his downfall as a man who was once decorated as King of England to a person who has aligned himself with nature, furthered by Frank Kermode stating, 'suffering can reduce humanity to a bestial condition' In this way, the portrayal of Lear's madness may be seen as more tragic than of what Gloucester experienced. A further feature of a classic tragedy is both tragic figures achieving their anagnorsis, (a critical moment of recognition), near the ending of the play.

The moment of realization occurs when Regan reveals to Gloucester of Edmund being a treacherous villain' Once being blinded, Gloucester comments, 'I stumbled when I saw, situational irony is deployed,

epitomizing his realization of the events surrounding him, at a point where <https://assignbuster.com/gloucester-is-no-less-a-tragic-figure-than-his-king-essay/>

he is no longer able to see. Perhaps this alludes to critic Lawrence Rejoinder's comment of the play is about Gloucester and Lear's self-discovery after a period of treating the others as a means of self-gratification', suggesting for Gloucester to recognize the true dirties of a human being, the process involves suffering and pain.

However, for Lear to gain missionaries, I believe he is forced to endure suffering, for example, his daughters which serves to heighten the sympathy felt for Lear. This is exemplified articulacy when interacting with Gloucester in Act 4, commenting they (Goneril and Regan) flattered me like a dog, the dramatic irony invoking pity because the audience is already aware of this.

Once reunited with Cordelia, Lear expresses himself as being bound upon a wheel of fire', his pessimistic view, alluding to a Christian interpretation of hell. Though both characters learn through their experience, it is arguably Lear's nonaggression which allows him to be more tragic than Gloucester. His torment eventually reduces him to beggary, wanting 'give me that patience, patience I need', the schism's emphasizing his desperation.