

# Foolishness in shakepeare's king lear

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



King Lear is considered to be Shakespeare's best artistic work. Early on, the readers glean the foolishness of the king as he bequeaths his riches and his kingdom to his deceitful daughters. This is his desperate attempt to know who loves him. Thus, we see his foolishness as he draws out testimonies of his daughters' love for him. For all his wealth and riches, he is bereft of the love of his daughters. His glaring foolishness is seen as he bequeaths his kingdom to the one who would speak of her undying love for him. Thus, we see that only a foolish man would do such actions for naturally, his daughters, who want the material things will give him the accolades he so desperately wants to hear.

King Lear is foolish not to know the depth of Cordelia's love for him because he measures it only with the words that will come from her mouth. He asks them to match each other's pronouncements of their love for him, " Tell me, my daughters,- / Since now we will divest us both of rule, / Interest of territory, cares of state,- / Which of you shall we say doth [does] love us [King Lear] most? That we our largest bounty may extend / Where nature doth with merit challenge" (Act I, Sc i, Ln 47-53).

King Lear should have observed more the actions of her daughters instead of their spoken adulations. He is taken aback by Cordelia's response: "' Nothing, my lord" (Line 89). He then prods her to continue yet, she does not succumb to the pretenses that the situation requires of her and declares no high praises and love, which prods the king to conclude, " Nothing will come of nothing:" and in a pitiable state urges her to " speak again" (Line 92). For his Cordelia lacks " that glib and oily art / To speak and purpose not; since what I well intend, / I'll do't before I speak-" (Line 227).

This foolishness is again gleaned as the King thinks that when he gives out his kingdom, he " shakes all cares and business from our age, conferring them on younger strengths while we unburdened crawl to death..." (Act I, Scene i, Ln 38-41). Nothing could be farther from the truth, for this just makes him worry no end that Cordelia does not love him at all.

The story of King Lear illustrates clearly what happens when children are consumed by greed and when they lose their love for their parents. The play focuses on deception, greed, cruelty, and misjudgment. King Lear would have stood bravely had he not been blinded by his own folly. Often the disguise or deception is not physical but emotional. The few characters that must physically disguise themselves in the play are the few characters that are not motivated by darker emotions.

Kent and Edgar disguise themselves: one to help the king, the other to escape punishment. In the end, Shakespeare shows them to have pure and decent motives. The dukes and two eldest daughters however, who at no time in the play hide their faces nor their actions, do hide their true nature. The daughters trick their father into believing that they love him above all else. Edmund, too, tricks his father into thinking he is a loving devoted son, and this is to hide their true greediness. (Novel Analysis).

Greed and craving are distortions of desire. In greed and craving, one relinquishes most of the consideration for anybody else in one's existence. King Lear is part of that existence and falls victim to this greed. He is foolish not to see behind the actions of the very people he is surrounded with. This is an insatiable, self-designed torture trap that his children are engulfed with.

King Lear knew the conditions of his life as he experiences it. Only he can choose how to meet them. To the degree that his daughters are into hustling and conning, then they do not really communicate with him. He exists for them only as an object that they hope to use for their own benefit. Lear finds himself surrounded by people who only wish to deceive and abuse him and leave him abandoned.

This causes him to lose his sanity. King Lear's decisions change his life and send him to his own demise. His actions lead him to his own sufferings, "Howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones. Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so that heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for ever! I know when one is dead, and when one lives."(Act V, Sc iii, Ln 306-312).

King Lear avoided the issue of his daughters' manipulations. He allowed himself to be sidetracked by his world of distracting events. His ways of resisting or avoiding dealing with areas of his life that he did not feel ready to cope, kept him from being logical. He resisted seeing clearly and that put something else between him and the issue. He blocked it out of his awareness and convinced himself that it does not exist. He looks at the event and sees only the distracter that he puts between him and the issue, or he does not see anything there at all. When he got totally caught in his situation, he lost all sense of perspective on what others were plotting against him.

In conclusion, the king's foolishness manifested in his own compulsive control that clamped him down and channeled his energies in narrow ways. This pushed all his power into places where he was blinded to see the entire

picture sending him naked and where nature symbolized the chaos he found himself in.

## **Works Cited**

1. Act I, Sc i, Ln 38-41, Act I, Sc i, Ln 47-53 Reports & Essays: Literature – Shakespeare, Study world Retrieved Jan. 8, 2007 at:
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