

Foreshadowing in a man for all seasons

Life



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In the play *A Man for All Seasons*, foreshadowing is used to hint at the death of Thomas More. Foreshadowing is a warning or indication of a future event. The foreshadowing shows through quotes from various characters throughout the play and even from Thomas More. King Henry wishes to divorce his current wife Catherine to be with another woman, but divorce is against the Catholic Church. In this case, King Henry needs all the support he can get to override the law of the church. He even goes as far as to start his own church and be the head of it.

Thomas More cannot support King Henry's divorce though because Thomas is devoted to the Catholic Church and its laws. He is a man who stands by his beliefs. This causes trouble with King Henry and all the men who support him. In the end, Thomas's friends betray him and he dies. Many quotes from Thomas's steward, Thomas More, and King Henry foreshadow Thomas More's death in *A Man for All Seasons*. Thomas More's oath to God is how he identifies himself and it is very important to him.

While Thomas is a very honest and pure man, his steward makes a comment saying, " My master Thomas More would give anything to anyone. Some say that's good and some say that's bad, but I say he can't help it – and that's bad. Because some day someone's going to ask him for something that he wants to keep; and he'll be out of practice " (Bolt 1. 17). The steward says this right after Rich takes the silver cup Thomas gives to him. The silver cup is a bribe a woman gives to Thomas, but Thomas does not accept bribes. The steward shows how kind Thomas is by not accepting the bribe and giving the bribe away.

This quote foreshadows Thomas's death, because the steward is predicting how King Henry will ask Thomas to support his divorce. The steward notes how Thomas would do just about anything for anyone, but Thomas will not be able to support the divorce because Thomas cannot give away his oath to God. This causes King Henry to build up resentment towards Thomas which leads to Thomas's death. Thomas believes his decision to not support the divorce will not cause any real trouble with him and King Henry, but Thomas is very wrong.

Although Thomas does not yet know he will die, he foreshadows his own death by saying, "Set your mind at rest- this is not the stuff of which martyrs are made" (Bolt 1. 60). This quote is very significant because it shows Thomas's ignorance and how much he underestimates the cruelty of his fellow friends and men in general. Thomas's wife, who possesses much common sense, is very concerned, and she realizes before Thomas that King Henry will not simply let Thomas get away with his decision. Thomas is happy with his decision though, because he has stayed true to himself and to God.

Thomas knows the only person he will judge is himself if he goes against his beliefs. Although King Henry is not pleased, Thomas believes he will not be bothered by the issue of the divorce again, but it does not go away as he hoped it would. Once Thomas realizes he has caused real trouble by his decision, he believes his silence will prove his innocence. This shows that Thomas stays ignorant throughout the play until he realizes how far King Henry is willing to go to prove his authority when Thomas is placed in prison under false charges.

Even though Thomas thinks his decision will not cause any chaotic problems, King Henry hints that it will, even before Thomas comes to this conclusion. Henry tries to be polite at first and discuss the issue of the divorce with Thomas in person. When King Henry realizes Thomas is going to stand by his decision, King Henry says, “ No opposition, I say! No opposition! Your conscience is your own affair; but you are my Chancellor! There, you have my word – I’ll leave you out of it. But I don’t take it kindly, Thomas ” (Bolt 1. 56).

Although King Henry tells Thomas that he will leave him out of the divorce issue, King Henry foreshadows Thomas’s death by also saying he does not take Thomas’s decision lightly. Thomas does not catch this though, so he feels that he and the King have come to a truce. Even though King Henry understands Thomas’s devotion to the Catholic Church, he will not let Thomas go without a fight. Once King Henry gets his divorce and starts his own church, England severs its connection with Rome. This causes Thomas to resign as Lord Chancellor. Thomas’s action only adds fuel to King Henry’s fire.

Thomas believes by staying silent on where he stands with his beliefs, he will not be punished for anything. In the end, King Henry decapitates Thomas for not choosing his side. Thomas’s death is foreseen many times throughout the play. The steward predicts that because of Thomas’s kind nature, he will one day be asked for something he will not want to give up. This prediction is proven true as King Henry asks Thomas to support a divorce that goes against Thomas’s beliefs. Thomas foreshadows his own death by underestimating the impact his decision will have on his community.

Thomas believes that his decision to not support the divorce will irritate King Henry and his followers, but ultimately they will get over his choice. King Henry proves Thomas wrong as he throws Thomas in prison for made-up charges and later on decapitates him. Lastly, King Henry hints at his plans for Thomas's death when he mentions how he does not take Thomas's decision kindly. Readers see just how unkindly King Henry takes Thomas's choice when he orders someone to kill Thomas. Foreshadowing is a key tool used in *A Man for All Seasons* in order to help readers predict Thomas More's unfair death.