

The tragedy of king lear assignment

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A Comparison of Psychological and Physical Deceit and Disguise In many of Shakespearean works, he suggests that appearances are not reflective of reality and uses this idea to develop many subplots in his works. He is notorious for constructing these false identities to advance the plotting and create unsuspecting twists. As his plays progress, different characters employ different strategies to promote their actions, with some opting to psychologically deceive their targets while others select to physically disguise themselves as someone else.

Shakespearean King Lear, is no exception; he portrays this theme through the various disguises of an array of characters that utilize deceit to reach their goals, which range from being supportive to being sinister. This element of deceit and disguise is first established in the opening scene when the reader discovers that King Lear is planning to divide his kingdom between his three daughters. He tests his daughters by demanding them to proclaim their love for him, with the intentions of awarding the daughter who displays her love to him the best with the largest share of his kingdom.

The play as just begun and Shakespearean theme of fake appearances has already arisen, as the outside appearances that each of the sister's displays for their father is not in accordance with their actual thoughts. General and Reagan, King Lear's two oldest daughters, both spin verbose and grandeur explanations about their deep love for him with General starting off by stating, "Sir, I love you more than word can wield the matter... Beyond all manners of so much I love you" (1. 1. 60-67). Reagan then plays off of her sister's lead and begins to say, "I am made of that self mettle as my sister...

And mind I am alone felicitate / In your dear Highness' love" (1. 1. 76-84).

This psychological ploy they use on King Lear seems to work, as he becomes frustrated and dissatisfied with his youngest daughter, Cordillera's, answer.

As King Lear waits for her to match her sisters' responses, Cordelia refuses to make such comments, asserting that, " Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave / My heart into my mouth. I love your Majesty / According to my bond, no more nor less" (1. 1. 100-102). As a result of this, King Lear disowns Cordelia, abolishes her from the kingdom and splits the kingdom between the other two sisters.

Following this incident, the Earl of Kent, who is the King's most loyal nobleman and servant, while attempting to reconcile the King about his rash decision to banish Cordelia, is also hastily exiled from the kingdom for giving his opinion on the matter. Here, you can see that King Lear has let his emotions get the best of him as he tells Kent, " Five days we do allot thee for provision To shield thee from disasters of the world, And on the sixth to turn thy hated back Thy banished trunk be found in our dominions, The moment is thy death.

Away! By Jupiter, This shall not be revoked. " (1. 1. 197-203) Not only has the plans of obtaining the power of the kingdom gone according to their plan, but General and Reagan were also able to unexpectedly rid the kingdom of two of their potential obstacles to the throne: one being Lear's favorite daughter, Cordelia, and the other being his most loyal servant, Kent. The aftermath of this sequence of events turns out to play a large role in the future, as the King will soon learn that he made a mistake.

Even though this is only the start of psychological deception in the play, the importance of its presence sets the tone for the play and makes it clear that everyone is susceptible to such trickery, even the almighty King. As the plot of King Lear and his daughters begins to develop in the opening scene, we are simultaneously introduced to another one of King Lear's nobleman, the Earl of Gloucester. Early on, we learn that Gloucester is an adulterer and has a bastard son, Edmund. In contrast to Edmund is Edgar, Gloucester's oldest and legitimate son.

At the beginning of the second scene of the Act One, Edmund gives a soliloquy on the lack of respect and class he has received for being a bastard, stating that "Thou, Nature, art my goddess... Now, gods, stand up for bastards" (I. I. 1-23)! Here we learn of Edmund's plan to betray Edgar, by means of a forged letter, which documents Edgar's "plan" to kill his own father. When Gloucester reads the letter, he barely questions the authenticity of the letter and lets his emotions overcome him, "O villain, villain!... Abominable villain!" (I. II. 79).

Afterwards, Edmund meets up with Edgar and alerts him of the news that Gloucester is livid at Edgar and that he is chasing him. Pretending to be of assistance to Edgar, Edmund suggests that he avoid Gloucester as much as possible and to remain armed in case Gloucester finds him. Here, Edgar naively mistakes Edmund's plan to protect his own brother as a sign of sincerity because of Edmund's ability to swiftly talk coupled with his deceptive nature. This makes it easy for Edmund to take advantage of the trusting and gullible personality of Edgar.

In reality, Edmund is merely setting the bait for Gloucester to fully turn his back on Edgar so that Gloucester will anoint Edmund as the next heir to the throne. Edmund succeeds in accomplishing the next step of his plan when he convinces Edgar to flee Gloucester castle as their father approaches the room. Right when Edgar flees, Edmund intentionally wounds his arm, affirming " Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion / Of my more fierce endeavor. I have seen drunkards / Do more than this in sport. / Father! Father" (11. 1. 36-39)!

By framing Edgar for his wounds as he fled the scene, Edmund has now secured Gloucester trust which has led him to the condemnation of Edger's death. As the two plots continue to unravel, more disguises begin to unfold, with one of them being Kent after he was expelled from Lear's Kingdom. Instead of double crossing his friends and family like Edmund had, Kent chose to return to Lear's kingdom, disguised as an ordinary peasant, even though he had been wronged by Lear. When asked by King Lear who he was, Kent simply replied, " A man, sir" (I. V. 1 1). Lear seemed to be content with the man's answer and allowed the newly disguised Kent to become his new servant. Even after that Kent was using was not of any importance, his characteristics lead him to be different than almost every character in the play. His role and physical disguise of being a random, selfless person who cares about the well-being of the King over his own safety juxtaposes the psychological disguise the two sisters, Goneril and Regan, displayed back in Act One.

Even though Kent has no familial relations to the King, he cared more about the King than the King's own two daughters did. Not only did the two sisters

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deceive Lear into dividing his kingdom amongst them, but they both treated Lear with disrespect and banished him from their respective kingdoms. One cannot simply put a price on Kent's loyalty to King Lear, even after being expatriated by the King. Much like Kent, Edgar was also forced away from his kingdom and was required to disguise himself as a means of protection.

Under the name of Poor Tom, Edgar disguised himself as a beggar; however, unlike Kent, Edgar's entire persona changed. In an aside, we learn that throughout Edgar's time as a homeless man, there was no possibility that life could have been worse for him - "And worse I may be yet. The worst is not / So long as we can say 'This is the worst'" (IV. I. 30-31). It is only during his time as a homeless man that he knows that life couldn't get any worse. Such logic would make sense in this situation because it is only at a man's utmost lowest point where he becomes the true essence of what he is.

With that being said, by spending time as a beggar and being homeless, Edgar's body is stripped away to the very pith of his being and it is there that he finds what he is truly made of. When Edgar has almost fully adjusted to his new life as a homeless bum, he then sees his father, Gloucester, walking towards him, but without any eyes. Here, Gloucester believes that Edgar is Poor Tom and also divulges that he knows that Edgar is innocent and that it was Edmund who was behind everything.

Gloucester then asks Edgar to lead him to Dover, where "There is a cliff, whose high and bending head / Looks fearfully in the confined deep... 'shall no leading need'" (IV. ii. 83-88). At this point in the play, I was puzzled as to why Edgar did not disclose his real identity to his father, but I believe that it

all boiled down to his father condemning him to death, which would always be hard to forgive. Edgar would eventually deceive Gloucester by not letting him commit suicide and jump off of the cliffs of Dover, but instead jump onto flat ground. This means of deception was a necessity to prevent

Gloucester from killing himself which was easily diverted. After experiencing so many life-altering events, Edgar had finally grown into and found his new identity. Having become encapsulated in this new physical disguise that he had finally developed into, it ultimately gave him the strength and mental fortitude to face and defeat his brother in the final scene. By creating and interweaving these deceptions and disguises amongst all the characters, Shakespeare is able to more effectively develop the characters of the play. Much like the formal title, *The Tragedy of King*

Lear, it was tragic and quite ironic that at the end of the play neither Kent nor Edgar got a chance to adequately reveal their true identities that were hiding beneath their disguises to both King Lear and Gloucester. Lear was far too delusional to understand Kent's explanation that he was the King's new servant due to the combination of his uneasy mental state along with Cordillia's corpse in his arms, whereas we learn that Gloucester died from shock when Edgar attempted to reveal himself. Shakespeare ends the play with only three surviving characters, leaving the reader to contemplate the mystery of their futures.