

• Foils in King Lear •

King Lear

- King of England, values appearances above reality.
- doesn't want to fulfill a King's obligations of governing for the good of his subjects, but wishes to retain the privileges and treatment of a King.
- selfish and harsh/hasty to react, "Nothing comes from nothing." as his response to Cordelia's profession of "bonded love" for her father, inferior to the grandiose professions of her sisters.
- blind to the truth — impaired with "blinders" characteristic of the Renaissance Christian Humanist — values the fawning of Goneril & Regan.
- Does not fully recover his sanity and undergo a complete character development. — he is humbled by the realization of his insignificance in comparison to the world.
- Ironically, make wicked, disloyal children heir.
- Lear is humbled by the symbolic storm representing his inner turmoil and increasing madness in addition to a frenzied confusion.
- Played by daughters through flattery to exile his only loyal child, Cordelia.

Gloucester

- Duke of Gloucester (title), father to Edmund (disloyal child) and Edgar (legitimate son and original heir to his lands and titles).
- is deceived by the clever entrapment of his son and exiles Edgar for fear of being murdered, and thus makes Edmund heir.
- neglects younger son, thus leading to his motivation for advancement through manipulation.
- physical blindness suffered for attempting to aid the King symbolizes metaphorical blindness that Lear and Gloucester suffer: the true character of their children, appropriately represented by their meeting in Dover while in their wretched conditions.
- Humbled through the experience of being blind and thus relying on others (Edgar in disguise) to aid him, comparable to Lear in the storm guided by Kent and his Fool. * Also notable that in both these scenes both characters finally show regard and consideration for their benefactor.