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English-
Shakespeare

King Lear and Cordelia

The play begins with King Lear dividing up his kingdom between his three daughters, Regan, Goneril, and Cordelia, as he faces old age and retirement. Each daughter is put through a test of spoken love for their father and the prize for the correct answer is an appropriate portion of the kingdom. Regan and Goneril profess their superior love for their father in order to please him with their words. Cordelia, not given to superfluous flattery, relates to her father as a matter-of-factly, expressing her love, but not exaggerating that it is anything more than the way a daughter should love her father.

The King is pleased with the answers Regan and Goneril give, but outraged by Cordelia's lack of glorification. Lear disowns Cordelia hastily before all. What was intended to be a ceremony of love and respect turned out to be chaotic and full of discord. The King himself is not acting in love, yet demanding it from his daughters as he would demand a task from one of his servants. It is interesting how King Lear demands love, and is blinded by his need to control how it is presented to him. His value in the words that are presented to him prove he is easy to be fooled and vulnerable. His harsh words to his daughter Cordelia make him appear unreasonable and unjust.

Cordelia remains the same throughout the play. After all, she loves her father as a daughter should. She doesn't pretend with her words, nor is she devastated by her father's words of alienation. She proves her love until her death, as she cares for her

father after he was abandoned by Regan and Goneril. She lived her life by right actions and not by "right words".