



King Lear Deceits Within the Family

Children in *King Lear* often deceive their parents by pretending to be someone they are not. Sometimes, they literally disguise themselves. Sometimes, they lie. Other times, they create the appearance of something that is not actually true.

Consider the examples of these kinds of deceptions by recording details from the play in the chart. Then, choose a third example from the text to explore in the same way.

Finally, working with a partner, discuss the answers to the two questions, using evidence from the chart and from personal experience to support your discussion. Together, write one- to two-sentence answers to each question based on the evidence in *King Lear*.

Example of Deceit	Who is deceitful? How?	Who is being deceived?	For what purpose?
Whiles I may 'scape, I will preserve myself, and am bethought To take the basest and most poorest shape That ever penury in contempt of man Brought near to beast. My face I'll grime with filth, Blanket my loins, elf all my hair in knots, And with presented nakedness outface The winds and persecutions of the sky, The country gives me proof and precedent Of Bedlam beggars, who with roaring voices Strike in their numbed and mortified bare arms Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary. (No Fear: 2.3.5–16)	Edgar has decided to disguise himself as a lunatic beggar by smearing his face with filth, matting his hair, and facing the elements wearing only a loincloth.	He is deceiving everyone: his father, the "henchmen on the lookout" for him, and everyone else with whom he comes into contact.	In Act 1, scene 2, Edmund shows his father, Gloucester, a fake letter he claims is written by Edgar, which states that Edgar is plotting to take his father's money. Gloucester believes the letter and calls Edgar a "monstrous, hateful, bestial villain." Edmund then tells Edgar that he must flee to escape their father's wrath without telling him the deceitful reason behind it. Edmund does this to grab the money and power that rightfully belongs to Edgar.

Sir, I do love you more than words can wield the matter, Dearer than eyesight, space, and liberty, Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare, No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honor, As much as child e'er loved or father found— A love that makes breath poor and speech unable, Beyond all manner of so much I love you. (No Fear: 1.1.54–60)			

1. How and why do children pretend to be something they are not in front of their parents in *King Lear*?

2. In general, how and why do children pretend to be something they are not in front of their parents?