



King Lear Playing the Fool

The Fool in *King Lear* is one of theater's most mysterious and playful characters. This character has been played by many actors in many ways. The Fool appears in Act 1, scene 4, with Lear's command to his attendant, "Go you, call hither my fool." The First Knight reports The Fool been depressed since Cordelia left for France. The Fool plays a significant role in Acts 2 and 3—foil, jester, wise man, confidant, friend—and then disappears from the final two acts.

Focus your attention on this funny and brutally honest companion by answering the questions below. When possible, use specific textual evidence, with citations, to support your answers. You might need to do some research online or at your library to answer question 4.

1. How does the Fool speak?

The Fool often speaks in rhyme and often in cryptic riddles, probably because he is sometimes saying things that the King may not want to hear. Sometimes, he even speaks nonsense. The Fool is the only comedic voice in the play.

2. How does the Fool act?

3. What is the relationship between the Fool and King Lear?

4. How has the Fool been portrayed through history? Give at least three examples.

5. Why does the Fool disappear after Act 3?
6. How would you portray the Fool if you were producing King Lear today? (Consider costume, makeup, mannerism, etc.)
7. What qualities would an actor need to have in order to play the Fool? Why?
8. Whom would you cast as the Fool if you were the casting director in Hollywood? Why?

RL.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RL.11-12.3 Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.