For the great majority of mankind are sat with appearances as though they were realities and are more often influenced by the things that ‘seem’ than those that ‘are’.
- Niccolo Machiavelli
King Lear is a two-fold character. On one hand, he is clever; scheming; and manipulative. On the other hand, he is mad; befuddled; and deeply saddened.

In order to effectively play the two sides of King Lear’s character off of his other – as the situation merits – Shakespeare utilizes juxtaposition. As the playwright pits appearances (physical disguises and outward emotions) with reality (true identities and inward emotions), we see King Lear become a three-dimension tragic hero.
REALITY

Throughout the play, the fool stays loyal to his king and always speaks the truth. When Goneril tells her servants not to obey her father anymore (and when she sets a limit to the number of attendants Lear can have), the fool doesn’t sugarcoat the situation. He tells Lear -- flat out – that as a king, he is no longer a man of authority and is now the real fool of the kingdom.

King Lear’s daughter, Cordelia, tells her father she loves him -- as a daughter should – and she doesn’t lie to get a piece of Lear’s land or his title. She is banished for not giving her father the answer he desired and gets married without her father’s blessings. In the end, when hearing about her sisters’ behavior, Cordelia leaves France to helps her father. She proves her love for Lear is both real and sincere. Cordelia firmly believed she shouldn’t lie about her feelings just to make Lear happy, she believed in not taking revenge and above all … she believed in staying loyal to herself.
Edgar falls victim to his brother’s jealously … jealousy for his legitimacy and for his father’s love. Edgar is a loyal and loving son. Whereas, Edmund --his bastard brother, makes him out to be a greedy murderer; resulting in banishment. Edgar helps his blinded father in numerous ways and doesn’t feel any resentment. Instead, he accepts the cards he was dealt. Edgar is straight-forward and tells no lies nor hides any feelings of hatred.

Gloucester-- even though he believes the lies of his illegitimate son-- **doesn’t hide** behind any false words or emotions; staying loyal to King Lear. Remaining loyal to the point where he sacrifices his own vision. And in the end, Glouchester is greatly repentant to Edgar once he figures out the **truth**.

In reality … the fool, Cordelia, and Edgar are representative of **truth and reality** within the larger world of deceit and appearances.
Regan and Goneril shower their father, King Lear, with praise and love. But, in reality they only want his power. King Lear hopes to spend the remainder of his days visiting his daughters in their castles, but his daughters don’t relish his company. In desperation to rid their father of all undue influence, Lear’s daughters banish his attendants. King Lear is offended and flees the kingdom. In turn, his daughters threaten anyone that tries to help Lear. Regan and Goneril initially appear loyal to their husbands, but in reality their greed overtakes everything … even their desire for Edmund … and leads to their downfall.
Kent disagrees with King Lear’s decision to split the kingdom between his eldest daughters and banish Cordelia -- who loves him the most. In turn, King Lear banishes him. But, Kent **secretly** returns in the **guise** of faithful servant named “Caius”. Along with his disguise, Kent is the metaphorical embodiment of the fool, Cordelia, and Edmund. His honesty and straight-forwardness allows him to defend his king--no matter the sacrifice.
ORDER vs. Chaos

Chaos cannot exist without some semblance of order with which to compare it. In King Lear, order is continuously juxtaposed with chaos. Holding a mirror to one situation –chaos or order – makes the other extreme all the more vivid. Within the play, chaos is symbolized by madness; foolishness; betrayal; illegitimacy; the unnatural; blindness; anarchy; and appearances. Whereas, order is symbolized by sanity; loyalty; legitimacy; the natural; clear vision; authority; and reality.
Written by less talented hands, the dramatic situations in King Lear might appear almost comical. A king who has been cuckolded by his own daughters (not to mention characters in disguise and a court fool) is the subject of farce, not tragic theater. But, Shakespeare is able to avoid the comical by juxtaposing appearances with reality. This mirroring of chaos with order makes the audience feel ill at ease, which in turn causes us to question ourselves, our surroundings and the very company that we keep.