

king Lear Literary Device

Writer: William Shakespeare | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Symbols

The Crown: Lear gives up his kingdom and his crown. In Act 1, Scene 4, the Fool uses an egg as a metaphor for Lear's mistake. The two halves of the eggshell represent Lear's divided crown. It shows that dividing his power between his daughters has weakened him.

The Storm and Wind: The storm in "King Lear" symbolizes the chaos in the kingdom and Lear's mind. As the storm rages outside, it reflects the turmoil within Lear. The wind also symbolizes change and disruption. It often highlights how external forces can cause personal and societal upheaval.

Blindness: Blindness is a central theme in the play. Lear is metaphorically blind to Cordelia's love and Kent's loyalty, while Gloucester is deceived by Edmund's lies. Gloucester's physical blindness after his eyes are gouged out symbolizes this inability to see the truth.

Letters: Letters play an important role in the play, filling in gaps in the story. They symbolize trust and importance, as writing was seen as more reliable than spoken words in Shakespeare's time. Letters carry weight in the play and often reveal crucial information.

Stars, Heavens, and Gods: In Shakespeare's time, people believed that the stars and heavens controlled life on Earth. This idea appears in King Lear when Kent talks about how the stars govern human fate. Characters often refer to the heavens when explaining their misfortune.

Animals: The play is filled with references to animals, used in insults or curses. Characters often compare humans to animals when describing their worst behavior. The Fool also uses animal metaphors in his jokes and songs.

Clothing and Costumes: Clothing and disguises are key symbols. Kent disguises himself as a commoner to stay close to Lear, and Edgar pretends to be a mad beggar to escape danger. These disguises show how appearances can be deceiving, as people hide their true identities to survive.