

Abstract

This thesis is a study of court jesters and clowns in Shakespeare's selected plays. It is interesting to study them since they almost always appear in Shakespeare's plays, be they tragedies, comedies, or historical plays. Besides, not many students are aware of their roles in the plays.

Chapter I in this thesis discusses the Fool in "King Lear". Shakespeare portrays this fool geniusly to heightens the tragedy happens to the King. The Fool is wise and he makes Lear realize his folly and his pride as king.

Chapter II discusses the fat clown, Falstaff in "Henry IV, Part I". Much fun provides by this clown due to his obesity and his bad characteristics. Shakespeare presents Falstaff as a comic relief before serious scenes and he also employs Falstaff as a contrast and parallel to the main character.

Chapter III discusses two court jesters and one clown in Shakespeare's comedy. These are Touchstone in "As You Like It", Feste in "Twelfth Night", and Launcelot Gobbo in "Merchant of Venice". Both Feste and Touchstone comment and criticize their superiors in the play. The clown Launcelot Gobbo creates comic relief in the play and foreshadows important scenes.

Table of Contents

Abstract

Acknowledgment

I. Introduction **1**

II. The Characteristics and Functions
of The Fool in "King Lear" **6**

III. The Characteristics and Functions
of Falstaff in "Henry IV, Part I" **16**

IV. The Court Jesters and Clowns in
William Shakespeare's Three Comedies **27**

V. Conclusion **42**

Bibliography