

Family Relations : King Lear addresses family relationships , including those between children and fathers and between siblings themselves . However , family relations do not occur in a vacuum ; they are entwined with the theme of order . A ruler's decision to relinquish his position and depend on his children's love would be fraught in any situation , but in this case , where the decision entails dividing a kingdom , the family intersects with the social order . Family relationships have legal and emotional repercussions . Gloucester laughs about fathering Edmund out of wedlock in Act 1 , Scene 1 , but his son's illegitimacy is the source of tremendous suffering for his entire family later . Edmund's resentment of his illegitimacy is one of the emotional engines of the play . In that same opening scene , we see the importance of familial love in Lear's demand to his daughters . Lear doesn't just want to love his daughters and to have them love him . He asks them to publicly proclaim their love . His responses to all three show his profound daughters , but especially to Cordelia , show misunderstanding of them .