The Tragedy of King Lear

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To explain why Richard and King Lear were unsuccessful kings, the readers need to look at their history first before both Richard and Lear ascended the throne. Shakespeare utilized King Richard for his work of fiction, which is titled after him (Shakespeare, 2000). Richard III was crowned the king of England in 1483 and ruled for three years as he was killed in a duel against Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond. King Lear's story is more of a tragedy as compared to Richard's. Lear's downfall is to be blamed more on his failing as a father than on his not being a successful monarch (Halio, 1992). At the beginning of the play, Lear decides to divide his realm among his three daughters.

"Tell me, my daughters—
[Since now we will divest us both of rule,
Interest of territory, cares of state—]
Which of you shall we say doth love us most,
That we our largest bounty may extend
Where nature doth with merit challenge..."
(Shakespeare, 1886)

The desire to divide his realm between his daughters is the biggest mistake that King Lear could have made. Lear was a strong king, but after growing old, he lost his sense of judgment and hamartia because he gave all his power away to the wrong ones. His eldest daughters Goneril and Regan, lie about loving their father while the youngest one doesn't say anything at all which leads to Lear giving everything to the other two and leaving Cordelia with nothing. Lear gets to see the true nature of his two eldest daughters once they get to the realm. His grief, in the end, leads him to his death.

Moving on to the reasons behind Richard's and Lear's failure as kings, it can be seen that Richard's greed took the best of him. He was dead set on getting the throne for himself, but his brother Edward made him the Duke of Gloucester. Seeing his brother as king, Richard grew envious and plotted to get everyone out of his way. The following lines reveal Richard's determination to be England's king: "*I am determined to prove a villain*" (Shakespeare, 1936). He murdered most of his family members to be crowned the king. His reign over England was unsuccessful because he was too extravagant and borrowed money from other nobles. He locked away Edward's sons while Edward had fallen ill. He

became infamous once the news of the prince's disappearance spread everywhere. Furthermore, he was betrayed by Lord Stanley at the battle of Bosworth. Lord Stanley refused to assist him which led to a decrease in the number of the army that Richard had brought to war against Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond.

King Lear on the other hand, fell for Goneril and Regan's lies and that was the leading cause of his downfall. He gave them two all of his realm which meant that he had nothing left for himself that could prove that he was still the King. Cordelia is disowned for not telling her true feelings to her father. However, the King of France marries Cordelia and takes her away, amazed at King Lear's treatment of his favorite daughter. Goneril and Regan abused their newfound power and led their father towards madness. They plot against their father while Gloucester's illegitimate son, Edmund plots to take everything from his older brother Edgar. Lear being saddened by his daughter's treatment leaves the realm and is cared for by Kent and Edgar. Goneril and Regan both fall in love with Edmund and plan on killing Albany, who has had a change of heart and feels saddened by Lear's treatment. In the meantime, Cordelia brings the French army to save her father from her sisters but is imprisoned and killed. Lear too dies at the end leaving the realm in the hands of Albany, Kent, and Edgar. Henry V is different from Richard III and King Lear as he does not kill people mercilessly for the sake of power. He doesn't fall victim to anyone's lies as King Lear had. Henry had taken absolute control of his realm and maintained stability in his army by giving them inspiring speeches before the war and getting to know what the soldiers thought of the impending war. He plans his every move as a king and thinks things through before taking any action

In conclusion, it can be said that both Richard and Lear had fallen victim to their desires and temperament. Richard could not see anyone else ascending the throne while Lear could not know the truth when it was clear to him from the beginning. Henry did not act on his greed or feelings and instead did what he thought was best for his people which is why he was a victorious king unlike the other two.

References

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