



Fortune's fool

©2010 eNotes.com, Inc. or its Licensors. Please see [copyright information](#) at the end of this document.

Benvolio:

Romeo, away, be gone!
The citizens are up, and Tybalt slain.
Stand not amaz'd, the Prince will doom thee death
If thou art taken. Hence be gone, away!

Romeo:

O, I am fortune's fool!

[*Romeo And Juliet Act 3, scene 1, 132–136*](#)

Lear:

I am even
The natural fool of fortune.

[*King Lear Act 4, scene 6, 190–191*](#)

Timon:

You fools of fortune. . . .

[*Timon Of Athens Act 3, scene 6, 96*](#)

Foolishness fascinated the Bard and his audience; the number of contemporary proverbs about fools is stunning. "A fool's bolt [arrow] is soon shot"; "No fool to [like] the old fool"; "Either a fool or a physician"; "A fool and his money be soon at debate"; "The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool" (that one's inherited from Socrates); "The first chapter of fools is to hold themselves wise"; "As the fool thinks, so the bell clinks"; "A fool's paradise"; "Fat as a fool"; "Two fools in one house are too many"—just to mention a few.

Shakespeare's phrase "fortune's fool" seems to be his invention, although it has proverbial kin: "Fortune favors fools"; "God sends fortune to fools"; and "Fools have fortune," all of which date from the mid-sixteenth century. In Shakespeare's hands, however, the sentiment of all these proverbs is inverted. Fortune is not bestowed on fools; men are the slaves Fortune makes fools of. Romeo, for example, simply by defending himself against Tybalt, a Capulet and therefore a blood enemy, becomes an outlaw. Caught up in a design he is powerless to affect, Romeo feels like fortune's puppet.

Copyright Notice

©2010 eNotes.com, Inc.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution or information

Shakespeare Quotes: Fortune's fool

storage retrieval systems without the written permission of the publisher.

For complete copyright information, please see the online version of this work:
<http://www.enotes.com/shakespeare-quotes>