



UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE

# THE TRAGEDY OF KING RICHARD III

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

EDUCATION PACK

Welcome to the Education Pack provided by Cambridge University's European Theatre Group to accompany our 2013 winter tour of Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of King Richard III*.

ETG has developed a reputation at home and abroad for producing exciting, innovative, experimental and professional interpretations of classic texts. However, an integral part of our tour is the educational enrichment which we hope to provide. We aim to create a production which will successfully engage with our audiences, whether they are school children, university students or academics.

This Education Pack is designed to be a supplement to the study and revision materials you can easily find elsewhere – on the internet, in core study guides, and in general introductions to the text. Information on the best of these sources can be found in the further reading section. This pack instead aims to help you think critically about the text in relation to its performance, and the key ideas that have shaped our production.

*Richard III* is unique within Shakespeare's History plays, in that almost every other character is eclipsed by the dominant force of Richard – he is both director and actor, politician and fool, hero and devil. Indeed, with over 30 historical figures crammed in the full play (many of whom only ever appear at the peripheries) we have chosen to focus our study and our production on Richard and the three key women who represent the only resistance to his rise – Margaret, Elizabeth and Anne.

We have also included a selection of key passages with discussion topics, dramatic exercises, and activities for the classroom; to aid the exploration of Shakespeare's language, there is a short introduction to a few subtle (though important) features of Early Modern English, as well as a glossary of some of the more complex vocabulary and terms you will come across while studying *Richard III*.

We hope that students will enjoy learning using the content of this Education Pack, and that teachers will find the ideas we have chosen to focus on both original and exciting. Please bear in mind that the pack is designed to be used as a supplement to teaching we would like you to make use of the sections which you and your students will find useful. We welcome your feedback, and will try to include any alterations for next year.

We are very excited to perform for you in December – until then, enjoy and explore the play!

Emily Newton  
*European Theatre Group, Tour Manager 2013/14*

**Written by Matt Clayton, Charly Halliday, Gareth Matthey, Emily Newton & Claire O'Brien**

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You're going to learn about the Shakespeare play commonly known as Richard III, and then you're going to watch our production of it. We believe that studying Shakespeare and engaging with him in the theatre are very different activities, but each activity can inform the other. When you're studying the play, for example, you can think about its original context, and perhaps learn about how it's been adapted and received since then. In the theatre, however, we only have the here and now to work with. Theatre is a live art form, and we believe it works best when it is made by and for people living in the present moment. For us, this means being alert to the issues that surround us in 2013.

In this pack, we aim to:

- Give a clear introduction to the text and some of the basic context behind it.
- Explain what we have found most interesting and relevant about the text, helping you to explore these areas for yourself.
- Introduce some of the sources from contemporary culture that have informed our own reaction to the text.

We believe there is no single 'Shakespeare' who can speak to us directly from beyond the grave – instead you should think about your reaction to it as both a text and a performance. In this pack, you will find multiple perspectives on Shakespeare's play. Onstage, there is only us talking to you, and we hope you will find this a conversation worth sharing in.

Matt Clayton

*European Theatre Group, Director 2012/13*

The fields of England have been soiled with the blood of its people for many years. Father has turned against son and son against father as the Houses of York and Lancaster have fought one another for control of the English throne. At the beginning of the play, it seems like peace may hold as **Edward IV reigns as the Yorkist king** and the Lancastrians have been either killed or exiled. But this peace is to be threatened, not by the Yorkists' enemies but from within their own family.

**Richard, Duke of Gloucester**, the youngest brother of the King yearns for power and for the crown and is willing to do anything to reach it. A 'crookback', vilified by allies and enemies for his cruelty, he first woos the **Lady Anne**, widow of the Lancastrian prince that he murdered. He is so brazen as to woo her over the corpse of her late husband.

He turns against his brother - **George, Duke of Clarence**. Convincing Edward of his treachery, Richard orchestrates his arrest and his subsequent murder. Murderers hired by Richard drown the noble but are troubled by their own consciences while Clarence never realises his brother's true nature until the end.

The court is shocked with **York Queen Elizabeth** placing the blame squarely upon Richard. Division is exposed in the court between Richard and his ally the **Duke of Buckingham** and their enemies (mainly of Elizabeth's party). Even these divisions are glossed over when the exiled **Lancastrian Queen Margaret** returns to curse them all. York may fight with York but all will ally against Lancaster.

Edward IV passes away, leaving his young son Edward to the throne and Richard as Lord Protector until he comes of age. Richard meets with them on the way to London where he convinces the new **Edward V and his younger brother** that they will be safe in the Tower of London. Richard seizes his opportunity - his enemies in court are arrested and executed, while Richard begins a campaign to convince the public of his modesty, piety and right to rule, supported by Buckingham. The crowds cry 'God save King Richard!' as the Princes are decried as illegitimate.

Richard is closer and closer to the throne. The Princes in the tower still stand in his way yet Buckingham is wary of murdering them - however he is overruled by Richard's ambition. Richard is now crowned King, with the Lady Anne at his side as Queen. But promises are not kept, power is abused and Buckingham cannot stand by his side any longer. He flees to the only man who stands ready to challenge Richard - **Henry Tudor, the Earl of Richmond**, nephew of the Lancastrian King Henry VI.

Lady Anne, terrified and alone, seeks the support of the **Duchess of York** and Queen Elizabeth but neither of them can prevent her death. York and Elizabeth, betrayed by Richard and lamenting the death of the Princes stumble across Queen Margaret: Lancaster and York are united in cursing the name of Richard – himself now demanding Elizabeth’s daughter’s hand in marriage, his own niece, to strengthen his hold on the throne.

As allies flee from his side and as Richmond’s powers abroad in France grow, Richard descends into paranoia. His popularity wains and the barbarism of his rule grows ever worse. Finally, rebellion breaks out against him as Buckingham first and then Richmond lead their forces into England to challenge Richard on the field of battle. Buckingham is captured and executed before the armies finally meet one another at Bosworth Field.

Richard and Richmond prepare for the battle. As night sets, Richard is beset by the ghosts of those he has murdered in his pursuit of power – from those killed in the midst of war to his own family slaughtered mercilessly. The ghosts bless Richmond and promise him their support in the coming battle that breaks when morning sets in. Richard’s allies flee from him, Richmond’s forces overwhelm him and the King himself is unhorsed.

***‘A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!’***

It is here that Richmond and Richard meet in battle face to face and it is here on Bosworth Field that the crookback king is finally killed. Richmond celebrates his victory over Richard and ascends the throne, becoming **Henry VII** and marrying the last heir of York. A new order and a new peace settles over Richard’s bones – the House of Tudor has been established.

# WHY IS SHAKESPEARE SO FAMOUS?

You might have noticed that people make a lot of fuss about Shakespeare. The works of William Shakespeare have had a huge **impact on the development of Western thought and culture**, giving him an unparalleled reputation and influence as an English writer. Today, Shakespeare continues to be studied and consumed in a variety of forms around the world. His artistic influence is still felt all over the place, in everything from high culture to mass media.

## CLASS DISCUSSION

- Is this long history of previous study a problem for critics?
- Do you think that modern critics should be ready to place Shakespeare on this impossibly high pedestal?

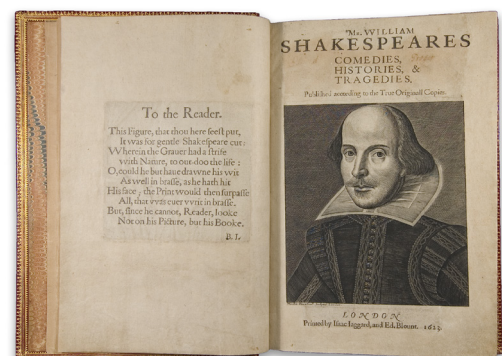
'If any author has become a mortal god, it must be Shakespeare.'

HAROLD BLOOM

In the past, different people from a variety of times and places have used Shakespeare as a way of thinking about themselves and their world. We can begin to tell the story about how Shakespeare got to be so famous:

The creation of Shakespeare's reputation started in the decade after his death, when other authors set him up as the great English writer, at a time when people were still trying to work out what being a great English writer meant.

**Shakespeare's complete works, the 'First Folio' was printed in 1623.**



In the 18th Century, heavily adapted versions of his work became the **most performed pieces** of theatre in England, at a time when entertainers and audience members were working out what a professional theatre was.

**David Garrick**, an English actor and theatre manager who influenced nearly all aspects of theatre, sprang to fame in the role of Richard III in 1747. The play was done for free in the interval of a concert to get around the licensing laws. Instead of declaiming the verse in a thunderous, measured chant, he spoke with **swift and natural changes of tone and emphasis**, and **changed the face of English performance art**.

As a result of this popularity, Shakespeare began to have an impact on other forms of entertainment, **inspiring spoofs, parodies and pastiches** all over the place.

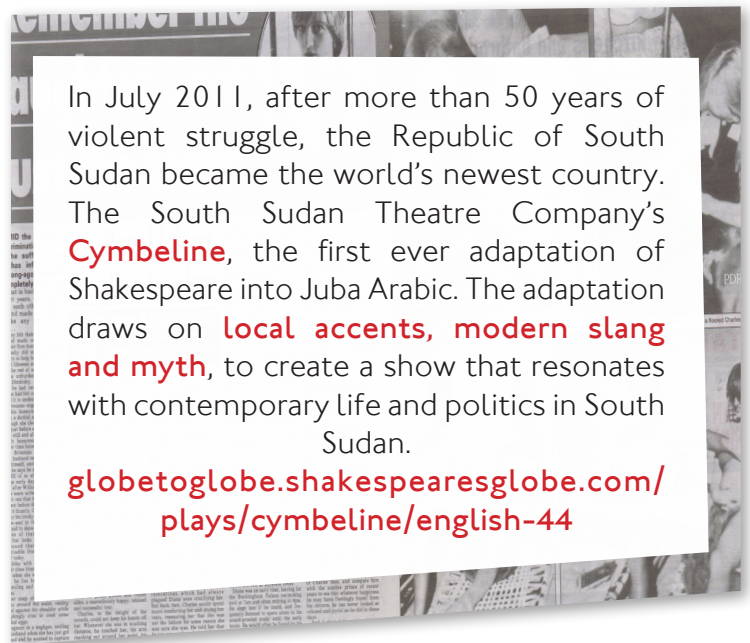
At the same time, more and more writers in England and the rest of Europe continued to read and respond to Shakespeare, increasingly singling him out as an author who told essential truths about human nature. This reached a high-point towards the end of that century, when poets and philosophers in the Romantic movement made Shakespeare central to their idea of what it meant to be a poet and a human being.

In the **19th Century**, when formal schooling became more widespread for young people in industrialised nations, educators began to put Shakespeare at the centre of learning, believing that his characters and style of writing were a model that should be replicated.

In the 20th Century, two things helped to spread Shakespeare even further: **a globalized mass-media culture dominated by the English language**, and the **academic study of English literature**. This cemented Shakespeare's place in high-brow and low-brow culture.

In 2012, the Globe Theatre in London brought together performances of **Shakespeare's complete works in 37 different languages**. Artists from all over the globe spoke these plays in their own language within the architecture Shakespeare wrote for.

[globetoglobe.shakespearesglobe.com](http://globetoglobe.shakespearesglobe.com)



The theorist **Marjorie Garber** has described Shakespeare as our society's equivalent of a 'fetish' – an untouchable magical object revered by a tribe. **Terence Hawkes** also points out the assumption institutions like Shakespeare's Globe make that Shakespeare is best appreciated in his original context. **How can Shakespeare be both a universal symbol of genius, and irrevocably rooted in the English past?**

The information above can help you to contextualise Shakespeare's extraordinary reputation. It shows that Shakespeare has had an effect on many generations of people all over the world. However, it also shows that the growth of his reputation was not exactly organic, and suggests that there may be certain groups have used Shakespeare to serve their own purposes.



*Richard III* is very different from most historical drama that is seen today. Nowadays, a writer working on a movie, series or novel with a historical subject will normally carry out research into real characters and events, but using their own **creative license** to tell a dramatic story.

The 'history' books and sources that Shakespeare used were very different from what we would find today. The historians that Shakespeare worked from believed in **the classical idea that correctly presented history could give moral and practical lessons**.



Both Shakespeare and his sources were also working at a time when the church and central government, headed by the monarchy, had a lot more **control over what was written and thought**. Monarchs and their governments had the power to restrict or censor writers and artists, and they had the money to commission or reward writers who pleased them. Political sedition was punishable by death, and the past was not outside the realm of politics.

The events of *Richard III* were very politically sensitive. Richard was the last king of the old line of monarchs, **the Plantagenets**, which had been torn apart by civil war between two warring branches of the family - the **Lancastrians** and the **Yorkists**. The man who replaced Richard was Henry Tudor, Duke of Richmond. He was the first Tudor king and the grandfather of Queen Elizabeth I. It was **politically important** for the Tudors to **portray Richard as evil and illegitimate**, and Henry as a **liberating hero**.

## CLASS ACTIVITY:

Look at these different representations of Richard III. What do you think are the motivations behind each portrayal? Are any of them realistic? Can we ever truly know which is most accurate?



Left: A Portrait of King Richard III, artist unknown (National Gallery).

Middle: Richard III, crookbacked, as typically represented in Shakespeare's play.

Right: Aneurin Barnard plays a sympathetic Richard in the recent BBC adaptation of Philippa Gregory's *The White Queen*.

Yet, Shakespeare undoubtedly keeps to the **official and approved narrative**. In fact he fully embraces it, ending the play with a patriotic speech by the victorious Richmond – the character seems almost able to see the future reign of Queen Elizabeth in which the audience are living.



Lawrence Olivier as Richard III and Ralph Richardson as Henry Tudor, Duke of Richmond

5.v.4-6

*[Presents the crown]* Lo, here this long-usurped royalty  
From the dead temples of this bloody wretch  
Have I plucked off to grace thy brows withal.  
[Stanley]

5.v.19-22

We will reunite the white rose and the red.  
Smile heaven upon this fair conjunction,  
That have long frowned upon their enmity.  
What traitor hears me and says not amen?  
[Richmond]

5.v.27-31

All this divided York and Lancaster,  
Divided in their dire division.  
O, now let Richmond and Elizabeth,  
The true succeeders of each royal house,  
By God's fair ordinance conjoin together.  
[Richmond]

However, **Hilary Mantel**, double winner of the Man Booker Prize for her historical novels *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*, recently wrote about the **malleability of historical fact** – particularly in relation to public figures. She offers a more critical analysis of Tudor propaganda:

*“Royal bodies do change after death, and not just as a consequence of the universal post-mortem changes. Now we know the body in the Leicester car park is indeed that of Richard III, we have to concede the curved spine was not Tudor propaganda, but we need not believe the chronicler who claimed Richard was the product of a two-year pregnancy and was born with teeth a the king stripped by the victors has been re clothed in his true identity.*

*This is the essential process of history, neatly illustrated: loss, retrieval.”*

HILARY MANTEL – ROYAL BODIES

#### CLASS DISCUSSION:

- How does this inaccuracy and propaganda affect our perception of the History Plays as historical?
- Can *Richard III* ever be considered a useful historical source?
- Are artists and writers free from censorship today in the Western world? Can you think of any examples today where certain images and words are used to influence us and our ideas?

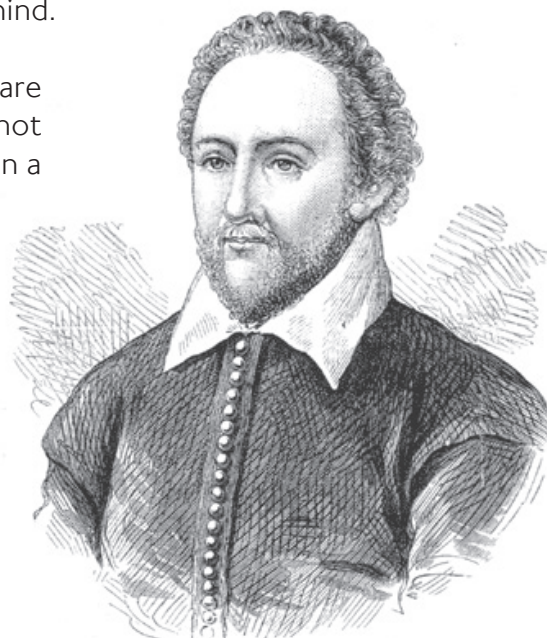
# A TWISTED SENSE OF SEX: THE UNNATURAL ATTRACTION OF RICHARD

RICHARD III  
EUROPEAN THEATRE  
GROUP 2013

What do you think about when you hear the words 'The Tragedy of King Richard III'? Do you think of celebrities, gossip, and sex scandals? Probably not, but this diary entry, written at the time of the play's first performances, might make you change your mind.

There aren't many pieces of writing mentioning Shakespeare that date from his own lifetime. This is one of them, and it's not literary criticism – it's a piece of celebrity gossip. It appears in a diary, a month after its author had seen the play:

*“Upon a time when Burbage played Richard the Third there was a citizen grew so far in liking with him, that before she went from the play she appointed him to come that night unto her by the name of Richard the Third. Shakespeare, overhearing their conclusion, went before, was entertained and at his game ere Burbage came. Then, message being brought that Richard the Third was at the door, Shakespeare caused return to be made that William the Conqueror was before Richard the Third.”*



RICHARD BURBAGE

The name 'Burbage' refers to Richard Burbage, the well-known star of many of Shakespeare's plays in their first production, including Richard III. In this story, a female audience member gets a little carried away by Burbage's performance and asks to see him after the show. But Shakespeare apparently has other plans...

**ACTIVITY:** Rephrase the quoted paragraph in modern English language. If the writer is deliberately ambiguous or suggestive in the original, you may need to come up with more than one way of rendering this subtlety. Can the passage be translated into 'tabloid' language?

It's not surprising to hear about a fan getting wrapped up in a performance, and it's not surprising for a celebrity like Burbage to have attracted this sort of attention. What is surprising is that **the character he was playing is supposed to be evil and repulsive**. Richard in the play orders the murder of two children and his own brother, using deception, corruption and the occasional execution to become king. So **why** would someone want him to pretend to be Richard in a romantic encounter?

**ACTIVITY:** Read Richard's opening monologue in Act I, Scene I and note down the character's reference to his appearance and personality. Does he make himself sound attractive?

Richard in the play is thoroughly evil, and yet the audience member did not simply look past the character in her attraction to Burbage the actor, she positively encouraged him to keep the pretence up when she came to meet him. Clearly she found something about the character alluring.



The idea that being evil is attractive is not completely foreign to us today. Look at the picture above of Boston bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev. When the magazine Rolling Stone put this photo of him on their front cover, many people reacted with horror. They claimed they had given him the treatment of a rockstar, but the magazine replied that the portrait was a personal photo. Nevertheless, the fact that it raised so much concern suggests that something about the photo does give the criminal a kind of bad-boy or rockstar appeal.

#### CLASS ACTIVITY:

Discuss the magazine cover. You could look up more coverage about it on the internet. Do the people complaining have a point? Is it ok for the magazine to publish this?

Can you think of any other people who might be described as charismatic villains or anti-heroes, both in real life and fiction? What are the qualities that make them attractive?

Portrayals of **romantic and charismatic villains** (whether intentional or not) are common, but Richard III does not easily fit into this category. For one thing, an important part of Richard's character is that he is physically deformed in a way that inspires disgust. Renaissance audiences shared the medieval idea embodied by Richard of a **link between physical and moral deformity**. He describes his body as an **offense against nature** which is so ugly that **'dogs bark at me as I walk by them'**. He claims that this makes him unable to seduce women, and this forces him to be evil:

*'Since I cannot prove a lover,  
I am determined to prove a villain'.*

**'Determined'** may be understood to refer to the **character's own decision** to behave in this way, but it also seems to say that Richard's actions are 'predetermined' by the fact that he is a character in a play that has been written with the intention of villainising him.

For important dynastic reasons the official history of Richard has already been written as a kind of play with Richard as the villain. With a knowing, ironic awareness Richard shows that **he understands himself to be an actor or character in a play with a pre-established plot** – and this is precisely what makes Richard III much more than a play about a serial killer written to please the government.

From the opening scene of the play, Richard dominates the action, demanding to steal the show, hog the limelight, and take the audience in as an accomplice to his actions. It was common for Elizabethan plays to start with **one actor on stage delivering a monologue** that sets the scene of the action. This was called the Prologue and would conventionally be delivered by an actor who was not yet in full costume or fully immersed in the play. The actor speaking the Prologue would address the audience directly and form a kind of threshold into the fictional world.

**For a main character to deliver the prologue to his own play goes against all dramatic convention.**

It is a hostile dramaturgical take-over of a specific audience address, a concerted charm-offensive, designed to make us the character's most loyal and intimate confidant. Richard's charm lies in his unabashed desire to make us see the performance and plot behind his rise to power.

In this context, opening the play with a direct address from the play's actual protagonist seems like a bold rewriting of this convention. Richard hijacks the mediating function of the prologue and carves out a role for himself that allows him to **both access the world of the play, and talk to the audience as though he's outside of it** – Richard is both actor and director.

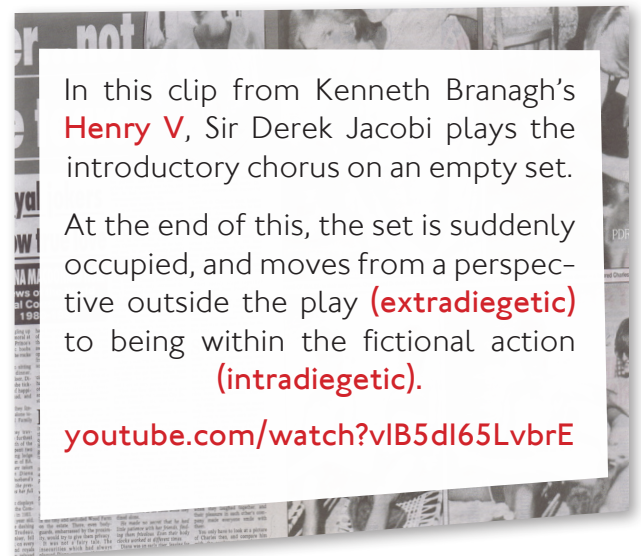
In **Act V Scene iii**, Richard's **fractured sense of self is exaggerated by the curses of the ghosts** before the Battle of Bosworth, introducing the first sense of guilt.

## CLASS ACTIVITIES:

- Look at the sentence structure. How has Shakespeare used the phrasing to characterise Richard?

Our production will have two actors both playing Richard, egging one another on, questioning one another and accentuating the dramatic relationship of actor and director.

- Find a partner, divide the lines between you and perform the extract together. What effect does this have on our understanding of Richard's mental state?



“Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.  
What do I fear? myself? there's none else by:  
Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I.  
Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am:  
Then fly. What, from myself? Great reason why:  
Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself?  
Alack, I love myself. Wherefore? for any good  
That I myself have done unto myself?  
O, no! alas, I rather hate myself  
For hateful deeds committed by myself!  
I am a villain: yet I lie. I am not.  
Fool, of thyself speak well: fool, do not flatter.  
My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,  
And every tongue brings in a several tale,  
And every tale condemns me for a villain.”

Happily accepting the role he is 'determinéd' to play, he pursues his rise to power with the infectious joy of an irrepressible actor. In Richard's world, acting can get you everywhere, so long as you're in control of the narrative ('Plots have I laid...'). Like Buckingham he can 'counterfeit the deep tragedian' better than any professional. Such is his enthusiasm, and awe at the power of his 'dissembling looks', that he sometimes wishes he could watch himself act:

*No friends to back my suit,  
But the plain devil and dissembling looks.  
(I.ii.237)*

This production lets Richard have his wish. The part is split into two actors, with each taking turns to act as 'shadow' to the other. The idea of the two Richards is a novel way of dramatizing the character's unique staginess, and will allow the audience to see a fresh the sense of Richard directing and prompting the events of the play as it unfolds around him.

In Henry VI Part 3, Richard appears in the court of the old king, foreshadowing the plot of Richard III. He discusses intention to seize the crown by acting his way to the top:

*Then, since this earth affords no joy to me,  
But to command, to cheque, to o'erbear such  
As are of better person than myself,  
I'll make my heaven to dream upon the crown,  
And from that torment I will free myself,  
Or hew my way out with a bloody axe.  
Why, I can smile, and murder whiles I smile,  
And cry 'Content' to that which grieves my heart,  
And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,  
And frame my face to all occasions.*

Richard's assertion that he can 'murder while I smile,/ And cry 'Content' to that which grieves my heart' (III.ii.182), echo's Hamlet's assertion that the usurping Claudius can 'smile, and smile, and be a villain' – the ultimate example of deceptive role play.

Indeed, the climax of the show of kingship comes when the commons beg Richard to take the crown, and Richard is forced to justify the execution of Hastings through play form: Richard acts out 'terror', and Hastings' head is appropriated as a gruesome prop, causing Richard weep of 'grief' and 'righteous indignation'. His fine understanding of theatrical convention balances the use of pathos, drama and shock to influence the fictional audience, leaving us, the real audience, to admire the performance.

ACT I, Scene ii,

'Was ever woman in this humour woo'd?  
Was ever woman in this humour won?  
I'll have her; but I will not keep her long.  
What! I, that kill'd her husband and his father,  
To take her in her heart's extremest hate,  
With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes,  
The bleeding witness of her hatred by;  
Having God, her conscience, and these bars  
against me,

And I nothing to back my suit at all,  
But the plain devil and dissembling looks,  
And yet to win her, all the world to nothing! Ha!

Hath she forgot already that brave prince,  
Edward, her lord, whom I, some three months since,  
Stabb'd in my angry mood at Tewksbury?  
A sweeter and a lovelier gentleman,  
Framed in the prodigality of nature,  
Young, valiant, wise, and, no doubt, right royal,  
The spacious world cannot again afford  
And will she yet debase her eyes on me,  
That cropp'd the golden prime of this sweet prince,  
And made her widow to a woful bed?  
On me, whose all not equals Edward's moiety?  
On me, that halt and am unshapen thus?

My dukedom to a beggarly denier,  
I do mistake my person all this while:  
Upon my life, she finds, although I cannot,  
Myself to be a marvellous proper man.  
I'll be at charges for a looking-glass,  
And entertain some score or two of tailors,  
To study fashions to adorn my body:  
Since I am crept in favour with myself,  
Will maintain it with some little cost.  
But first I'll turn yon fellow in his grave;  
And then return lamenting to my love.  
Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass,  
That I may see my shadow as I pass.'

CLASS DISCUSSION

Look at this monologue from the end of Richard's encounter with the widow Anne, as he has successfully seduced her at her over the body of her dead husband.

Richard revels in his accomplishment as an actor, and uses the language of reflections and shadows to explore new self-awareness and ability.

- Explore the uses of the words 'me', 'myself' and 'I' in this passage. What do they show about Richard's ideas about himself?

- How important are the ideas of doubling and duplication in this passage?

- In Renaissance culture, duality and falseness are associated with the Devil. Bearing this in mind - has Richard shown acting itself to be an immoral activity?



3.5 ll. 1–32: Richard and Buckingham are in costume, preparing for a role, discussing acting – then they put these skills into practice. Again, we see the artifice behind the performance: we can see an actor playing a character playing an actor.

[Enter GLOUCESTER and BUCKINGHAM, in rotten armour,] [p]marvellous ill-favoured]

Duke of Gloucester. Come, cousin, canst thou quake, and change thy colour,  
Murder thy breath in the middle of a word, 2070  
And then begin again, and stop again,  
As if thou wert distraught and mad with terror?

Duke of Buckingham. Tut, I can counterfeit the deep tragedian;  
Speak and look back, and pry on every side,  
Tremble and start at wagging of a straw,  
Intending deep suspicion: ghastly looks  
Are at my service, like enforced smiles;  
And both are ready in their offices,  
At any time, to grace my stratagems.

Take another look at the Burbage anecdote from the previous section. We can begin to see how useful this piece of gossip can be as a way into understanding the character and the play. The audience member seems to be attracted to Burbage-as-Richard, not in spite of the character being portrayed, but because of it. Her invitation to blur the line between actor and character in their illicit meeting is preempted in the behaviour of Burbage/Richard onstage. With his sly awareness of the dramatic artifice all around Richard manages to both safely distance the audience from the horrific acts being portrayed, and bring himself dangerously close to collapsing the boundary between actor and character.





# PRINCESS DIE: ROYAL BODIES & CELEBRITY DEATHS

RICHARD III  
EUROPEAN THEATRE  
GROUP 2013

The photo was taken while Kate Middleton, Duchess of Cambridge, was pregnant with the heir to the British throne, Prince George. With it are two quotes, by the author **Hilary Mantel**, taken from an article entitled 'Royal Bodies'.

*'When her pregnancy became public she had been visiting her old school, and had picked up a hockey stick and run a few paces for the camera. BBC News devoted a discussion to whether a pregnant woman could safely put on a turn of speed 'We have arrived at while wearing high heels.'*

The crux of the matter: a royal lady is a royal womb. Along with the reverence and awe accorded to royal persons goes the conviction that the body of the monarch is public property. We are ready at any moment to rip away the veil of respect, and treat royal persons in an inhuman way...'



Shakespeare's Richard III is another example of a royal who finds his body under intense scrutiny. His enemies subject him to verbal dissections and inscriptions as they try to make him into a monster. Indeed, he is regularly cursed as a 'dog', 'devil', 'boar', 'hound' or 'hedgehog', suggesting he is less than human.

## CLASS ACTIVITY:

Below is Richard's description of his own body, addressing his own physical unsuitability for the part of King. How does Richard use the theme of disproportion here? Does it seem excessive? Why?



Kevin Spacey, Richard III (Old Vic, 2011)

Act I, Scene i

'But I, — that am not shap'd for sportive tricks,  
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass;  
I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty,  
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;  
I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,  
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,  
Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time  
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,  
And that so lamely and unfashionable,  
That dogs bark at me, as I halt by them, —  
Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,  
Have no delight to pass away the time,  
Unless to spy my shadow in the sun  
And descant on mine own deformity.'

His body matters because in a medieval monarchy the health of the king was thought to be related to the health of the nation. In **Act 2, Scene iii**, when the citizens realise that the young boy Prince Edward will now be king after his father's death, they are dismayed: **'Woe to the land that's governed by a child.'** Likewise in the Tudor portrayals of Richard, his disability is an important symbolic marker of his illegitimacy – his reign is an aberration in comparison to that of the physically fit, healthy and unmarred Richmond.

Historians have accused Shakespeare of providing a deluge of unforgettable images of Richard, leaving a lasting impression of this king as ugly and evil. Clearly, crafting an image of Richard as deformed was important for Tudor propaganda, but also a gripping characteristic for an actor to portray on stage.

During the Renaissance, the notion of what was meant by physical perfection was inherited from classical ideals of proportion and symmetry. The English writer **George Puttenham** writes in *The Arte of English Pose*: **'all things stand by proportion, and that without it nothing could stand to be good or beautiful'**. Imperfection was therefore unnatural and regarded as some sort of diabolical intervention to visibly indicate moral corruption – **'a lump of foul deformity'**.



Andrea Alciati's *Book of Emblems* (1526) suggests a link between disability (here, a cripple and a blind man) and divine acts of limitation or punishment.

#### CLASS DISCUSSION

Is this how Richard should be portrayed however? Should we maintain the propagandised image of a King whose reputation has been marred by Elizabethan politics and caricature?

Disability is an important consideration when thinking about Richard's body in performance.

**Read this extract** from a column in The Guardian newspaper on 'cripping up' – the practise of able bodied actors playing the disabled.

-Is it offensive to have a fully abled actor pretend to be disabled for the role?

*The western theatrical canon is filled with disabled characters. We are metaphors for tragedy, loss, the human condition – the victim or villain, the scapegoat, the inferior, scary "special" one, the freak, the problem requiring treatment, medicalisation and normalisation. Although disabled characters occur in thousands of plays, seldom have the writers been disabled themselves, or written from that perspective. It is also rare for actors with impairments to be cast in productions, even when the character is disabled. As I scornfully stated in my 2002 play Peeling, in which Hammond performed: "Crippling up is the 21st century's answer to blacking up".*

KAITE O'REILLY, 'Comment is Free', The Guardian, 30 August 2012

# GIRLS WHO RUN THE WORLD: THE QUEENS, RICHARD & GENDER

RICHARD III  
EUROPEAN THEATRE  
GROUP 2013

Richard III is a play with few female characters in it – those of greatest note are **Queen Elizabeth** (the wife of Edward IV), **Lady Anne** (the wife of Richard III), the **Duchess of York** (the mother of Richard III) and **Queen Margaret** (the wife of the Lancastrian King Henry VI). Given that an all male cast would have performed original productions of the play, the play has a very skewed sense of gender – one that is heavily masculine.



Left: Chicago Shakespeare Theater, showing Queen Margaret (Jennifer Harmon) cursing Richard (Wallace Acton) for the heinous crimes he has committed. Right: All male Shakespeare company, *Propeller*, with Tony Bell (Lady Margaret), Kelsey Brookfield (Duchess of York) and Dominic Tighe (Queen Elizabeth) in *Richard III* at the Lyceum, Sheffield [dir. Ed Hall, 2011].

## CLASS DISCUSSION:

- Can any of the women in *Richard III* be seen to have power? Consider the fates and actions of each of these women, particularly Anne and Queen Margaret.
- The production by Propeller (right) is set in a grotesquely industrial, 'unfeminine' environment, displaying the pickled heads of the murdered Princes in front of the women. How might these directoral choices reflect incompatibility of the political setting and traditional 'feminine' qualities in the play? Does the all-male casting enhance these ideas or detract from them?

What power the women of the play have is seen in Queen Margaret. Her curse resonates throughout the play as it finally comes true, and the reign of the House of York is brutally culled. It could be argued that **whatever power the women possess in this men's world is verbal** – aside from this most notable of curses, the women turn their tongues against Richard, the man who murders their husbands, their children, their brothers. However, while they possess a sense of power and give their speakers some respect, the instantaneous response from those on stage is derision. Even Margaret's powerful curse Richard manages to momentarily derail.

A particular example of a shift in power is seen with Queen Margaret. Her appearance in the Henry VI plays is characterised by **strong will, commanding authority and a dynamism** that her husband cannot capture himself. He is completely emasculated. What has changed for Margaret for Richard III? Is she just a weaker character in the presence of Richard ascendant? The politically astute Margaret of the early plays becomes Poor Margareta prophetess.

QUEEN MARGARET

Can curses pierce the clouds and enter heaven?  
Why, then, give way, dull clouds, to my quick curses!  
If not by war, by surfeit die your king,  
As ours by murder, to make him a king!  
Edward thy son, which now is Prince of Wales,  
For Edward my son, which was Prince of Wales,  
Die in his youth by like untimely violence!  
Thyself a queen, for me that was a queen,  
Outlive thy glory, like my wretched self!  
Long mayst thou live to wail thy children's loss;  
And see another, as I see thee now,  
Deck'd in thy rights, as thou art stall'd in mine!  
Long die thy happy days before thy death;  
And, after many lengthen'd hours of grief,  
Die neither mother, wife, nor England's queen!  
Rivers and Dorset, you were standers by,  
And so wast thou, Lord Hastings, when my son  
Was stabb'd with bloody daggers: God, I pray him,  
That none of you may live your natural age,  
But by some unlook'd accident cut off!

GLOUCESTER

Have done thy charm, thou hateful wither'd hag!

QUEEN MARGARET

And leave out thee? stay, dog, for thou shalt hear me.  
If heaven have any grievous plague in store  
Exceeding those that I can wish upon thee,  
O, let them keep it till thy sins be ripe,  
And then hurl down their indignation  
On thee, the troubler of the poor world's peace!  
The worm of conscience still begnaw thy soul!  
Thy friends suspect for traitors while thou livest,  
And take deep traitors for thy dearest friends!  
No sleep close up that deadly eye of thine,  
Unless it be whilst some tormenting dream  
Affrights thee with a hell of ugly devils!  
Thou elvish-mark'd, abortive, rooting hog!  
Thou that wast seal'd in thy nativity  
The slave of nature and the son of hell!  
Thou slander of thy mother's heavy womb!  
Thou loathed issue of thy father's loins!  
Thou rag of honour! thou detested... Richard!

Margaret's position in the play is equally extra-dramatic as Richard's. Where our Richards come forth and announce their own play, stealing the limelight of the prologue, Margaret skulks through a scene, commenting on it snidely seemingly to no one. It could be argued that **the women of the play make use of their theatrically imposed weakness (their impertinence, petulance, lunatic and frantic natures) against Richard**. While only Richard may command the play from the sides, they try as they might to turn their imposed roles against him.

Throughout this discussion though, you can see that it is hard to define them on their own – **they are defined in relation to the men in their life**. No matter their power or their role in the play, they are almost negated as individuals. **Identity is the domain of the men**. Even the original actors were all boys – women were only seen as young men on stage. The theatrical weakness of the women is ingrained into the play.

#### CLASS ACTIVITIES

- As a modern viewer, are you surprised by the treatment of women in this period? Think about the religious contexts – the legacy of Eve, and the witch hunts.

Richard ascends to the throne by destroying those ahead of him in the line of succession. The defeat of Richard results in the fertile union of Henry Tudor and Princess Elizabeth, and the beginning of recent history for contemporary audiences.

In what ways are the real fears about succession after Elizabeth I, a childless female Monarch, addressed in this play?

Read **Act I Scene iv**, focusing particularly on lines **184 to 286**:

- 1) Organise yourself into **groups of threes** and perform this extract, focusing on the manner in which Shakespeare **characterises** the murderers and Clarence and following his explicit direction. Think closely when doing this about how it looks and feels as a piece of performance.
  - Does it feel correct that one of the murderers is affected by conscience?
  - Does stabbing seem an appropriate death for Clarence?
  - When you feel this extract works strongest and weakest?

- 2) Now, in the same group of three, perform the extract again. However, do not focus on what Shakespeare tells us about the characters, actors and situation. Focus instead on alternatives to the situation.
  - Does the murderer have to doubt his actions?
  - Does Clarence have to be killed by a knife, does the situation have to be tense?

Feel free to **adapt the extract** in whatever way you see fit in order to fit your vision for the scene or to elaborate on your understanding of it.

- 3) Compare the results of each performance.
  - What do you think the effect is of such alteration of the text?
  - Has the **original intention** of the scene been enhanced, exaggerated or ignored?
  - Does it matter if your scene differs from the way that Shakespeare intended it?

This exercise is an important one to understanding the process by which we have worked as a team to **develop, adapt and alter the text** (which you are reading) into the performance (which you will see).



Read **Act 3 Scene vii**, focusing particularly on lines **1 to 41**:

- 1) As you read through this scene, the historical importance is very clear as it depicts the crowning of an English king.
- Go through this scene with a partner and rephrase the conversation, focusing on the lines given and modernise the scene.

- Remember to think about what is added to the meaning of the text in terms of punctuation, spelling, meaning and sentence structure, and try and incorporate this.

Shakespeare himself worked from historical sources for his texts but in a non-historical manner (the details are not exact). Could you argue what you are doing in modernising the scene is similar to what Shakespeare did when first writing the play?

- 2) This scene references the citizens and common people of England and London yet they barely appear in the play. Only in Act 2, Scene iii and Act 3, Scene vi do we hear the opinions of the common people.

- **Organise yourselves into groups of 5** and improvise a scene as the common people of London and your reactions to the events of the play and to the characters involved.

Does adding content like this improvisation diminish the historical content of the play or does it enliven it by adding a further dimension to the tragedy? Does improvisation have a role in our depiction of reality in theatre today?

- 3) Read this extract from the Bible, which could be seen to have importance to the themes and events explored in Richard III. :

*Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

(Romans 12.17-21)

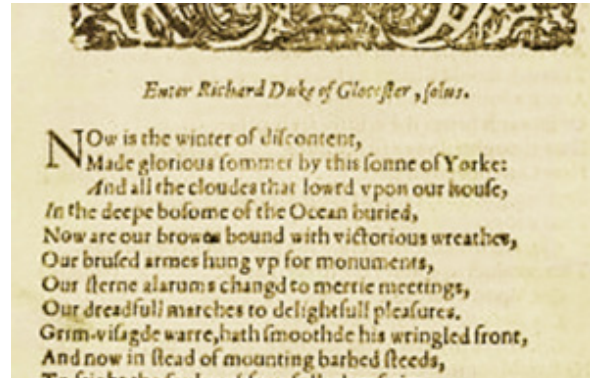
- Could it be incorporated into a performance of Richard III?
- If so, which scene would you place it into and why?
- Which character would you have speak these lines? **Perform the scene as a group.**

- 4) Think about these two sets of edits you have made to the text, and discuss with other groups your choices. Is the original text being abused by this act or enhanced? Is it okay to add these extracts from other texts when they are relevant?

When Shakespeare was writing in the late 16th century, the English language had almost developed into the form it is in today, as is known by scholars as Early Modern English. The growth of the printing industry and a renewed interest in language meant that many writers and lexicographers began to formalise spelling and grammar.



A Middle English manuscript



An Early Modern English printed Quarto

Modern English has lost many of the linguistic details that were part of everyday speech in the 16th Century. These details tell us a lot about the **age, social background and emotions of the speaker**, and Shakespeare is famous for capturing them in his writing and characterisation. This can include the use of the polite or impolite forms of pronouns, or a choice between an archaic word form and a new one – the study of these choices in linguistics is known as **historical sociopragmatics**. Here is an introduction to one of the most interesting ones:

## You or Thou?

In Modern English, the 2nd person is simply 'you'; however in Early Modern English, they also used the term 'thou'. This is used in a very similar way to the French 'tu/vous' and German 'du/Sie', to be a marker of respect, affection or social distance. Therefore, the conscious choice a character makes between 'you' and 'thou' tells us about the social relationship being described. For instance, in **Act I, Scene i**, **notice the shift between Richard's address of 'you' to 'thou'**:

RICHARD ... Meantime, this deep disgrace in brotherhood  
Touches me deeper than **you** can imagine.

CLARENCE I know it pleaseth neither of us well.

RICHARD Well, **your** imprisonment shall not be long;  
I will deliver you or else lie for **you**.  
Meantime, have patience.

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CLARENCE I must perforce. Farewell.

*Exeunt CLARENCE, BRAKENBURY, and GUARD*

RICHARD Go, tread the path that **thou** shalt ne'er return.  
Simple, plain Clarence! I do love **thee** so,  
That I will shortly send **thy** soul to heaven,  
If heaven will take the present at our hands.

120

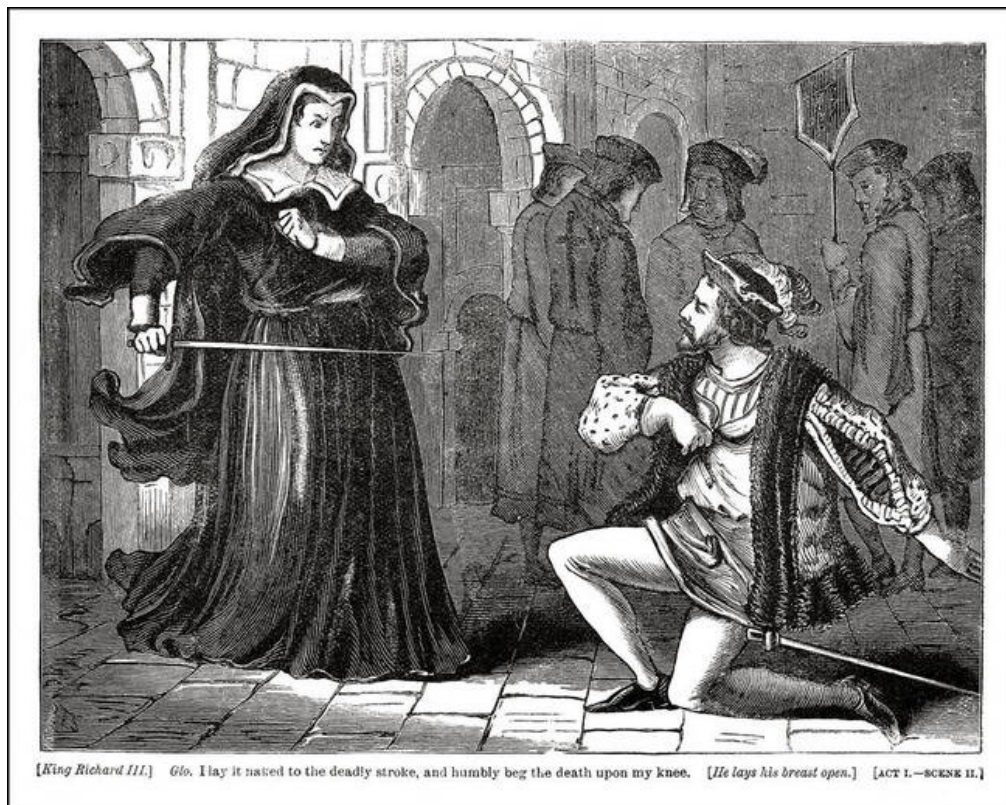
While he addresses Clarence as 'you' to his face, **implying social respect and status**, he quickly switches to a disrespectful 'thou'. It is possible that Richard is also playing with the affectionate use of 'thou' ironically, as he plans his brother's death. A contemporary audience, sensitive to this use of grammar, would have immediately understood Richard's skilled ability as an actor from the first scene of the play.

### CLASS ACTIVITY

Look at the conversation between Anne and Richard in **Act I, Scene ii**.

In this scene, Anne mourns the death of the old Lancastrian King Henry VI, who was probably killed in the Tower of London by the York brothers (including King Edward and Richard).

- Read the passage with a partner and highlight any uses of 'you' or 'thou' as you go.
- Discuss the motives of Richard in this conversation. Why does he choose to use these pronouns at certain times - what emotion is he crafting, and what does he want Anne to think?





Here are a few suggestions for interesting essay topics to get started with!

Be creative, have fun, and remember to back up your points with examples from the play.

1. 'And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,  
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,  
I am determined to prove a villain  
And hate the idle pleasures of these days.'

**Is there a hero in Richard III?**

2. Explore the development of the character of Richard of Gloucester, thinking about the themes of appearance and reality.

3. 'Can curses pierce the clouds and enter heaven?  
Why, then, give way, dull clouds, to my quick curses!'

**Explore the power of words, speech and cursing in Richard III.**

4. How is recorded history influenced by propaganda and censorship, both within the plot of Richard III and in the writing of the play itself?

5. The individual play *Richard III* was billed and printed as a Tragedy, but was categorised as a History play in the First Folio of Shakespeare's Complete Works in 1623.

**How important is the idea of either genre to the character of Richard of Gloucester, and is it a Tragedy or a History play?**

### Further Reading:

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KERMODE, FRANK, *Shakespeare's Language*, Penguin, 2001

RIGHTER, ANNE, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*, Barnes and Noble, USA, 1969

TILLYARD, E.M.W., *Shakespeare's History Plays*, New York 1946

WATSON, D.G., *Shakespeare's Early History Plays: Politics at Play on the Elizabethan Stage*, Athens, 1990

WEIR, ALISON, *The Wars of the Roses*, New York: Ballantine, 1996.

- i.i **‘Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious by this sun of York’**  
Richard’s first words punningly refer both in general to the improvement in fortunes of the house of York and in particular to his bother Edward, ‘this son of York’ who is now King.
- i.i **‘abjects’**  
Shakespeare invented this noun, which seems to mean ‘lowly, outcast an servile subjects’.
- i.i **‘brooked’**  
endured
- i.i **‘more pity that the eagles should be mewed, while kites and buzzards prey at liberty’**  
Hastings bemoans the fact that whilst the noblest of bird of prey are cooped up, other commoner and uglier birds are free to scavage.
- i.i **‘packed with post-horse’**  
A post-horse was the Elizabethan equivalent of the Wild West ‘pony express’: Richard tells us he will now persuade King Edward to condemn George Duke of Clarence to death – though this is never shown.
- i.i **‘for then I’ll marry Warwick’s youngest daughter. What, though I killed her husband and her father?’**  
Lady Anne was the daughter of the ‘King-Maker’ Earl of Warwick who in the recent wars changed allegiance to Henry VI of Lancaster, whose son Edward, Prince of Wales she married. According to Shakespeare, Richard killed ‘her husband’ on the battlefield and also murdered her father in law King Henry, whose coffin, attended by Lady Anne, is now brought on.
- i.ii **‘more direful hap betide that wretch’**  
May more dreadful events overtake that evil man.
- i.iii **‘falsely to draw me in these vile suspects’**  
To implicate me so falsely in these shameful suspicions.
- i.iii **‘with this condition’**  
Treated in such a way.
- i.iii **‘thou elvish-marked abortive rooting hog!’**  
Margaret refers to Richard’s hunchback as if marked out by wicked spirits as one of their own, and so deformed as to resemble a pig with its dead down snaffling in the earth.

- I.iii **'yet you have the vantage of her wrong'**  
And yet you're the ones who have benefited from the harm done to her.
- I.iii **'set abroad'**  
To lay abroad or set to work.
- I.iv **"'tis a point of wisdom**  
You've made a wise decision.
- III.i **"'tis a parlous boy, bold, quick, ingenious, forward, capable'**  
Richard's string of adjectives would usually constitute high praise for the Prince of Wales; here they add up to a thread and spell out his doom.
- III.iv **'fond'**  
Foolishly naive.
- III.viii **'he is holy in exercise'**  
He is busy in religious meditation. Richard, Buckingham and Catesby now stage-manage the take-over.
- III.viii **'the corruption of a blemished stock'**  
A branch of royal family tree tainted by illegitimacy.
- IV.iv **'intelligencer'**  
Spy, agent.
- V.i **'who hath descried the number of the traitors?'**  
Who amongst you has counted the size of the opposing army?
- V.vi **'our wrongs in Richard's bosom will conquer him'**  
The fatal grievances dealt to us will undermine his valour.
- V.iv **'what do I fear? Myself? There's none else by...'**  
Richard began the play with a confident soliloquy about his plans to gain the throne, and rehearsed the various roles he would play to ensure his success. This speech, his final soliloquy, is different in every way - his dazzling repertoire of parts has shrunk into schizophrenic paranoia.
- V.iv **'cried on'**  
Encouraged, cheered on.
- V.iv **'pell-mell'**  
With no quarter given.