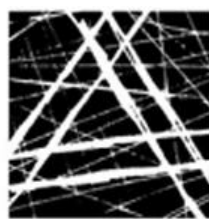


Richard III



Education Resource Pack



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theatre

OVERVIEW

Richard III is a historical play by William Shakespeare and is believed to have been written in approximately 1592. The play is deemed a tragedy and is the second longest of Shakespeare's plays, after Hamlet. Richard III is the concluding part of Shakespeare's first tetralogy, also consisting on Henry VI parts 1, 2 & 3, and is the final part in his plays regarding the "War of the Roses", the civil war that took place between the houses of York and Lancaster. It is the story of the deformed and jealous Richard, Duke of Gloucester's villainous plan to take the throne.

The play is based on Sir Thomas Mores' History of King Richard III. Sir Thomas' novel, despite being based upon historical events, is largely untrue and dramatized conflicts, provided descriptions of body and mind, and looked for causes as well as recording facts which influenced dramatists such as Shakespeare.

SYNOPSIS

After the long civil war between the houses of York and Lancaster, England is enjoying a period of peace under King Edward IV and the victorious Yorks. However Edward's younger brother, Richard Duke of Gloucester, resents Edward's power and the happiness of those around him. Malicious, power-hungry, and bitter about his physical deformity of hunchback, Richard begins to conspire secretly to overthrow Edward and take the throne. He decides to kill anyone he has to in order to become king.

Using his intelligence and his skills of deception and political manipulation, Richard begins his campaign for the throne. He manipulates Lady Anne into marrying him, even though she knows that Richard has killed her husband and father-in-law, by convincing her that he only killed them out of lust and desperation for her. Queen Margaret the grieving wife of Henry VI curses everybody present, hoping that they will one day be as miserable as her.

Next Richard then has his own older brother Clarence murdered because he has a stronger claim to the throne than Richard. He shifts the burden of guilt onto his sick older brother King Edward IV, blaming his lavish, over indulgent lifestyle on his illness, in order to accelerate Edward's death. After King Edward dies, Richard becomes lord protector of England and the figure in charge until the elder of Edward's two young sons grows up.

Consequently Richard kills the court noblemen who are loyal to the young princes, most notably Lord Hastings, the lord chamberlain of England. He then has Edwards Widow, Elizabeth's relatives arrested and executed. With Elizabeth and the princes now unprotected, Richard has his political allies, particularly his right-hand man, Lord Buckingham, campaign to have Richard crowned king. Richard then imprisons the young princes in the Tower and order Buckingham to kill them. However Buckingham cant stomach the killing and refuses so Richard sends hired murderers to kill both children. It's at this point that Richard starts to think Buckingham might need to be got rid of. Richard also suggests that he will soon murder his wife Anne.

After the princes are murdered and Lady Anne is dead, Richard begins to put plans in place to marry his brother's daughter young Elizabeth. Though young Elizabeth is his niece, the alliance would secure his claim to the throne. Meanwhile Queen Elizabeth (young Elizabeth's mother), Queen Margaret, and Richard's mother the Duchess of York, all mourn together. It turns into a competition to prove who is the saddest and most hard done by. Richard's mother gives him a piece of her mind. Queen Elizabeth also has a go at him. In spite of her disgust at him, Queen Elizabeth gives Richard the impression that she is

warming to the idea of him marrying her daughter as a strong political move and a nice way to get over her grief.

By this time, Richard's reign of terror has caused the common people of England to fear and loathe him, and he has alienated nearly all the noblemen of the court—even the power-hungry Buckingham. When rumours begin to circulate about a challenger to the throne who is gathering forces, Buckingham defects to join his forces. The challenger is the earl of Richmond, a descendant of a secondary arm of the Lancaster family, and England is ready to welcome him. Richmond is captured and executed and Richard prepares for battle.

The night before the battle, ghosts of Richard's victims visit his tent and curse him. They also visit Richmond's tent and give him encouragement and the promise of victory. The next day in the battle Richard fights bravely and ferociously. He loses his horse and staggers about the battlefield on foot. Richard and Richmond fight and Richard is killed. Richard's crown is taken and given to Richmond.

Richmond is crowned King Henry VI and promises an end to the War of the Roses. He promises that with his marriage to young Elizabeth, long lasting peace will return to England.

CHARACTERS

Richard - Also called the duke of Gloucester, and eventually crowned King Richard III. Deformed in body and twisted in mind, Richard is both the central character and the villain of the play. He is evil, corrupt, sadistic, and manipulative, and he will stop at nothing to become king. His intelligence, political brilliance, and dazzling use of language keep the audience fascinated—and his subjects and rivals under his thumb.

Buckingham - Richard's right-hand man in his schemes to gain power. The duke of Buckingham is almost as amoral and ambitious as Richard himself. He defects from Richard towards the end of the play and is eventually executed.

King Edward IV - The older brother of Richard and Clarence, and the king of England at the start of the play. Edward was deeply involved in the Yorkists' brutal overthrow of the Lancaster regime, but as king he is devoted to achieving a reconciliation among the various political factions of his reign. He is unaware that Richard attempts to thwart him at every turn.

Clarence - The gentle, trusting brother born between Edward and Richard in the York family. Richard has Clarence murdered in order to get him out of the way. Clarence leaves two children, a son and a daughter.

Queen Elizabeth - The wife of King Edward IV and the mother of the two young princes (the heirs to the throne) and their older sister, young Elizabeth. After Edward's death, Queen Elizabeth (also called Lady Gray) is at Richard's mercy. Richard rightly views her as an enemy because she opposes his rise to power, and because she is intelligent and fairly strong-willed. Elizabeth family; Dorset, Rivers, and Gray are her allies.

Anne - The young widow of Prince Edward, who was the son of the former king, Henry VI. Lady Anne hates Richard for the death of her husband, but for reasons of politics and for sadistic pleasure Richard persuades Anne to marry him. She is later killed by Richard.

Duchess of York - Widowed mother of Richard, Clarence, and King Edward IV. The duchess of York is Queen Elizabeth's mother-in-law, and she is very protective of Elizabeth and her

children, who are her grandchildren. She is angry with, and eventually curses, Richard for his heinous actions.

Margaret - Widow of the dead King Henry VI, and mother of the slain Prince Edward who were deposed and murdered by the family of King Edward IV and Richard. She is embittered and hates both Richard and the people he is trying to get rid of, all of whom were complicit in the destruction of the Lancasters.

The princes - The two young sons of King Edward IV and his wife, Queen Elizabeth and Richards nephews. Agents of Richard murder these boys in the Tower of London. Young Prince Edward, the rightful heir to the throne, should not be confused with the elder Edward, prince of Wales (the first husband of Lady Anne, and the son of the former king, Henry VI.), who was killed before the play begins.

Young Elizabeth -The former Queen Elizabeth's daughter. She becomes a pawn in political power and is promised in marriage at the end of the play to Richmond, the Lancastrian rebel leader, in order to unite the warring houses of York and Lancaster.

Richmond - A member of the Lancaster royal family. Richmond gathers a force of rebels to challenge Richard for the throne. He is meant to represent goodness, justice, and fairness all the things Richard does not. Richmond is portrayed in such a glowing light in part because he founded the Tudor dynasty, which still ruled England in Shakespeare's day. He becomes King Henry VI at the end of the play.

Ratcliffe, Catesby - Two of Richard's flunkies among the nobility.

Dorset, Rivers, and Gray - The family of Elizabeth.

Tyrrell - A murderer whom Richard hires to kill his young nephews, the princes in the Tower of London.

Hastings - A lord who maintains his integrity, remaining loyal to the family of King Edward IV. Hastings winds up dead for making the mistake of trusting Richard.

Stanley - The stepfather of Richmond. Lord Stanley, earl of Derby, secretly helps Richmond, although he cannot escape Richard's watchful gaze.

Lord Mayor of London - A gullible and suggestible fellow whom Richard and Buckingham use as a pawn in their ploy to make Richard king.

MAJOR THEMES

Themes for discussion in Richard III are:

- **Deformity:** Richard claims that his deformity is the cause of his wicked ways. He manipulates the audience for sympathy, just as he manipulates the other characters throughout the play. The play also highlights the link of appearance and morality where ugly is deemed as bad and pretty is deemed as good. It highlights the theory that if you are ugly it is Gods punishment for being bad or doing bad.
- **Manipulation and the allure of evil:** Richard exudes charisma and sexual power. He is able to manipulate his victims for his own gain. However Richard's victims are all complicit in their own destruction and allow themselves to be taken in by his charisma and overlook his dishonesty and violent behaviour. This tendency is replicated through Richard's relationship with the audience. Even though we dislike

his actions, his gleeful, brilliant, revealing monologues cause most viewers to like him and even hope that he will succeed despite his obvious malice.

- **War:** The play commences at the end of the War of the Roses, the civil war between the Houses of York and Lancaster. The play's one major battle (the Battle of Bosworth Field) is a climactic moment that brings Richard's tyrannous reign and the Wars of the Roses to an end, ushering in the Tudor dynasty and a golden age of peace and prosperity.
- **Power:** Richard III is a story of the struggle to win power. The play portrays Richard as "Machiavellian" and as an unscrupulous ruler who'll do just about anything to gain the crown and remain in power. Richard's antithesis is Richmond/King Henry VII, a monarch divinely appointed by God whose reign marks a fresh start for war-torn England. This can be seen as Shakespeare's celebration of the Tudor monarchy.
- **Betrayal:** Richard III is full of betrayal. Richard betrays his friends and family, and his friends and family betray him. Through it all, there's hardly a moment of surprise or shock at each betrayal. Betrayal is an expected part of power politics, and the audience learns to be wary of the motives and intentions of nearly every player.

MOTIFS

Motifs which appear in the play are:

- **The supernatural, Curses and Ghosts:** Throughout the play we are confronted with characters cursing others. The main theme is that your curse comes back on you and the prophecy of those who curse comes true, therefore serving justice. Also within the play Richard and Richmond are visited by the ghosts of the people Richard has killed. They ultimately profess Richard's demise which comes to effect in the final battle.
- **Dreams:** The motif of prophetic dreams is part of the play's larger preoccupation with the supernatural, but the idea of dreams emerges as its own separate motif after Stanley's dream about Hastings's death. Clarence and Stanley both have dreams that not only predict the future, but that are also heavy with important symbolism.

SYMBOLS

Symbols throughout the play are:

- **The Boar:** The boar is Richard's heraldic symbol, and is used several times throughout the play to represent him. The idea of the boar is also played on in describing Richard's deformity, and Richard is cursed by the duchess as an "abortive, rooting hog" (Act 1, scene 3). The boar was one of the most dangerous animals that people hunted in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and Shakespeare's

audience would have associated it with untamed aggression and uncontrollable violence.

- **Wine and Excess:** In the play Richard suggests that King Edward has died of excess. This is then used ironically when Richard drowns Clarence's body in a barrel of wine. Wine also represents intoxication and lust, the lust that Richard feels for not only for power and the throne.

Key Curriculum Areas

English Literature

Arcola's production of Richard III would be a great production for A-level English literature students who have to study Shakespeare and Richard III.

Key Questions for consideration are:

- Evaluate the use of language within the play? How has this been used to create dramatic effect?
- What is Richard's relationship with the audience? How does this make you as an audience member react to his character?
- What are the sexual politics of the play? How does Richard use his charisma and sexual power to his advantage?
- What is the significance of curses within the production?
- How has the play been interpreted from its original format in this production? How has the director adapted this production for a modern audience?

Drama and Theatre Studies

Richard III would be a good opportunity for those studying drama to come and see a work of Shakespeare. It would also be a good opportunity for students to see a modern adaptation of a Shakespeare play which is being played in a more intimate space than a traditional proscenium arch theatre.

Some Key Questions for consideration are:

- How has the play been adapted from its original Shakespearean format?
- How is the space different to where it would have been performed in Shakespearean times? What effect does this have on the audience? Which type of space do/would you prefer?
- How has the play been cast? How is this different to how it would have been cast originally?
- Did you empathise with any of the characters? Who and why?
- Did you sympathise with any of the characters? Who and why?
- Was there a message, a moral, or anything to be learnt from the action of the play and if so, what was it?
- Can you think of five ways this production was successful in conveying the play's message?

Students studying Drama and theatre studies would have to take into consideration factors such as the script, set design, costume, music, sound and lighting. Some questions for consideration have been outlined below:

The Script

Shakespeare's original transcript of Richard III has been through many different versions and adaptations. The script will have been cut and adapted to suit the production values.

- How has the script been adapted for this production?
- Why do you think you would need to adapt a script?
- Do you think this version of the script is effective?

Set Design

The set design of a production creates the place, the setting, the world of the play. Richard the III has many different settings and the director has used set design to create all these different settings.

- What type of set has been used in this production? Is there lots of set or is it minimalistic in style?
- How effective is the use of set? Can you think of any ways it could be improved?
- How do you think this set would be different to the set used in Shakespeare's time?

Lighting

Lighting is important in theatre for a number of reasons and can be used in many ways including to create setting and atmosphere.

- How was lighting used in this production?
- Was the use of lighting effective? If yes give an example. If no give an example of how it could have been improved.
- In what way is lighting used to create mood? Can you think of any specific examples of where lighting was used to create dramatic effect?
- How do you think the use of lighting has changed how the play would have been performed from original versions?

Costume

Costume is used most commonly in theatre to illustrate character, it is also often used to convey the setting of the play both in time and place.

- What style were the costumes in the play? Were they modern day or classical?
- What are the effects of having the costume in this style?
- Which style of costume do you prefer? Why?
- To what extent was costume used to highlight the themes in the play?

Music and Sound

Music is often used in theatre to create the atmosphere and Sound effects are used to illustrate the action of play.

- Has any music been used in the play? What effect did this have?
- In what way has sound and sound effects been used? Did you think this was effective?
- Did the use of music and sound add to the content of the play?
- Would you have used any more/less sound effects? Why?

Cultural Legacy

The story of the War of the Roses and Richard III still continue to have a cultural legacy in today's modern entertainment. The stories have gone on to inspire many modern television shows such as *Game of Thrones*, *House of Cards* and *The Hollow Crown*.

Game of Thrones

The parallels of Richard III and *Game of Thrones* are as below:



Stannis Baratheon and Richard III

GoT: Robert Baratheon's brother Stannis is convinced that he should rule Westeros because his nephews (Joffrey and Tommen) are illegitimate.

Historical parallel: Edward IV's brother Richard of York issues a decree that his nephews were illegitimate in 1483 and then took the throne himself.



Lady Ann and Sansa Stark

GoT: Young Sansa Stark is a prize bride as the heir to the North and has lost most of her family to war. She was betrothed to tyrannical Joffrey before being married to Tyrion and Ramsay.

Historical Parallel: Lady Anne was first married to Henry VI's son Edward of Lancaster. Months after the wedding both her father and husband were killed in battle. She was then married by the future Richard the III in order to secure her wealth and land for a house.



Talisa Stark and Queen Elizabeth

GoT: Robb Stark loses valuable allies when he marries Talisa for love - disregarding his promise to marry one of Walder Frey's daughters.

Historical parallel: Edward IV married Elizabeth, a great beauty with no standing wealth, secretly in 1464. His ally the Earl of Warwick had been busy negotiating a marriage to a French princess, and was so hurt that he helped Lancastrian Henry VI overthrow Edward in 1470.



Daenerys Targaryen and Henry VI (Richmond)

GoT: Daenerys Targaryen is the last surviving member of her house, living in exile in Essos, and the mother of dragons.

Historical Parallel: Henry Tudor was the last surviving member of the Lancastrian family with a viable claim to the throne in the War of the Roses. When Edward IV reclaimed the crown in 1472, 14 year old Henry was forced to flee to Brittany.

House of Cards



Netflix's original series *House of Cards* is greatly influenced by Shakespeare. In an interview with Kevin Spacey, who himself has played Richard III both in London and New York, he says that "The great thing about the original series and Michael Dobson's [sic] book is that they were based on Shakespeare. The direct address is absolutely 'Richard III'".

Some of the influences of Richard III on *House of Cards* are highlighted below:

Frank's breaking of the fourth wall parallels "Richard III": Some of Shakespeare's characters break the fourth wall (they talk to the audience), notably Richard III and also Iago, the villain from "Othello." This makes characters that are villains, much more palatable to the audience. They say funny things and create a rapport with us. They make us feel like they're our close friends. But be careful! If you let your guard down, they might just stab you (or push you in onto a subway platform in front of a moving train).

Frank, like Richard III, is a likable villain: A character breaking the fourth wall, no matter what kind of crimes and murders he is committing, makes us feel like we are in his inner circle, like we are confidantes. Frank and Richard III also make fun of all the idiots around them.

Just as "Richard III" is only nominally historical, "House of Cards" is only nominally about politics: Though "Richard III" is technically a historical play (Richard III was a real person, after all), you definitely don't have to be interested in history to enjoy it. It ends up being more about Richard III as a character than about his evil deeds. The same goes for "House of Cards." We were initially hesitant to watch it, as we are not exactly intrigued by the details of the U.S.'s political system. However, the show is way more about the characters and their interactions, mainly Frank's, than it is about the day-to-day in the White House.

The Hollow Crown: War of the Roses



The Hollow Crown is the most directly linked modern television series to Richard III and other Shakespeare plays as it is a direct re-telling of Shakespeare's stories. *The Hollow Crown: War of the Roses* commences at the start of Henry IV parts 1 & 2 and continues to the end of Richard III. The series feature Benedict Cumberbatch as Richard III, Tom Sturridge as Henry VI, Judi Dench as the Duchess of York and Keeley Hawes as Queen Elizabeth.

Cast and Creatives

Greg Hicks - Richard III



Playing the lead role of Richard III will be Greg Hicks. Greg has had an extensive television and theatre career, having performed many times with the *Royal Shakespeare Company*, at the *Old Vic*, the *National Theatre*, the *Arcola* and many others playing roles such as Macbeth in *Macbeth*, Lear in *King Lear* and Romeo in *Romeo and Juliette*. His television career has seen him take roles in *Casualty*, *The Bill* and *Heartbeat* but to name a few.

Below are some reviews of Greg Hicks' previous performances from *The Independent* and *The Guardian*:

The Kreutzer Sonata, Arcola Theatre, review: Greg Hicks is riveting



The Kreutzer Sonata review - Tolstoy's tale of murder is electrified by Greg Hicks



Arcola, London

Greg Hicks is hilarious as a demonic newspaper editor in Mark Jagasia's scorching satire on the anti-immigration rhetoric infecting parts of Fleet Street

Text
Direction
Design
Lighting Design
PR

William Shakespear
Mehmet Ergen
Anthony Lamble
David Howe
Kevin Wilson

Press Release:

King Edward is on the throne, and England is at peace. But don't worry - it won't be that way for long.

Gripping and outrageous, Shakespeare's Richard III is the tale of a ruthless, power-crazed misogynist who lies and cheats his way to the highest seat in the land.

Following his celebrated performances as Macbeth, Julius Caesar, Coriolanus and King Lear for the Royal Shakespeare Company, Greg Hicks takes on the role of the tyrant king Richard in this startling new production, directed by Arcola's Artistic Director Mehmet Ergen.

Best	£22 (£19 conc, £17 previews)
Standard	£20 (£17 conc, £15 previews)
Value	£16 (£14 conc, £12 previews)
Restricted	£12 (£10 previews)

Monday - Saturday at 7.30pm.

Wednesday and Saturday matinees at 3pm.

No performances Sunday.

Preview pricing: 11 - 13 May

Relaxed performance: 20 May, 3pm

Group /school rates (for 10+ people) available. Contact Box Office