TEACHERS' NOTES ON SHAKESPEARE'S *Richard III*

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1. A synopsis

Richard III is a historical play by William Shakespeare believed to have been written around 1593 depicting the accession to power and subsequent short reign of King Richard III of England. The play is grouped among Shakespeare's histories.

After a long civil war between the royal family of York and the royal family of Lancaster, England enjoys a period of peace under King Edward IV and the victorious Yorks. But Edward's younger brother, Richard, resents Edward's power and the happiness of those around him. Malicious, power-hungry, and bitter about his physical deformity, Richard begins to aspire secretly to the throne—and 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 a noblewoman, Lady Anne, into marrying him—even though she knows that he murdered her first husband. He has his own older brother, Clarence, executed, and shifts the burden of guilt onto his sick older brother King Edward in order to accelerate Edward's illness and death. After King Edward dies, Richard becomes lord protector of England—the figure in charge until the elder of Edward's two sons grows up.

Next Richard kills the court noblemen who are loyal to the princes, most notably Lord Hastings, the lord chamberlain of England. He then has the boys' relatives on their mother's side—the powerful kinsmen of Edward's wife, Queen Elizabeth—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, in his bloodiest move yet, sends hired murderers to kill both children.

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 rumors begin to circulate about a challenger to the throne who is gathering forces in France, noblemen defect in droves 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.

Richard, in the meantime, tries to consolidate his power. He has his wife, Queen Anne, murdered, so that he can marry young Elizabeth, the daughter of the former Queen Elizabeth and the dead King Edward. Though young Elizabeth is his niece, the alliance would secure his claim to the throne. Nevertheless, Richard has begun to lose control of events, and Queen Elizabeth manages to forestall him. Meanwhile, she secretly promises to marry young Elizabeth to Richmond.

Richmond finally invades England. The night before the battle that will decide everything, Richard has a terrible dream in which the ghosts of all the people he has murdered appear and curse him, telling him that he will die the next day. In the battle on the following morning, Richard is killed, and Richmond is crowned King Henry VII. Promising a new era of peace for England, the new king is betrothed to young Elizabeth in order to unite the warring houses of Lancaster and York.

2. The title

Richard III is taken from the main villain of the play, the antagonist Richard, Duke of Gloucester. The choice of his name for the title shows his central role in creating the central conflict in the play. His involvement in schemes that cause pain and suffering to other characters puts him in a position as a character the playwright uses to develop the play in form of themes, character traits of other characters, the plot, lessons and the mood and atmosphere, among others.

3. Setting

The play reflects a history of England set in the middle of Queen Elizabeth I's reign. The Church of England was governed by Bishops. Spain was the most powerful of the Catholic countries. It tried to invade England but was defeated by the English navy. Richard III, the youngest brother of Edward IV, schemes and murders several kin and kith to rise to the throne. He is later overthrown and killed by Henry, earl of Richmond. Henry marries the Yorkist heiress so as to unite the houses of York and Lancaster than have been embroiled in the wars of the Roses.

Different events happen at different times for significant purposes. Most significant is the night before the final battle in which Richard gets nightmares from all his dead victims who predict his death. On the other hand, in the same night, the same ghosts foretell victory for Richmond.

The social setting of the play is mainly reflecting the conflict between the York and the Lancaster families which have been embroiled in civil wars for decades over who is the rightful heir to the throne of England. At the end of the play, Shakespeare intelligently kills the conflict when Richard is killed in a poetic justice of sorts and the young Elizabeth, a Yorkist gets married to Richmond of the Lancaster family who emerges victor in the battle that leaves Richard dead.

4. Plot

Summaries of the Acts and Scenes

Act I:I

Richard, the duke of Gloucester, speaks in a monologue addressed to himself and to the audience. After a lengthy civil war, he says, peace at last has returned to the royal house of England. Richard says that his older brother, King Edward IV, now sits on the throne, and everyone around Richard is involved in a great celebration. But Richard himself will not join in the festivities. He complains that he was born deformed and ugly, and bitterly laments his bad luck. He vows to make everybody around him miserable as well. Moreover, Richard says, he is power-hungry, and seeks to gain control over the entire court. He implies that his ultimate goal is to make himself king.

Working toward this goal, Richard has set in motion various schemes against the other noblemen of the court. The first victim is Richard's own brother, Clarence. Richard and Clarence are the two younger brothers of the current king, Edward IV, who is very ill and highly suggestible at the moment. Richard says that he has planted rumors to make Edward suspicious of Clarence.

Clarence himself now enters, under armed guard. Richard's rumor-planting has worked, and Clarence is being led to the Tower of London, where English political prisoners were traditionally imprisoned and often executed. Richard, pretending to be very sad to see Clarence made a prisoner, suggests to Clarence that King Edward must have been influenced by his wife, Queen Elizabeth, or by his mistress, Lady Shore, to become suspicious of Clarence. Richard promises that he will try to have Clarence set free. But after Clarence is led offstage toward the Tower, Richard gleefully says to himself that he will make sure Clarence never returns.

Lord Hastings, the lord Chamberlain of the court, now enters. He was earlier imprisoned in the Tower by the suspicious King Edward, but has now been freed. Richard, pretending ignorance, asks Hastings for the latest news,

and Hastings tells him that Edward is very sick. After Hastings leaves, Richard gloats over Edward's illness. Edward's death would bring Richard one step closer to the throne. Richard wants Clarence to die first, however, so that Richard will be the legal heir to power. Richard's planned next step is to try to marry a noblewoman named Lady Anne Neville. An alliance with her would help Richard on his way to the throne. Lady Anne recently has been widowed—she was married to the son of the previous king, Henry VI, who recently was deposed and murdered, along with his son, by Richard's family. Anne is thus in deep mourning. But the sadistic and amoral Richard is amused by the idea of persuading her to marry him under these circumstances.

Analysis

In the play's well-known opening lines, Richard refers to events that Shakespeare chronicles in his earlier plays *Henry VI, Parts One, Two, and Three,* and with which he would have expected his viewers to be familiar. The *Henry VI* plays detail an exhausting civil war for the throne of England, which boiled down to a contest between two families: the House of York and the House of Lancaster. This civil war is known as the Wars of the Roses, because of the white and red roses that symbolized the houses of York and of Lancaster, respectively. Richard's side, the House of York, eventually wins, and Richard's oldest brother, Edward, is now King Edward IV.

This knowledge of the recent civil war helps us make sense of the opening lines, spoken by Richard: "Now is the winter of our discontent / Made glorious summer by this son of York; / And all the clouds that loured upon our homes / In the deep bosom of the ocean buried" (I.i.1–4). Richard's brother Edward is the "son of York" who has brought "glorious summer" to the kingdom, and Richard's "winter of our discontent" is the recently ended civil war. The "house" is the House of York, to which Richard and his brothers Edward and Clarence belong, and which now rules the kingdom.

Act I:II

Lady Anne, the widow of King Henry VI's son, Edward, enters the royal castle with a group of men bearing the coffin of Henry VI. She curses Richard for having killed Henry. Both Henry VI and Edward, who were of the House of Lancaster, have recently been killed by members of the House of York, the family of the current king, Edward IV, and Richard. Anne says that Richard is to blame for both deaths. She refers spitefully to her husband's killer as she mourns for the dead king and prince, praying that any child Richard might have be deformed and sick, and that he make any woman he might marry be as miserable as Anne herself is.

Suddenly, Richard himself enters the room. Anne reacts with horror and spite, but Richard orders the attendants to stop the procession so that he can speak with her. He addresses Anne gently, but she curses him as the murderer of her husband and father-in-law. Anne points to the bloody wounds on the corpse of the dead Henry VI, saying that they have started to bleed. (According to Renaissance tradition, the wounds of a murdered person begin to bleed again if the killer comes close to the corpse.)

Praising Anne's gentleness and beauty, Richard begins to court her romantically. Anne naturally reacts with anger and horror and reminds Richard repeatedly that she knows he killed her husband and King Henry. He tells Anne that she ought to forgive him his crime out of Christian charity, then denies that he killed her husband at all. Anne remains angry, but her fierceness seems to dwindle gradually in the face of Richard's eloquence and apparent sincerity. Finally, in a highly theatrical gesture, Richard kneels before her and hands her his sword, telling her to kill him if she will not forgive him, indicating that he doesn't want to live if she hates him. Anne begins to stab toward his chest, but

Richard keeps speaking, saying that he killed Henry IV and Edward out of passion for Anne herself—Anne's beauty drove him to it. Anne lowers the sword.

Richard slips his ring onto her finger, telling her that she can make him happy only by forgiving him and becoming his wife. Anne says that she may take the ring but that she will not give him her hand. Richard persists, and Anne agrees to meet him later at a place he names.
As soon as Richard is alone, he gleefully begins to celebrate his conquest of Anne. He asks scornfully whether she has already forgotten her husband, murdered by his (Richard's) hand. He gloats over having won her even while her eyes were still filled with the tears of mourning, and over having manipulated her affections even though she hates him.

Analysis

Act I, scene ii is psychologically complicated, and is without doubt one of the most difficult scenes in the entire play. It is hard for many readers to accept that Anne, who mourns the dead Henry and curses Richard at the beginning of the scene, could possibly wear his ring and let him court her by the scene's end. This scene demonstrates Richard's brilliance as a manipulator of people. We receive a taste of this brilliance in Act I, scene i, but the wooing of Anne shows Richard's persuasive abilities at a whole new level. Richard's ability to persuade the grieving, bitter Anne to accept him as a suitor is surely proof of his ominous skill in playing upon people's emotions and in convincing them that he is sincere when in fact he is lying through his teeth.

Act I:III

Queen Elizabeth, the wife of the sickly King Edward IV, enters with members of her family: her brother, Lord Rivers, and her two sons from a prior marriage, Lord Gray and the Marquis of Dorset. The queen tells her relatives that she is fearful because her husband is growing sicker and seems unlikely to survive his illness. The king and queen have two sons, but the princes are still too young to rule. If King Edward dies, control of the throne will go to Richard until the oldest son comes of age. Elizabeth tells her kinsmen that Richard is hostile to her and that she fears for her safety and that of her sons.

Two noblemen enter: the duke of Buckingham, and Stanley, the earl of Derby. They report that King Edward is doing better, and that he wants to make peace between Richard and Elizabeth's kinsmen, between whom there is long-standing hostility.

Suddenly, Richard enters, complaining loudly. He announces that, because he is such an honest and plainspoken man, the people at court slander him, pretending that he has said hostile things about Elizabeth's kinsmen. He then accuses Elizabeth and her kinsmen of hoping that Edward will die soon. Elizabeth, forced to go on the defensive, tells Richard that Edward simply wants to make peace among all of them. But Richard accuses Elizabeth of having engineered the imprisonment of Clarence—an imprisonment that is actually Richard's doing (as we have learned in Act I, scene i).

Elizabeth and Richard's argument escalates. As they argue, old Queen Margaret enters unobserved. As she watches Richard and Elizabeth fight, Margaret comments bitterly to herself about how temporary power is, and she condemns Richard for his part in the death of her husband, Henry VI, and his son, Prince Edward. Finally, Margaret steps forward out of hiding. She accuses Elizabeth and Richard of having caused her downfall and tells them that they do

not know what sorrow is. She adds that Elizabeth enjoys the privileges of being queen, which should be Margaret's, and that Richard is to blame for the murders of her family. The others, startled to see her because they thought that she had been banished from the kingdom, join together against her.

Margaret, bitter about her overthrow and the killing of her family by the people who stand before her, begins to curse all those present. She prays that Elizabeth will outlive her glory, and see her husband and children die before her, just as Margaret has. She curses Hastings, Rivers, and Dorset to die early deaths, since they were all bystanders when the York family murdered her son, Edward. Finally, she curses Richard, praying to the heavens that Richard will mistake his friends for enemies, and vice versa, and that he will never sleep peacefully.
Margaret leaves, and Catesby, a nobleman, enters to say that King Edward wants to see his family and speak with them. The others leave, but Richard stays behind. He announces that he has set all his plans in motion and is deceiving everybody into thinking that he is really a good person. Two new men now enter, murderers whom Richard has hired to kill his brother, Clarence, currently imprisoned in the Tower of London.

Act I:IV

Inside the Tower of London, the imprisoned Clarence tells Brackenbury, the lieutenant of the tower, about the strange dream he had the night before. Clarence says he dreamed that he was outside of the tower and about to set sail for France, along with his brother, Richard. But as they walked along the deck of the ship, Richard stumbled, and when Clarence tried to help him, Richard accidentally pushed him into the ocean. Clarence saw all the treasures of the deep laid out before him, as his drowning was prolonged for a very long time. He struggled to give up the ghost, but had to feel the terrible pain of drowning over and over again. Clarence then dreamed that he visited the underworld, where he saw the ghosts of those for whose deaths he had been partly responsible in the recent overthrow of the monarchy. In particular, Clarence dreamed that he saw the ghost of Prince Edward—the son of Henry VI and first husband of Lady Anne—whom Clarence himself had helped to kill. Prince Edward cried out aloud, cursing Clarence, and the Furies seized Clarence to drag him down to hell. Clarence then woke from the dream, trembling and terrified.
Brackenbury commiserates with Clarence, and Clarence, who has a foreboding of evil, asks him to stay with him while he sleeps. Brackenbury agrees, and Clarence falls asleep.

Suddenly, Richard's hired murderers enter unannounced. They rudely hand Brackenbury the warrant that Richard gave them—a legal document that orders Brackenbury to leave them alone with Clarence, no questions asked. Brackenbury leaves quickly.

Left alone with the sleeping Clarence, the two murderers debate how best to kill him. Both suffer some pangs of conscience, but the memory of the reward Richard offers them overcomes their qualms. Eventually they decide to beat him with their swords and then to drown him in the keg of wine in the next room. But Clarence suddenly wakes and pleads with them for his life. The murderers waver in their resolve, and Clarence finally asks them to go to his brother Richard, who, Clarence thinks, will reward them for sparing his life. One of the murderers hesitates, but, the other, after revealing to the unbelieving Clarence that it is Richard who has sent them to kill him, stabs Clarence, and puts his body in the keg. The murderers flee the scene before anyone comes to investigate.

Analysis

Clarence's description of his dream is notable for both its striking language and its portentous foreshadowing. Clarence is unaware that Richard is behind his imprisonment, but he nonetheless dreams that his brother causes his death. His vivid description of the terror of drowning is also memorable: "O Lord! Methought what pain it was to

drown / What dreadful noise of waters in my ears, / What sights of ugly death within mine eyes!" (I.iv.21–23). The evocative phrases Shakespeare uses, such as the descriptions of the strange treasures Clarence sees and the "[t]en thousand men that fishes gnawed upon" (I.iv.25), juxtapose earthly wealth and human mortality—a frequent concern of Renaissance writers. Some of the images used here, such as that of the dead men's skulls at the bottom of the sea into whose eye sockets reflecting gems have fallen, are similar to images that Shakespeare uses in his later play *The Tempest.* In that play, a fairy sings to a young prince whose father is believed to have drowned at sea, describing the way his father's bones have turned into coral and his eyes to pearls.

Clarence's dream is also an eerie foreshadowing of his actual drowning later in the scene. Moreover, it foreshadows the nightmare Richard himself experiences just before battle in Act V, scene v. Like the appearance of Margaret's curses in Act I, scene iii, the use of a foreshadowing dream here indicates the predominance of the supernatural in *Richard III.* While the play is technically classified as a history play, in many respects it more closely resembles Shakespearean tragedy, given its villainous central character, Richard, and the crucial role played by supernatural occurrences such as curses, ghosts, prophecies, and dreams.

Act II:I

A flourish of trumpets sounds, and the sickly King Edward IV enters with his family, his wife's family, and his advisors. Edward says that there has been too much quarreling among these factions, and he insists that everybody apologize and make peace with one another. He also announces that he has sent a letter of forgiveness to the Tower of London, where his brother Clarence has been imprisoned and sentenced to death. (At this point, King Edward does not know that his other brother, Richard, has intercepted his message and has caused Clarence to be killed.)

With a great deal of urging, King Edward finally gets the noblemen Buckingham and Hastings to make peace with Queen Elizabeth and her kinsmen (Rivers, Dorset, and Gray), promising to forget their long-standing conflicts. Richard himself then enters, and, at the king's request, gives a very noble-sounding speech in which he apologizes for any previous hostility toward Buckingham, Hastings, or the queen's family, and presents himself as a friend to all. Peace seems to have been restored.

But when Elizabeth asks King Edward to forgive Clarence and summon him to the palace, Richard reacts as if Elizabeth is deliberately making fun of him. He springs the news of Clarence's death on the group. With calculated manipulation, he reminds Edward of his guilt in condemning Clarence to death and says that the cancellation of the sentence was delivered too slowly. The grieving, guilty Edward begins to blame himself for his brother's death.

Stanley, the earl of Derby, suddenly rushes in to beg the king to spare the life of a servant condemned to death. Edward angrily blasts his noblemen for not having interceded to save Clarence when the king himself let his anger run away with him. The already sick Edward suddenly seems to grow sicker, suffering from grief and guilt. He has to be helped to his bed.

Act II:II

Later, in another room in the palace, the duchess of York, the mother of Richard, Clarence, and King Edward, is comforting Clarence's two young children. The boy and girl ask their grandmother if their father is dead, and she, lying to try to spare them, tells them he is not. But the duchess knows how evil her son Richard really is and that he killed his brother, and she grieves that she ever gave birth to him.

Suddenly, Elizabeth enters, lamenting out loud with her hair disheveled, a common sign of grief on the Elizabethan stage. Elizabeth tells the duchess that King Edward has died, and the duchess joins her in mourning. All four make

ritualistic lamentations. The two children cry for their dead father, Clarence; Elizabeth cries for her dead husband, Edward; and the duchess cries for both of her dead sons—Edward and Clarence.

Act II: III–IV

Three ordinary citizens on a street in London discuss the state of national affairs. They share the news of King Edward's death, and, although one of them is optimistic about the future, saying that Edward's son will rule, the others are very worried. These citizens insist that, of the king's sons, the oldest, young Prince Edward, is still too young to reign. They state that the two sides of his family—the kinsmen of Queen Elizabeth on one side (Rivers, Dorset, and Gray) and his uncle Richard on the other—are locked in a jealous power struggle. Moreover, they see that Richard himself is dangerous, cunning, and thirsty for power, and they discuss his villainous nature. The citizens complain that it would be better for the prince to have no uncles than to have uncles struggling over control of him and the country. They dread what the future will bring.

Back in the palace, the cardinal, an ally of Elizabeth's family, tells Elizabeth, the duchess of York, and Elizabeth's youngest son that young Prince Edward has nearly reached London and should arrive within two days. The prince's mother, grandmother, and younger brother say that they are looking forward to seeing him.

Suddenly, the marquis of Dorset arrives with terrible news. He says that Elizabeth's kinsmen, Rivers and Gray, have been arrested along with an ally of theirs named Sir Thomas Vaughan. They have been sent to Pomfret, a castle where prisoners are held and often killed. The order to arrest them came, not surprisingly, from Richard and his ally, Buckingham. Elizabeth and the duchess realize that this news probably means the beginning of the end for their family. They wail for their loss—and for what is to come. Knowing that Richard means her ill, Elizabeth decides to take her youngest son and flee to sanctuary—to a place where, she hopes, Richard cannot come after them. The cardinal promises his support and hands over to Elizabeth the Great Seal of England, a highly symbolic artifact.

Analysis

Act II, scene iii is what critics sometimes call a window scene, because it briefly turns away from the actions of the noble characters to give us a glimpse into the minds of the common people. Because almost the entire play focuses so intensely on a close-knit group of noblemen, this technique of showing us the thoughts of people in the street offers a new point of view and gives the play a greater sense of perspective. We learn from this episode that the commoners are deeply concerned about the results of the power struggle that they know is going on in the highest levels of government. This concern heightens the tension of the play and also reminds us that the effects of these court struggles are not confined to the royal palace. Rather, they have profound consequences for everyone who lives in England. Historically, this window scene also would have made the play resonate deeply with a large portion of Shakespeare's audience, many of whom were commoners who, like those in Act II, scene iii, worried about how the behavior of powerful men and women such as the nobles would affect their lives.

In Act II, scene iv, the younger prince's jokes and puns at his uncle's expense show us that, unlike Clarence's young son, this boy sees through Richard's schemes. We also see that he is precociously clever, fully justifying his mother's reference to him as a "parlous," or dangerous, boy, and warning that he is "too shrewd" for his own good (II.iv.35). As we see later in the play, Richard does not like the people around him to be too shrewd, for when people can see through his lies they become a threat to his schemes.

Elizabeth's response to the news of her kinsmen's imprisonment might seem an overreaction to somebody unfamiliar with the situation, but given the context, her cry of fear, "Ay me! I see the ruin of my house," is perfectly justified

(II.iv.48). She knows that an imprisonment engineered by Richard is likely to lead to death, as it has already done for Clarence. But, beyond her fear for Rivers, Gray, and Vaughan, Elizabeth can also see the larger meaning of this action. With Edward out of the way, Richard has begun to use his power fearlessly and without concern for reprisal. Elizabeth is now frightened for her own safety, as well as for that of her two young sons. The heir to the throne is in a particularly precarious position, since Richard has good reason to want him dead. Elizabeth's decision to take her youngest child and head for sanctuary is the only rational response. The sole question that remains is whether even this maneuver can protect her and her family from Richard's unleashed malice.

Act III:I

With a flourish of trumpets, the young Prince Edward, the heir to the throne, rides into London with his retinue. His uncle Richard is there to greet him, accompanied by several noblemen, including Richard's close allies, the lords Buckingham and Catesby. Richard greets the prince, but the intelligent boy is suspicious of his uncle and parries Richard's flattering language with wordplay as clever as Richard's own. The prince wants to know what has happened to his relatives on his mother's side—Rivers, Gray, and Dorset. Although he doesn't tell Prince Edward, Richard has had Rivers and Gray arrested and imprisoned in the castle of Pomfret; Dorset is presumably in hiding.
Lord Hastings enters, and announces that Elizabeth and her younger son, the young duke of York, have taken sanctuary (taking sanctuary means retreating to within a church or other holy ground, where, by ancient English tradition, it was blasphemous for enemies to pursue a fugitive). Buckingham is very irritated to hear this news. He asks the Lord Cardinal to go to Elizabeth and retrieve young York from her, and he orders Hastings to accompany the cardinal and forcibly remove the young prince if Elizabeth refuses to yield him. The cardinal understandably refuses, but Buckingham gives him a long argument in which he says that a young child is not self-determining enough to claim sanctuary. The cardinal gives in, and he and Lord Hastings go to fetch young York. By the time they return, Richard has told Prince Edward that he and his brother will stay in the Tower of London until the young prince's coronation. Both princes are unwilling to be shut up in the tower.

After he sends the princes off to the tower, Richard holds a private conference with Buckingham and Catesby to discuss how his master plan is unfolding. Buckingham asks Catesby whether he thinks that Lord Hastings and Lord Stanley can be counted on to help Richard seize the throne. Although Lord Hastings is an enemy of Elizabeth and her family, Catesby believes that Hastings's loyalty to the dead King Edward IV is so great that he would never support Richard's goal of taking the crown from the rightful prince. Moreover, Catesby believes, Lord Stanley will follow whatever Lord Hastings does.

Buckingham suggests that Richard hold a council in the palace on the following day, supposedly to discuss when to crown young Prince Edward as king. In reality, however, they will scheme about how Richard can become king himself, and they must determine which of the noblemen they can count on as allies. There will be "divided counsels" the following day. First, a secret council will be held to strategize. Next, there will be a public one, which everyone will attend, at which those plans will be carried out (III.i.176).

Buckingham and Richard order Catesby to go to Lord Hastings, in order to sound him out and find out how willing he might be to go along with Richard's plans. Richard adds that Catesby should tell Hastings that Queen Elizabeth's kinsmen, who are currently imprisoned in Pomfret Castle, will be executed the next day. This news, he believes, should please Hastings, who has long been their enemy. After Catesby leaves, Buckingham asks Richard what they will do if Hastings remains loyal to Prince Edward. Richard cheerfully answers that they will chop off Hastings's head.

Buoyed by his plans, Richard promises Buckingham that, after he becomes king, he will give Buckingham the title of earl of Hereford.

Analysis

This scene provides further evidence of Richard's skill at manipulation and deception, but it also makes it clear that Richard's manipu-lations are transparent to the right kind of person. When Richard speaks to the intelligent young prince, the boy is clearly not fooled. When Prince Edward says, "I want more uncles here to welcome me," he reveals that he suspects Richard of having acted against his other uncles—which is in fact the case (III.i.6). The prince may be referring to Clarence, his actual uncle, whom Richard has caused to be murdered. Still, since kinship titles are rather vague in Shakespeare, he probably refers more directly to Rivers, Gray, and Dorset, although two of them are actually his mother's adult sons.

Act III:II–IV

Very early in the morning, a messenger knocks at the door of Lord Hastings, sent by Hastings's friend Lord Stanley. The messenger tells Hastings that Stanley has learned about the "divided counsels" that Richard plans to hold this day (III.i.176). The previous night, the messenger says, Stanley had a nightmare in which a boar attacked and killed him. The boar is Richard's heraldic symbol, and according to the messenger, Stanley is afraid for his safety and that of Hastings. He urges Hastings to take to horseback and flee with him before the sun rises, heading away from Richard and toward safety.

Hastings dismisses Stanley's fears and tells the messenger to assure Stanley that there is nothing to fear. Catesby arrives at Hastings's house. He has been sent by Richard to discover Hastings's feelings about Richard's scheme to rise to power. But when Catesby brings up the idea that Richard should take the crown instead of Prince Edward, Hastings recoils in horror. Seeing that Hastings will not change his mind, Catesby seems to drop the issue.

Stanley arrives, complaining of his forebodings, but Hastings cheerfully reassures him of their safety. Finally, Hastings goes off to the council meeting along with Buckingham. Ironically, Hastings is celebrating the news that Elizabeth's kinsmen will be executed, thinking that he and his friend Stanley are safe in the favor of Richard and Buckingham. Hastings is blissfully unaware of Richard's plan to decapitate him should Hastings refuse to join Richard's side.

ACT III:III

Guarded by the armed Sir Richard Ratcliffe, the queen's kinsmen Rivers and Gray, along with their friend Sir Thomas Vaughan, enter their prison at Pomfret Castle. Rivers laments their impending execution. He tells Ratcliffe that they are being killed for nothing but their loyalty, and that their killers will eventually pay for their crimes. Gray, remembering Margaret's curse, says that it has finally descended upon them, and that the fate that awaits them is their punishment for their original complicity in the Yorkists' murder of Henry VI and his son. Rivers reminds Gray that Margaret also cursed Richard and his allies. He prays for God to remember these curses but to forgive the one Margaret pronounced against Elizabeth herself, and her two young sons, the princes. The three embrace and prepare for their deaths.

ACT III: IV

At Richard's Council session in the Tower of London, the suspicious Hastings asks the councilors about the cause of their meeting. He says that the meeting's purpose is supposed to be to discuss the date on which Prince Edward

should be crowned king, and Derby affirms that this is indeed the purpose of the meeting. Richard arrives, smiling and pleasant, and asks the Bishop of Ely to send for a bowl of strawberries. But Buckingham takes Richard aside to tell him what Catesby has learned—that Hastings is loyal to the young princes and is unlikely to go along with Richard's plans to seize power.

When Richard re-enters the council room, he has changed his tune entirely. Pretending to be enraged, he displays his arm—which, as everyone knows, has been deformed since his birth—and says that Queen Elizabeth, conspiring with Hastings's mistress Shore, must have cast a spell on him to cause its withering. When Hastings hesitates before accepting this speculation as fact, Richard promptly accuses Hastings of treachery, orders his execution, and tells his men that he will not eat until he has been presented with Hastings's head. Left alone with his executioners, the stunned Hastings slowly realizes that Stanley was right all along. Richard is a manipulative, power-hungry traitor, and Hastings has been dangerously overconfident. Realizing that nothing can now save England from Richard's rapacious desire for power, he too cries out despairingly that Margaret's curse has finally struck home.

ACT III: V–VII

Richard questions Buckingham about his loyalty and his capabilities. Buckingham answers that he is able to lie, cheat, and kill, and is willing to use any of those skills to help Richard. Now that Lord Hastings and Elizabeth's family have been killed, and the court is under Richard's control, Richard and Buckingham know that they need to start manipulating the common people of England in order to ensure the crowning of Richard as king. The first thing to do is to manipulate the lord mayor of London into believing that Hastings was a traitor. Buckingham assures Richard that he is a good enough actor to pull off this feat.

The lord mayor enters the castle, followed by Catesby with Hastings's head. Buckingham tells the mayor about Hastings's alleged betrayal. He says that Hastings turned out to be a traitor, plotting to kill him and Richard. Richard tells the lord mayor that Hastings confessed everything before his death. The mayor, who is either very gullible or eager to go along with the claims of people in power, says he believes Richard and Buckingham just as if he has heard Hastings's confession himself. He says that he will go and tell all the people of London what a dangerous traitor Hastings was, and that Richard was right to have him killed.

After the mayor departs, Richard, very pleased with their progress, tells Buckingham the next part of the plan: Buckingham is to make speeches to the people of London in which he will try to stir up bad feeling against the dead King Edward IV and the young princes, implying that the princes aren't even Edward's legitimate heirs. The goal is to make the people turn against the princes and demand that Richard be crowned king instead. While Buckingham is on this errand, Richard sends his other henchmen to gather some more allies, and he himself makes arrangements to get rid of Clarence's children and to ensure that no one can visit the young princes imprisoned in the tower.

ACT III:VI

On the streets of London, a scrivener (someone who writes and copies letters and documents for a living) says that he has just finished his last assignment, which was to copy the paper that will be read aloud to all of London later that day. The paper says that Hastings was a traitor. The scrivener condemns the hypocrisy of the world, for he, like everybody else, can see that the claim in the paper is a lie invented by Richard to justify killing his political rival.

ACT III:VII

Buckingham returns to Richard, and reports that his speech to the Londoners was received very badly. Buckingham says that he tried to stir up bad feelings about King Edward and his sons and then proposed that Richard should be king instead. But, instead of cheering, the crowd just stared at him in terrified silence. Only a few of Buckingham's own men, at the back of the crowd, threw their hats into the air and cheered for the idea of King Richard, and Buckingham had to end his speech quickly and leave.

Richard is furious to hear that the people do not like him, but he and Buckingham decide to go ahead with their plan anyway. Their strategy is to press the suggestible lord mayor to ask Richard to be king, pretending that this request would represent the will of the people. Richard, instead of seeming to desire the crown, will pretend to have to be begged before he will finally accept it. They successfully carry out this trick, with various clever embellishments. Richard shuts himself up with two priests before Buckingham leads the lord mayor to him to give the impression that he spends a great deal of time in prayer. In a long and elaborately structured speech, Buckingham makes a show of pleading with Richard to become king, and Richard finally accepts. Buckingham suggests that Richard be crowned the very next day, to which Richard consents.

ACT IV:I–III

Outisde the Tower of London, Elizabeth, her son Dorset, and the duchess of York meet Lady Anne (who is now Richard's wife) and Clarence's young daughter. Lady Anne tells Elizabeth that they have come to visit the princes who are imprisoned in the tower, and Elizabeth says that her group is there for the same reason. But the women learn from the guardian of the tower that Richard has forbidden anyone to see the princes.

Stanley, earl of Derby, suddenly arrives with the news that Richard is about to be crowned king, so Anne must go to the coronation to be crowned as his queen. The horrified Anne fears that Richard's coronation will mean ruin for England, and says that she should have resisted marrying Richard—after all, she herself has cursed him (in Act I, scene ii) for killing her first husband. Her curses have come true. As his wife, she has no peace, and Richard is continually haunted by bad dreams. The duchess of York instructs Dorset to flee to France and join the forces of the earl of Richmond, a nobleman with a claim to the royal throne.

ACT IV:II

Back in the palace, the gloating Richard—who has now been crowned king of England—enters in triumph with Buckingham and Catesby. But Richard says that he does not yet feel secure in his position of power. He tells Buckingham that he wants the two young princes, the rightful heirs to the throne, to be murdered in the tower. For the first time, Buckingham does not obey Richard immediately, saying that he needs more time to think about the request. Richard murmurs to himself that Buckingham is too weak to continue to be his right-hand man and summons a lowlife named Tyrrell who is willing to accept the mission. In almost the same breath, Richard instructs Catesby to spread a rumor that Queen Anne is sick and likely to die, and gives orders to keep the queen confined. He then announces his intention to marry the late King Edward's daughter, Elizabeth of York. The implication is that he plans to murder Queen Anne.

Buckingham, uneasy about his future, asks Richard to give him what Richard promised him earlier: the earldom of Hereford. But Richard angrily rejects Buckingham's demands and walks out on him. Buckingham, left alone, realizes that he has fallen out of Richard's favor and decides to flee to his family home in Wales before he meets the fate of Richard's other enemies.

ACT IV:III

Tyrrell returns to the palace and tells Richard that the princes are dead. He says that he has been deeply shaken by the deed and that the two men he commissioned to perform the murders are also full of regrets after smothering the two children to death in their sleep. But Richard is delighted to hear the news, and offers Tyrrell a rich reward. After Tyrrell leaves, Richard explains the development of his various plots to get rid of everyone who might threaten his grasp on power. The two young princes are now dead. Richard has married off Clarence's daughter to an unimportant man and has locked up Clarence's son (who is not very smart and does not present a threat). Moreover, Richard gloats that Queen Anne is now dead—we can assume Richard has had her murdered—and he announces once again that his next step will be to woo and marry young Elizabeth, the daughter of the former King Edward and

Queen Elizabeth. He believes that this alliance with her family will cement his hold on the throne.

Ratcliffe enters suddenly with the bad news that some of Richard's noblemen are fleeing to join Richmond in France, and that Buckingham has returned to Wales and is now leading a large army against Richard. Richard, startled out of his contemplation, decides that it is time to gather his own army and head out to face battle.

ACT IV:IV

Elizabeth and the duchess of York lament the deaths of the young princes. Suddenly, old Queen Margaret enters, and tells the duchess that the duchess is the mother of a monster. Richard, she says, will not stop his campaign of terror until they are all dead. Margaret rejoices in this fact because she is very glad to see her curses against the York and Woodeville families come true. She is still as bitter as she has been throughout the play about the deaths of her husband, Henry VI, and her son, Prince Edward, and she says that the York deaths are fair payment.

The grief-weary Elizabeth asks Margaret to teach her how to curse, and Margaret advises her to experience as much bitterness and pain as Margaret herself has. Margaret then departs for France. When Richard enters with his noblemen and the commanders of his army, the duchess begins to curse him, condemning him for the bloody murder of his extended family and telling him that she regrets having given birth to him. The enraged Richard orders his men to strike up loud music to try to drown out the women's curses, but it does not work, and the duchess curses him to die bloodily.

Although shaken by this verbal assault, Richard recovers and, speaking with Elizabeth in private, broaches his proposal to her: he wants to marry her daughter, the young Elizabeth. The former queen is horrified, and sarcastically suggests to Richard that he simply send her daughter the bloody hearts of her two little brothers as a gift, to win her love. Richard, using all his gifts of persuasion and insistence, pursues Elizabeth, insisting that this way he can make amends to what remains of her family for all he has done before. He argues that the marriage is also the only way the kingdom can avoid civil war. Elizabeth seems to be swayed by his words at last and tells him she will speak with her daughter about it. As soon as Elizabeth leaves the stage, Richard scornfully calls her a foolish and weak-willed woman.

Richard's soldiers and army commanders start to bring him reports about Richmond's invasion, and as bad news piles up, Richard begins to panic for the first time. Richmond is reported to be approaching England with a fleet of ships; Richard's allies are half-hearted and unwilling to fight the invader. All over Britain, noblemen have taken up arms against Richard. The only good news that Richard hears is that his forces have dispersed Buckingham's army, and that Buckingham has been captured. Richard then learns that Richmond has landed with a mighty force, and he decides it is time to fight. He leads out his army to meet Richmond in battle.

ACT IV:V

Elsewhere, Stanley, earl of Derby, meets a lord from Richmond's forces for a secret conversation. The suspicious Richard has insisted that Stanley give his son, young George Stanley, to him as a hostage, to prevent Stanley's deserting Richard's side. Stanley explains that this situation is all that prevents him from joining Richmond. But he sends his regards to the rebel leader, as well as the message that the former Queen Elizabeth has agreed that Richmond should marry her daughter, young Elizabeth. The other nobleman gives Stanley information about the whereabouts of Richmond (who is in Wales) and about the vast number of English noblemen who have flocked to his side. All are marching toward London, to engage Richard in battle.

ACT IV:IV–V

Act IV, scene iv presents the fulfillment of predictions made in Act I, scene iii. The main female characters of the play—Elizabeth, the duchess, and Margaret—are together again. This time, though, they are all in the same situation. All of the women have suffered loss, defeat, and the death of their children and husbands. The gleeful Margaret seems to feel that a kind of cosmic justice has been attained. To her, the death of Elizabeth's children seems a fair return for the murder of her own husband, Henry, and son, Edward. She tells the duchess, "Bear with me. I am hungry for revenge, / And now I cloy me with beholding it" (IV.iv.61–62). Margaret sees just retribution in the fact that nearly everyone who has died since her husband and son was either a participant or a bystander during the murders of her husband and son. We cannot help but see the irony in this vision of justice, as we see the recurrence of a few common names within the royal family. Thus, for example, the dead Edwards of the York family become clearly symmetrical with Margaret's dead Edward, from the Lancaster family.

ACT V:I–II

The captured Buckingham is led to his execution by an armed sheriff. Buckingham asks to speak to King Richard, but the sheriff denies his request, leaving him time to ponder before his head is cut off. Upon discovering that it is All-Souls Day, Buckingham's thoughts turn to repentance and judgment, and he recalls the promises he made to King Edward IV that he would always stand by Edward's children and his wife's family. He also recalls his own certainty that Richard, whom he trusted, would never betray him and seems to be recalling Margaret's prophecy: "[R]emember this another day, / When he [Richard] shall split thy very heart with sorrow" (I.iii.297–298). Buckingham concludes that Margaret was right, and that, moreover, he deserves to suffer for his own wrongdoing—for breaking his vows, for being an accomplice to foul play and murder, and for his folly in trusting Richard, who has indeed broken his heart. He tells the officers to bring him to "the block of shame," and he is led away to die (V.i.28).

ACT V:II

At the camp of Richmond's army, which is marching through England to challenge Richard, Richmond tells his men that he has just received a letter from his relative Stanley, informing him about Richard's camp and movements. Richard's army, it seems, is only a day's march away. The men recall the crimes that Richard has perpetrated and the darkness he has brought to the land. A nobleman points out that none of Richard's allies is with him because they believe in his cause—they stay with him only out of fear and will flee when Richard most needs them. Eager for the battle, Richmond and his men march onward toward Richard's camp.

ANALYSIS: ACT V, SCENES I–II

The action accelerates in the scenes leading up to the battle. Shakespeare paces the scene so that events happen and news arrives in quick succession, leaving little time for contemplation on the parts of the main characters. At the

same time, these scenes reflect back on important scenes earlier in the play, revealing the consequences of past actions and the fulfillment of past prophecies. Just as Elizabeth, Margaret, and the duchess's reconsideration of earlier times in Act IV, scene iv prepares the ground for their extraordinary moral transformation in learning to curse, Buckingham's memory of Margaret's curse here prepares him for an equally significant transformation—his sudden desire to repent and accept his fate. Margaret's curse, written off as an eccentricity when it is first delivered, is now revealed to be an accurate instrument of prophecy, and thus assumes its full importance as an instrument of foreshadowing in the play. The re-emergence of the prophetic curse naturally carries with it an overtone of supernatural oversight, implying that God or fate controls the action of the play. In this light, Buckingham's declaration that his execution is due to the justice of God, who, he feels, is punishing him for having aligned himself with evil, brings the notion of moral justice into full focus in the play. This focus on moral justice anticipates the dissolution of Richard's unjust reign by redirecting the narrative toward the idea of just outcomes overseen by the will of God. Buckingham underscores this point when he declares, "Thus doth he force the swords of wicked men / To turn their own points in their masters' bosoms" (V.i.23–24). In other words, the justice of God requires that evil men will be undone through their own wickedness. Buckingham intends this point to refer solely to himself, but Shakespeare frames it as a moral generalization that points clearly toward Richard.

The sense of impending justice that Shakespeare introduces through the execution of Buckingham is carried over into Act V, scene ii, in which Richmond and his advisors' complaints about Richard's behavior amount to a moral indictment, a list of all the reasons why Richard's removal from power is the outcome that justice demands. The sense of justice, strength, courage, and optimism inherent in the frank and determined conversation of the rebels stands in direct contrast to the sense of corruption, death, and impending doom that clings to Richard's court. Richmond's advisors employ language of defiance and resolution that takes Richard's crimes as the impetus for the action that the rebels must take. For example, Oxford declares, "Every man's conscience is a thousand swords / To fight against this guilty homicide" (V.ii.17–18). Like Oxford's, each of the short speeches made by the men here revolves around the idea that Richard has been a murderous and oppressive king who deserves to be overthrown and that, as a result, Richmond's army is morally unwavering in its quest to overthrow him. Whereas the lust for power characterized Richard's rise to the throne, the principle of justice now directs Richmond and his army to challenge Richard's wrongful rule.

ACT V:III

In his camp, King Richard orders his men to pitch their tents for the night. He says that they will engage in their great battle in the -morning. Richard talks to his noblemen, trying to stir up some enthusiasm, but they are all subdued. Richard, however, says he has learned that Richmond has only one-third as many fighting men as he himself does, and he is confident that he can easily win.

ACT V:IV

Meanwhile, in Richmond's camp, Richmond tells a messenger to deliver a secret letter to his stepfather, Lord Stanley, who is in an outlying camp. Stanley is forced to fight upon Richard's side, but Richmond hopes to get some help from him nonetheless.

ACT V:V

Back in King Richard's tent, Richard issues commands to his lieutenants. Because Richard knows of Stanley's relationship with Richmond, he is suspicious of Stanley, and is holding Stanley's young son, George, hostage. He

has an order sent to Lord Stanley telling him to bring his troops to the main camp before dawn, or else he will kill George. Declaring that he will eat no supper that night, Richard then prepares to go to sleep for the night.
Stanley comes secretly to visit Richmond in his tent. He explains the situation, but promises to help Richmond however he can. Richmond thanks him and then prepares for sleep.

As both leaders sleep, they begin to dream. A parade of ghosts—the spirits of everyone whom Richard has murdered—comes across the stage. First, each ghost stops to speak to Richard. Each condemns him bitterly for his or her death, tells him that he will be killed in battle the next morning, and orders him to despair and die. The ghosts then move away and speak to the sleeping Richmond, telling him that they are on Richmond's side and that Richmond will rule England and be the father of a race of kings. In a similar manner, eleven ghosts move across the stage: Prince Edward, the dead son of Henry VI; King Henry VI himself; Richard's brother Clarence; Rivers, Gray, and Vaughan; the two young princes, whom Richard had murdered in the tower; Hastings; Lady Anne, Richard's former wife; and, finally, Buckingham.

Terrified, Richard wakes out of his sleep, sweating and gasping. In an impassioned soliloquy, he searches his soul to try to find the cause of such a terrible dream. Realizing that he is a murderer, Richard tries to figure out what he fears. He asks himself whether he is afraid of himself or whether he loves himself. He realizes that he doesn't have any reason to love himself and asks whether he doesn't hate himself, instead. For the first time, Richard is truly terrified.

ACT V:III–VI
Ratcliffe comes to Richard's tent to let him know that the rooster has crowed and that it is time to prepare for battle. The shaken Richard tells Ratcliffe of his terrifying dream, but Ratcliffe dismisses it, telling Richard not to be afraid of shadows and superstition.

In his camp, Richmond also wakes and tells his advisers about his dream, which was full of good omens: the ghosts of all of Richard's victims have told him that he will have victory. Richmond gives a stirring pre-battle oration to his soldiers, reminding them that they are defending their native country from a fearsome tyrant and murderer. Richmond's men cheer and head off to battle.

ACT V:VI
In Richard's camp, Richard gives his battle speech to his army, focusing on the raggedness of the rebel forces and their opposition to himself, the allegedly rightful king. A messenger then brings the bad news that Stanley has mutinied and refuses to bring his army. There is not enough time even to execute young Stanley, for the enemy is already upon them. Richard and his forces head out to war.

ANALYSIS ACT V:III–VI
These scenes are the psychological high point of the play, and the turning point at which Richard's downfall becomes certain. The play vividly dramatizes the contrast between Richard's character and Richmond's character, shifting its perspective back and forth between them six times. The leaders, in their respective camps, make almost identical preparations as they ready for the next day's battle, but the difference between them can be seen in the way they go about their business. Richard speaks brusquely to his lords, and, as we can see, essentially is isolated from all human contact. As a result of his malicious nature, he kills anyone who becomes close to him, gradually destroying all his close human relationships. He is in power, but he is alone: his brothers, nephews, and even his own wife are

all dead at his hand, his mother has cursed and abandoned him, and even the person who was once his closest friend—Buckingham—has been sent to execution.

Richmond, on the other hand, is gracious and friendly to both his noblemen and his soldiers. The battle speeches of the two leaders clearly show their different styles: Richmond asks his men to remember the beauty of the land that they are protecting from a tyrant, and the wives and children whom they will be making free. He reminds his men that he himself will die in battle if he cannot win, and that, if he does succeed, all his soldiers will be rewarded. In contrast, Richard simply mocks the enemy soldiers, calling them "a scum of Bretons and base lackey peasants" (V.vi.47). As Richard says to his noblemen before his speech, he believes that might makes right, and that "[c]onscience is but a word that cowards use, / Devised at first to keep the strong in awe" (V.vi.39–40). Very much Richard's opposite, Richmond claims to fight for honor, compassion, and loyalty—in effect, he fights on the side of conscience.
The effect of the ghosts' procession is something like having eleven bitter curses ("Despair and die!") cast upon Richard in sequence. When Richard wakes, he is shaken by a bout of self-doubt and soul-searching that is unparalleled in the play, and that many readers think is one of Shakespeare's greatest moments of insight into human psychology. Richard—the two-dimensional villain, the bloody "hell-hound"—is forced to look into his soul, and is terrified by what he finds there (IV.iv.48). His uncertainty as to what he finds within himself, more than the ghosts' curses, shakes him to the core.

ACT V:III–VI
Sweating and terrified, Richard asks desperately, "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" (V.v.136–138). With this sudden, horrible revelation that there is a murderer in the room, and that he is it, Richard is suddenly uncertain of whether to be afraid even of himself. His lines dramatize the realization that the ghosts have inspired—that he is a dramatically different person than he has imagined himself to be. He suddenly recognizes that he is a murderer. His statement "I am I" can be read as an effort to assert his own self-identity. After Richard realizes that he has become something that scares even himself, the divide between who he once was and who he has become is astonishingly clear. This divide threatens even his existence. Once he realizes that he is afraid of himself and that he is a murderer, his immediate question is whether or not he will kill himself. His answer is conflicted. Although he avoids this possibility by claiming that he loves himself and therefore would not kill himself, he realizes moments later, "I rather hate myself / For hateful deeds committed by myself" (V.v.136–144). In this scene it is very clear that Richard has moved beyond a simple, flat version of the medieval character, Vice, and experiences the deeply divided emotions that characterize real human beings.

In a strange, haunting, and even moving conclusion, Richard unexpectedly turns to thoughts of others, and grieves for his isolation: "I shall despair. There is no creature loves me, / And if I die no soul will pity me. / Nay, wherefore should they?—Since that I myself / Find in myself no pity to myself?" (V.v.154–157). With these words he realizes, angry and desperate, that he doesn't even sympathize with himself. Even after he manages to put aside his terror and resumes the semblance of his old arrogance, this sensation does not fade. Clearly, for Richard, the end is near.

ACT V:VII
The two armies fight a pitched battle. Catesby appears on stage and calls to Richard's ally Norfolk, asking for help for Richard. Catesby reports that the king's horse has been killed and that the king is fighting like a madman on foot, challenging everyone he sees in the field as he attempts to track down Richmond himself.

Richard himself now appears, calling out for a horse. But he refuses Catesby's offer of help, saying that he has prepared himself to face the fortunes of battle and will not run from them now. He also says that Richmond seems to have filled the field with decoys—that is, common soldiers dressed like Richmond—of whom Richard has already killed five. He departs, seeking Richmond.

ACT V:VIII

Finally, Richmond appears, and Richard returns. They face each other at last and fight a bloody duel. Richmond wins, and kills King Richard with his sword. Richmond runs back into battle. The noise of battle dies down, and Richmond returns, accompanied by his noblemen. We learn that Richmond's side has won the battle. This revelation is hardly surprising, since Richard is dead. Stanley, swearing his loyalty to the new king, presents Richmond with the crown, which has been taken from Richard's body. Richmond accepts the crown and puts it on.

Relatively few noblemen have been killed, and Stanley's young son, George, is still safe. Richmond, now King Henry VII, orders that the bodies of the dead be buried, and that Richard's soldiers—who have fled the field—should all be given amnesty. He then announces his intention to marry young Elizabeth, daughter of the former Queen Elizabeth and of the late King Edward IV. The houses of Lancaster and York will be united at last, and the long bloodshed will be over. The new king asks for God's blessing on England and the marriage, and for a lasting peace. The nobles leave the stage.

ANALYSIS: ACT V, SCENES VII–VIII

Richard's death is conveyed only in stage directions in the text—uncharacteristically, Shakespeare does not even give him a dying speech. Richard's death comes as no surprise, however. His final scenes only enact the outcome that the play has already established as inevitable, both in terms of narrative shape and in terms of moral resolution. In broad terms, the first part of the play shows a gradual rise in Richard's fortunes and power. These fortunes peak and then decline dramatically. Buckingham's hesitation to help Richard kill the young princes in Act IV, scene ii, moments after Richard's coronation, marks the beginning of Richard's decline into paranoia and his gradual loss of control of the events around him. The duchess of York's curses and Elizabeth's deception of Richard in Act IV, scene iv confirm this downward slide, which reaches its low with Richard's nightmare—and subsequent self-questioning—in Act V, scene v. After all of these events, it is clear that Richard's death, which has been predicted and prophesied many times by many people, is only a matter of time.

Richard's final scenes do illustrate something of the frenzied selfishness of his mind. Shakespeare depicts the gradual devolution of his bold and reckless fighting on the battlefield, as he goes from fighting to protect his power and his kingdom to fighting simply to protect his neck. Richard lacks the sense of higher purpose with which Richmond has been endowed, and thus he lacks the ability to die nobly. In the end, Richard is obsessed with his own self-preservation, as indicated by his cry of "[a] horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!" (V.vii.7, 13). In this moment, Richard clearly reveals his priorities. He would trade everything for a horse on which to improve his chances of surviving the battle rather than die honorably for his cause.

5. Themes and ideas
   - Hypocrisy
   - Greed for power
   - Suffering
   - Evil vs Good
   - Justice (divine justice)

- Loyalty and disloyalty to authority
- The supernatural/fate
- Retribution
- Guilt – conscience
- Fear

6. 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. Richard is unattractive and wicked self centered villain, ruthless, hypocritical, blasphemous, antagonistic, he dislikes pleasures of peace and is a determined villain, he is vindictive, vengeful and sly, deceptive and opportunistic.

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.

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 is part of the Woodeville family; her kinsmen—Dorset, Rivers, and Gray—are her allies in the court.

Dorset, Rivers, And Gray - The kinsmen and allies of Elizabeth, and members of the Woodeville and Gray families. Rivers is Elizabeth's brother, while Gray and Dorset are her sons from her first marriage. Richard eventually executes Rivers and Gray, but Dorset flees and survives.

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.

Duchess Of York - Widowed mother of Richard, Clarence, and King Edward IV. The duchess of York is Elizabeth's mother-in-law, and she is very protective of Elizabeth and her children, who are the duchess's 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. In medieval times, when kings were deposed, their children were often killed to remove any threat from the royal line of descent—but their wives

were left alive because they were considered harmless. Margaret was the wife of the king before Edward, the Lancastrian Henry VI, who was subsequently deposed and murdered (along with their children) 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, Elizabeth, their names are actually Prince Edward and the young duke of York, but they are often referred to collectively. Agents of Richard murder these boys—Richard's nephews—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. Young Elizabeth enjoys the fate of many Renaissance noblewomen. She becomes a pawn in political power-brokering, 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.

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

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

Richmond - A member of a branch 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.

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.

Vaughan - A friend of Elizabeth, Dorset, Rivers, and Gray who is executed by Richard along with Rivers and Grey.

7. Dramatic Techniques
   - Irony (dramatic, verbal, situation)
   - Asides
   - Contrast
   - Symbolism (the tower, the roses, the marriage of Richmond and Elizabeth, Richard's deformities…)
   - Soliloquy
   - Direct speech
   - Imagery
   - Use of poetic prose
   - Use of the supernatural
   - Letters

- Disguise foreshadowing

8. Lessons
   - Appearances can be deceptive
   - You reap what you sow
   - The truth always comes out
   - Good always triumphs over evil
   - A friend in need is a friend indeed
   - In unity is strength
   - Hatred is senseless
   - For every cloud there is a silver lining
   - Marriage should be based on love

9. Relevance to society
   - Greed for power
   - In family hypocrisy
   - Family enmity